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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 3 June 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.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Order! I again warn members about the length of notices of motions. Some members were unable to give their notices of motions today. If it continues, I will impose words limits on motions.

Pursuant to sessional order government business proceeded with.

INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL AMENDMENT (ACCREDITED STATE WATER REGULATOR) BILL 2015

Second Reading

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [10.12 a.m.]:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As members would be aware, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015 was introduced in the other place on 12 May 2015. The bill before the House is in the same form as the introduced bill. The second reading speech of the Minister in the other place appears at pages 5 and 6 in the proof *Hansard* of 12 May 2015. I refer members to that speech and commend the bill to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.13 a.m.]: I speak in the debate on the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015. The object of the bill is to amend the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 to enable the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to apply under the Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010 of the Commonwealth for the accreditation of arrangements under which the tribunal approves or determines charges for the provision of certain water infrastructure services relating to water resources in that part of the Murray-Darling Basin that is located in New South Wales.

For that purpose, the bill, first, applies certain provisions of the Commonwealth Water Charge Rules as a law of New South Wales and gives those applied provisions effect during the period of accreditation. Secondly, the bill confers on the tribunal the functions of a regulator under those applied provisions. Thirdly, it provides that the tribunal is not subject to the control or direction of any Minister in the exercise of those functions. Fourthly, it provides for the notification of the approval, revocation or cessation of the accreditation, and, fifthly, it provides for the interpretation of the applied provisions.

Established on 1 January 2015, following the merger of the Sydney Catchment Authority and the State Water Corporation, Water NSW is responsible for managing the storage, release and supply of bulk water across New South Wales. It achieves this through its management of the largest water infrastructure in the State, including the Menindee Lakes and the Warragamba, Blowering, Burrinjuck and Hume dams. Water NSW and its customers currently deal with two regulators for pricing, being the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] for the Murray-Darling Basin valleys and IPART for the three coastal valleys, being the Richmond, Bega and Hunter valleys.

This system was introduced in 2008 as part of the Murray-Darling Basin water reforms, giving the ACCC responsibility for developing and enforcing water charge and water market rules within the basin. However, reporting to two regulators results in duplication of the price review and reporting processes whereby stakeholders must make lengthy submissions and attend hearings related to reviews conducted by both the IPART and the ACCC. They also have to navigate the separate pricing methodologies and reporting requirements of the two bodies.

This bill will enable IPART to receive accreditation to exercise the price determination functions on behalf of the ACCC under the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010. Consequently, for the people of New South Wales this means only one agency will be responsible for setting prices for Water NSW across the State, which will help to streamline the process for Water NSW and other bulk water users in New South Wales. The Commonwealth legislation will continue to apply to the Murray-Darling Basin. This bill enables IPART to undertake this role on behalf of the ACCC once it is accredited.

This is an administrative change to reduce the regulatory burden on Water NSW and other stakeholders such as irrigators and resource and energy companies. The Minister for Lands and Water in the other place, the Hon. Niall Blair, provided the Opposition with a briefing on the bill. He indicated at that briefing that there was some urgency due to a deadline of 30 June 2015 for the application with the ACCC. In his second reading speech, the Minister made it clear that this bill is essentially of an administrative nature and is aimed at simplifying processes and reducing cost impacts. The Minister said:

The proposed amendments will deliver greater efficiencies and regulatory outcomes for Water NSW and its customers by providing for IPART to be the single price regulator. Direct savings in reduced regulatory costs for Water NSW are estimated at \$618,000 over four years, with ongoing savings of \$415,000 per annum.

Conversations the Opposition has had with relevant stakeholder groups support this statement. Many of the stakeholder groups indicated that the arrangements proposed in this bill should in fact have been put in place originally. The stakeholders were comfortable with IPART being accredited as they had from the outset argued for IPART to retain that power. Stakeholders were also comfortable with the way the ACCC has conducted the process to date. In terms of costs, it is more efficient if the one regulator sets prices—and that would be IPART under this bill—rather than operating under the current arrangements. It is essential that pricing complexity and process duplication be reduced. The Opposition will not oppose the bill but will monitor closely the implementation of these new arrangements to ensure there are no hiccups.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [10.19 p.m.]: At the outset I welcome the Opposition's support for the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015 and acknowledge that the Opposition received an excellent briefing. I was involved in the architecture of the bill during 2014 and I am glad to see the bill coming to fruition, having passed through the upper House. I welcome to the Parliament residents of the Murray-Darling Basin—students Bridget Bennett and Hannah Smith and teacher Stacey Hall from Tottenham Central School in the central part of the State. Tottenham is famous for being in the middle of the State. The geographical centre of the State is actually Five Ways, which is not far from Tottenham. Tottenham is pretty much in the middle of my electorate. I welcome Bridget, Hannah and Stacey to the Parliament.

When I became the member for Barwon Tottenham did not have a police presence. Indeed, it did not have a police presence for some time because the town was struggling to get an officer to relocate to the area. That community in my electorate, which covers 45 per cent of New South Wales, would be one of the best self-help communities in this State. The community takes charge of all issues and welcomes new people. In fact, Bridget's grandfather Noel introduces people to work and into the community. The policeman who finally moved to the area also happened to be a plumber. When I have asked the community about law and order issues they have nothing to say; however, they have said that all their taps are fixed and they are dealing with water issues in the community.

I return now to the leave of the bill. As my electorate covers two-thirds of the Murray-Darling Basin, from the north to the south-western part of the State, this is an extremely important bill. Whilst it might involve regulatory burden and the easing of duplication between what is largely a State-based entity in the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC], the stakeholders and I felt it was not necessary to have two pricing authorities in New South Wales reporting through two methodologies, which ultimately impacted on water users. As the member for Cessnock outlined, the Office of Water is an extremely large entity combining the Sydney Catchment Authority and the former State Water. It is now responsible for all bulk storage and access across New South Wales, whether in the city, along the coast or in the western part of New South Wales.

The cost of water to industry, whether they are irrigators or local councils, is fundamentally important to keeping businesses viable but there has been confusion between the ACCC and IPART. Both bodies would make submissions on water pricing that may not have been consistent and the end users always had to pay. In some cases the water charges to irrigators could not be justified, particularly in the south of the State where irrigators were unsure of what they were paying for. In some cases they were paying for conservation outcomes and in others for water purchasing. It was not appropriate and the cost should have been borne by government or some other third party. It was evident that we needed to get back to a single pricing authority and enter into negotiations to have IPART licensed to undertake all water pricing from the Macintyre River in the north to the Murray River in the south, including the eight Murray-Darling Basin areas.

Price reviews can be very complex processes, given that each valley has a different pricing regime. If all goes well, water costs will go down, not up, for water users across the State. I look forward to being involved in that process later in the year. It is important that all stakeholders are involved in the process. To date, that has been the case. Whether it is the NSW Irrigators Council, the Office of Water, Treasury or local government, it is important that the relevant parties remain involved in the discussion, not just on pricing but on water sharing plans in general. The Federal Government has a desire and commitment to have a water resource plan up and running by 2019. Sound work is being undertaken presently to ensure that water sharing plans, which are becoming more inclusive in managing environmental outcomes, progress. The divide that has historically existed in some valleys between production water and environmental water is lessening.

It is important that environmental and production outcomes are not mutually exclusive. One can move water from A to B to achieve both outcomes. It is efficient and draws people together so that they can take a holistic view of water management particularly across the Murray-Darling Basin valleys. The savings to be made are considerable in back-of-house administration. The Minister identified over \$600,000 over four years but also an ongoing saving of about \$400,000 in administrative costs every year. Those savings will be passed on to water users, and that is fundamentally important. The Government made a commitment to all industries and particularly rural industries that it would drive down the cost of doing business. One of the ways of doing that is to reduce red tape.

To some degree we need regulation as we must establish efficient markets in water use and water trade. One of the reasons that water was separated from land back in 2002-03 was to make sure our water goes to the highest value use, and that is certainly the case today. Sustainable diversion limits developed across the basin, water buy-back and the structural adjustment taking place have been a painful process in some cases. But, from what I understand, everybody seeks to achieve the same outcome. They want production outcomes, to keep people employed and to make sure that our rivers and the basin remain healthy. It is important that everybody takes ownership of those issues, not just some sections of the community.

This common-sense bill will help my good friends from Tottenham and others who live between the Lachlan and Bogan rivers to have a more appropriate pricing structure in the future. It will assist the public and industry groups in the making of submissions and will enable a more seamless relationship between the New South Wales and Federal counterparts. Rob O'Neill from the Office of Water, who assisted on water pricing and water trading, has moved to IPART to consider issues around water pricing. It is good to have someone with that expertise remaining in the government bureaucracy. The tribunal will be the beneficiary of his wealth of knowledge. This Government is reducing red tape, making efficiency gains and supporting water infrastructure and the water savings will be shared between the environment and production. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [10.27 a.m.]: The Greens support the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Credited State Water Regulated) Bill 2015. The bill principally makes an administrative change to water regulation and pricing in New South Wales, which ultimately will create more efficiency and certainty. My colleague in the other place who has carriage of water issues recognised the benefit of having only one body overseeing the regulation of water pricing in New South Wales and it makes sense that IPART also has responsibility for the Murray-Darling Basin. In particular, The Greens note that the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010 will still apply, which means that IPART will have to abide by those rules once it has been accredited. The Greens feel comfortable that accreditation can be revoked if IPART does not appropriately act in this role. I was in Broken Hill for five years during the 2000-05 drought. The crisis at Broken Hill, Menindee, Wilcannia, Louth and beyond along the Darling catchment is very serious. The Greens will support the bill and hope that the Parliament of New South Wales will lend its support to addressing the developing crisis.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [10.29 a.m.]: I support the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015. I agree with the member for Cessnock that it is a challenge to spin that title out. One of the key functions of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Review Tribunal [IPART] is to regulate major public water businesses in New South Wales with respect to compliance with their operating licences and the prices they charge for their monopoly services. However, since the passage of the Commonwealth reforms in relation to the Murray-Darling Basin a few years ago, we have had a dual regulatory system which has meant there is an unnecessary compliance burden in having to deal with two different authorities.

Since the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] has taken on the role of approving or determining regulated charges for water in the Murray-Darling Basin for certain operators, we have had a situation where Water NSW has to deal with both IPART and the ACCC. The dual determination process has imposed a significant regulatory burden on Water NSW, because it became necessary for Water NSW to prepare two pricing submissions—one for each regulator. This bill will overcome this inefficiency by facilitating the accreditation of IPART's determination process that complies with the requirements of the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2011. As we have heard from all parties who have spoken on this matter, there is broad support for this common-sense measure to ensure that we can regulate water prices throughout New South Wales in the most efficient manner, respecting the needs of the environment and the land but reducing costs wherever possible.

Since assuming its regulatory role over price determinations for regulated rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin, the ACCC has signalled a series of price increases of up to 10 per cent per year over the coming years. The Government is aware that these price increases are hitting primary producers hard and that concerns have been raised by a number of constituents. The New South Wales Government supports the independence and integrity of the ACCC and IPART as independent price regulators. However, it is clear that price increases at the level proposed may not be sustainable for many water users. For this reason, this Government has already initiated a range of market-based solutions that will ease price pressure and enable decreased prices for water from regulated rivers within the Peel and Namoi valleys, in particular, over time.

These measures include increased alignment of management arrangements for water sources, which are designed to influence broader cross-valley trade interaction. These types of arrangements may support a whole-of-system pricing structure in the future. For example, last year the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water—at the time Minister Kevin Humphries, the member for Barwon—approved a one-year trial of water allocation trading, known as temporary trade, between the Peel and Namoi valleys, with the option to extend to two years.

The freeing up of water allocation trades between the Peel and Namoi valleys will not only put downward pressure on water prices but also allow Peel water users to generate income once seasonal rains allow these trading arrangements to become operational. The Peel Water Sharing Plan has also been amended to facilitate temporary trade from the Peel to the Namoi, and this Government will seek to have these temporary trade arrangements between the Peel and Namoi regulated rivers accredited by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority against the Basin Plan Trading Rules, which took effect from 1 July last year.

A further review of charges for the regulated rivers within the Murray-Darling Basin, including the Peel and Namoi rivers, will be undertaken by IPART in 2016. IPART's price review will include an examination of the appropriate share of costs between users and the New South Wales Government for all of Water NSW activities. Most importantly, all stakeholders will have the opportunity to make submissions to the price review. This open and transparent process will provide the water users of regulated rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin with an important opportunity to directly engage with the price determination process through a State-based regulator.

This Government supports moves to protect the environment, water users and the viability of towns and communities throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. It is a complex matrix of priorities to juggle and, to date, government activities, both State and Federal, have been working well towards that aim. However, in the process we need to be sensitive to the impacts that pricing regulation can have on water users throughout the valleys and, to the extent that it is possible, we need to ameliorate the impact and reduce the burden on consumers by reducing unnecessary duplication in regulation. To that end, I welcome the support of Labor and The Greens in ensuring that we have a sensible regulatory regime that protects users, the environment and communities, and minimises costs. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.34 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015. This bill removes the unnecessary regulatory overlap in price setting for Water NSW, which will result in savings for the newly formed Water NSW—which is a combination of State Water and the Office of Water—and its customers; a reduced regulatory burden for stakeholders in price reviews and reporting processes; and enhanced regulatory outcomes with greater scrutiny of costs and performance. That can only be a good outcome because we all want to see a more streamlined organisation and structure in pricing than what has traditionally been an extraordinarily complex state of affairs with water pricing throughout New South Wales.

When the Coalition came to government in 2011 I was the Minister responsible for water for three years, and trying to get through the maze of complexities in relation to water legislation was an extraordinary process. Over the past four years or so we have managed to streamline the structure significantly and make it almost workable for everyday people in New South Wales. Historically, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal set water pricing for both the Murray-Darling Basin and the rest of New South Wales. That situation changed on 1 July 2014 following reforms to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, which took effect through the Water Act 2007.

Water NSW and its customers are currently required to deal with both the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and IPART for the three coastal valleys. But it did not make sense for those valleys to be regulated by the ACCC, so quite early in the piece we determined that they should be subject to price determination by IPART, which, if I may be so bold as to say, is a more compassionate organisation than the ACCC. This bill is an important step forward for those in rural New South Wales communities who depend on water from these regulated rivers for their livelihoods and their health and wellbeing. These accreditation arrangements will decrease the regulatory burden and the cost to Water NSW of delivering its vital services.

The accreditation of IPART as regulator under the Commonwealth scheme marks yet another step towards the more functional and effective administration of what was originally a very unpopular Murray-Darling Basin Plan by the Commonwealth, but we are making it as workable as we possibly can. The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was made by the Commonwealth and began in November 2012. From the beginning of this process we were concerned about a number of issues associated with the basin plan. As the Minister at the time, I was not prepared to sign any agreements until those issues had been resolved, much to the angst of the Commonwealth Minister at the time, and many of the other State Ministers as well. It was not an uncommon practice for South Australia and New South Wales to have a full confrontation at these Murray-Darling Basin meetings. Some of my fondest memories are of conversations I had with representatives from South Australia during those meetings.

It has been a long and unnecessarily difficult process for the New South Wales Government to at last reach the point of signing the basin agreements with the Commonwealth to implement the plan across the State. We needed to see balanced outcomes and I was not prepared to commit unless the Commonwealth gave priority to infrastructure and the better use of available water over licence buybacks to achieve the lower extraction limits required under the basin plan. In particular, it was absolutely necessary for New South Wales to see limits on buybacks, to allow communities and industries time to adjust. I therefore set a buyback limit of 3 per cent per valley per decade, which, at the time, Minister Burke was not particularly enamoured with.

Fortunately, the Coalition Government came to office in 2012 and a very sensible new Minister responsible for water, Senator Simon Birmingham, was appointed and New South Wales found a much more rational and sensible Minister with whom to deal. It should be remembered that New South Wales had the most to lose out of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. South Australia was getting everything, but New South Wales was losing everything. Right in the middle of our most productive agricultural area water was being stripped from us without due regard to the livelihoods of those people living in the Namoi and the impact it was going to have on the farming communities. It behoved us to do the very best we could for these people and for communities such as Griffith, Hay and Deniliquin—communities that were going to be impacted by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan—to make sure that they survived.

After setting the limit of 3 per cent per valley per decade, a sum of money was also decided upon for a structural adjustment package. It was set at \$100 million. New South Wales was not going to get enough. I think that they limited us to \$25 million or \$27 million. It was not enough, given that we were sacrificing absolutely everything for the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. It was a Commonwealth plan—it was not a New South Wales plan—but we had to try to get the best that we possibly could.

That deal then went up to \$32.5 million. One of my proudest moments as the Minister responsible for water was when I got a better deal with respect to the structural adjustment package for those regional communities. I was delighted when Warren Truss put out a media release with respect to projects in the Murray-Riverina as a result of that structural adjustment package. The media release states:

"Under the \$100 million Australian Government programme, the Basin States of NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia each select projects for funding in consultation with the Australian Government," Mr Truss said.

"The 21 projects selected for funding in NSW will lead to the creation of around 250 jobs in the State, and will help businesses and communities impacted by the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan."

Mr Truss went on to detail the plan. The joint media release with John Barilaro, the New South Wales Minister for Regional Development stated that the 21 projects receiving funding come from a diverse range of industries, including some industries from my electorate of Cootamundra. I was delighted to be able to state my support for these wonderful projects, including the Coolamon Cheese Company. The media release stated:

The Coolamon Cheese Company has been awarded funding to purchase and restore the original Coolamon Co-operative building (built in the early 1920s) to house a boutique cheese making facility utilising Riverina milk. The development will establish an iconic agri-tourism destination, with guided tours and cheese making courses, and is expected to create up to 16 new jobs.

Go Coolamon Cheese Company; well done. The media release also mentioned a project in Narrandera. It stated:

AgriAustralis' new hazelnut cracking plant at Sandigo has been awarded funding to help fund a power upgrade to bring forward the establishment of the drying and cracking facility.

I can see a smile on the face of the member for Ballina, because she knows that these are the people who make the Ferrero Rocher chocolates—the chocolate that we all love.

Mr John Robertson: Speak for yourself.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The member for Blacktown is such a sourpuss. That wonderful company, Ferrero Rocher, is investing in Narrandera. One million hazelnut trees are being planted in the Narrandera area at the moment. I was very delighted to be able to attend with Mr Alessandro Boccardo from Ferrero Rocher to see the very first hazelnut trees in Narrandera just last year. Another of the wonderful projects in this package is Pro Ten, also from Narrandera Shire. It has been awarded funding to upgrade the electricity supply to the site where the company is building 64 new broiler meat chicken sheds. The company expects this investment to lead to the creation of up to 14 new jobs.

While in Sydney this might not sound like anything special, 64 new broiler meat chicken sheds mean an enormous amount of food for this State and, indeed, for the whole of Australia. I know Narrandera is a long way from Sydney but this is a very valuable investment for my part of New South Wales and it will lead to great jobs and great opportunities for people living in our shire. I say again that this legislation is welcome. I am pleased that it has cross-party support. It has taken a long time to get the Murray-Darling Basin Plan to this stage. I am delighted that we now have some projects on the ground and that we are getting some much-needed funding into regional communities. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [10.44 a.m.]: I speak in this second reading debate in support of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015. I note that the bill has cross-party support. This bill represents another step towards delivering New South Wales primary producers efficient and effective water pricing. Through this bill, responsibility for setting water charges for New South Wales regulated rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin will be provided to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, under the accreditation arrangements provided by the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2011.

This is an important step forward for those in New South Wales rural communities who depend on water from these regulated rivers for their livelihoods and for the health and wellbeing of the members of those rural communities. I will go one step further: I think this plays a huge part in supporting production not just from our State's food bowl but from our country's food bowl. These accreditation arrangements will decrease regulatory burden and the cost to Water NSW of delivering its vital services. The accreditation of IPART as regulator under the Commonwealth scheme marks yet another step toward the more functional and effective administration of New South Wales's involvement in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan ushered in by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government.

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was made by the Commonwealth, and began in November 2012. From the beginning of this process, New South Wales was concerned about a number of issues associated with the basin plan and was not prepared to sign any agreements until those issues were resolved. Unfortunately, it has been a long and unnecessarily difficult process for the New South Wales Government to at last reach the point of signing the basin agreements with the Commonwealth to implement the plan across our great State. But this Government has worked with determination to ensure that the interests of its rural constituents received the support and recognition that they deserved.

Consistent with this Government's desire to see balanced outcomes, New South Wales was not prepared to commit unless the Commonwealth gave priority to infrastructure and the better use of available water over licence buybacks to achieve the lower extraction limits required under the basin plan. In particular, we wanted to see limits on buybacks to allow communities and industries time to adjust. We also wanted to see appropriate and equitable assistance for New South Wales rural communities affected by the basin plan and adequate funding for basin plan implementation.

It is important to note that the then Australian Labor Party Commonwealth Government sought to politicise what should have been a bipartisan issue, and ignored the legitimate and real concerns of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government and our rural and regional communities, despite the fact we represent about 56 per cent of the basin. The Labor Commonwealth Government was focused on a "just add water" approach to the basin plan, which would have undoubtedly gutted our basin communities.

The new Commonwealth Government's approach to the plan is in stark contrast to the then Labor Government's approach on this critical issue. I am pleased to say this Government is now working with the current Commonwealth Government to resolve these issues. The New South Wales Government looks forward to implementing a basin plan that sufficiently balances environmental outcomes with economic and social outcomes and pressures. The consultative way in which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment, South Australian Senator Simon Birmingham—my good friend—went about negotiating with the Murray-Darling Basin States and the Australian Capital Territory played a significant role in helping us to reach an agreement on the basin plan.

The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals have always maintained that infrastructure investment and environmental works and measures are the most sensible way of achieving the social, economic and environmental outcomes of a basin plan. Water buybacks are blunt instruments that have real impacts on rural communities. I have been lucky enough to visit some of these communities over the years. As set out in its recently released Water Recovery Strategy, the Commonwealth has implemented a limit on buybacks, and in recent months we have seen the advancement of a number of important infrastructure projects. I am sure previous speakers have mentioned them.

The Commonwealth has increased its level of funding for New South Wales regional economic projects and lifted its restrictions on New South Wales assessing funding for implementing the plan, investigating sustainable diversion limits—SDL offset projects—which is great news. With the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government holding firm on its issues we will see a far better outcome for New South Wales water users, which is a win-win for rural communities under the basin plan. This bill is just one step toward better management of our State's water resource for the people of New South Wales and that is why I support the bill and commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [10.50 a.m.]: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to support the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015, a wonderful piece of legislation which gives further support and assistance to people in rural and regional New South Wales, particularly those involved in the water industry. As we have heard previously in this debate the Opposition is supporting this bill, and I welcome that. The object of the bill is to amend the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act 1992 to enable the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] to apply under the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010 for the accreditation of arrangements under which the tribunal approves or determines charges for the provision of certain water infrastructure services relating to water resources in that part of the Murray-Darling Basin located in this great State.

This bill contains a number of provisions, which have been covered in previous speeches. It greatly eases the regulatory burden on Water NSW and on stakeholders involved in the water industry, irrigators and others, and it is an excellent piece of legislation. Currently price regulation responsibilities are split between the

Australian Consumer and Competition Commission [ACCC] and IPART. Water NSW—the corporation responsible for managing the storage, release and supply of bulk water across New South Wales—is forced to comply with separate pricing methodologies and reporting requirements for each price regulator. That has its own inherent problems with consistency and duplication, and other complications.

As part of a current price review stakeholders of Water NSW must respond to two separate processes; one from IPART, the other from the ACCC. The stakeholders in such price reviews are many. It is a large State, a large basin with a lot of communities and stakeholders affected, including the NSW Irrigators Council, resource and energy companies, the NSW Office of Water and, of course, the New South Wales Treasury. Currently a price review involves huge amounts of consultation, public hearings, submissions and reports. It is very onerous, costly and time consuming. It is necessary and important that they are conducted thoroughly and effectively. But we recognise that this thorough, onerous process, sometimes regarded by those in the industry as overly cumbersome, does result in a considerable burden on the resources of stakeholder organisations and stakeholders. It requires an enormous amount of time, money and effort to respond to the two different processes that currently exist when there is a review.

This bill will ease that burden by providing for IPART to be the single price regulator instead of there being two. With a single regulator, resources demands are at least halved because there is only one agency to respond to. Money and time can be better spent delivering the services that are required in rural and regional New South Wales. We have heard already in the debate the estimates of regulatory savings that will flow from the passing of this legislation; over \$600,000 dollars over four years, and ongoing savings of over \$400,000 for every year thereafter—not trivial figures by any measure.

Red tape reductions such as this bill provides for are part of this Government's commitment to the people of this State, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales, which has, in the last decade at least, been burdened by a lot of unnecessary regulation on a number of fronts. I am very pleased to see that this bill will make significant inroads to that issue and seek to reduce a lot of that red tape. But, of course, I will be the first to acknowledge that some degree of regulation is necessary and it is a desirable component of establishing efficient markets and harmonious communities that promote substantial positive benefits for society as a whole. We need some form of regulation. This bill maintains that whilst simplifying and reducing it without jeopardising the final outcome, which is important.

As we know from history, and I know from a country perspective, excessive red tape detracts from productivity and ultimately lowers the standard of living for people in New South Wales. We have seen that for far too long, and the water industry has been historically plagued by it, having been heavily regulated. There have been massive changes in this space, particularly in areas of the Northern Tablelands electorate, which provide significant financial, emotional and time management challenges for people involved in the industry to adapt and manage the flow-on impacts on their communities. We have seen that through water buybacks, through the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and the creation of the sustainable diversion limits [SDLs]. That has taken significant amounts of water out of a number of communities throughout the basin, and that has flow-on impacts.

Moree is a robust and resilient community—one of the largest agriculture producing regions in this great country—but water has been taken out of that community costing the local economy between \$40 million and \$60 million a year. That is a significant amount of money that no longer flows through that community. The community has adjusted to that and is continuing to adjust. We have seen a number of new industries, businesses and ventures start up in that community, such as the Moree Solar Farm. It will be the second-largest solar farm in this country once completed next year. More than 220,000 panels will power 15,000 homes on an annual basis.

We have seen some very good innovations in that community such as the Moree Water Ski Lakes, which addressed a negative environment situation and created a potential tourism bonanza. We have seen a number of other businesses encouraged to invest. The council invests heavily in the Moree Gateway project, which will be opened later this month. Already a number of new businesses are seeking to invest in that industrial bulky goods development near the airport. Moree is a good example of a community that has tried to navigate its way through the complex, changing landscape of the water sector. It is also a good example to other communities throughout the basin of how resilient communities can bounce back. Ultimately it takes courage, great leadership and a lot of time as well.

As we have heard throughout this debate the Government is committed to building a stronger, more productive and diverse economy. Reducing the regulatory burden is an important part of that because regulation

tends to strangle economic prosperity and development. By reducing red tape for Water NSW and its many stakeholders the Government is enhancing regulatory outcomes and providing efficiency gains for water infrastructure service delivery across the State. It gives me great pleasure to commend to the House a bill that will improve the lot of the water sector throughout rural and regional New South Wales and save money and, most importantly, another fine example of this Government reducing regulatory burden on people who do not need to be burdened.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [10.58 a.m.] in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Cessnock, Ballina, Barwon, Riverstone, Cootamundra, Oatley and Northern Tablelands for their contributions to the debate. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015 will facilitate the accreditation of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] as the single price regulator for water infrastructure services in New South Wales. The bill provides for the IPART to apply under the Commonwealth Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules 2010 for accreditation and to enable IPART once accredited to be able to exercise the price determination functions under these rules.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Amendment (Accredited State Water Regulator) Bill 2015 provides improved regulatory efficiency for setting the pricing for services provided by Water NSW. It will provide significant financial benefits to Water NSW and its customers whilst enhancing regulatory outcomes in the form of efficiency gains for water infrastructure services in all areas of this great State. I acknowledge and pay tribute to the Hon. Niall Blair in the other place and thank him for his magnificent work in bringing this bill forward. It is a reflection of his efforts that this bill has cross-party support. I also acknowledge and pay tribute to the former Minister for Lands and Water, the member for Barwon, for starting the ball rolling on these important reforms. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) tabled, pursuant to section 58 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, a report entitled "Investigation into allegations that an Ausgrid engineer corruptly solicited and accepted benefits from Ausgrid contractors and subcontractors", dated 3 June 2015.

Ordered to be printed.

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

QUAKERS HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL KISS AND DROP BAY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown) [11.01 a.m.]: Today I speak on the Quakers Hill Public School Parents and Citizens Association's community campaign for a kiss and drop bay and an extension to council parking adjacent to the school. On 20 May 2015 I had the pleasure of attending Quakers Hill Public School's

Parents and Citizens [P and C] meeting, which was full of passionate and driven parents and carers looking to continue to make Quakers Hill Public School a great place of learning and development for their children. Without the hard work of P and Cs across my electorate, local schools would be struggling to meet the demands of their pupils. They reflect the volunteer culture of our Blacktown community and across Western Sydney. Quakers Hill is one of the many rapidly growing areas in my electorate. According to census data, the population is around 26,000. As the population grows, so the infrastructure should grow to support the area. There is no greater need for infrastructure than our children's education and their personal safety.

Quakers Hill Public School enrolments have jumped from to 660 in 2011 to 811 in 2014, which is a 20 per cent increase in three years. It is a great school because of the activity and drive of its principal, Mr Bert Lo Campo, who is doing a fantastic job not only as an educator but also as a motivator of the young students attending the school. He is teaching them to have pride in their school and is supported by all the teachers. The enrolment increases have resulted in traffic congestion and safety issues around the school at drop-off and pick-up times. The safety of our children is paramount. When the Quakers Hill P and C met me to discuss their community campaign to install a kiss and drop bay and to extend the council car park adjoining the school, I asked, "How can I help?"

In the following weeks we will have contact with Blacktown City councillors, especially those in Ward 1 who represent the parents and students, to see if we can engage in meaningful discussions on the possibilities for moving forward. I take this opportunity to thank the Quakers Hill Public School P and C for showing the determination and passion that this community campaign requires. I am hopeful we can achieve results. I make special mention of the President of the Quakers Hill Public School P and C, Katrina Mitchell, whose hard work initiated the campaign a little over a year ago. Results will not come overnight. But we must not forget that as representatives of our community we should deliver results for our constituents because it is only with their trust and support that we arrive in these Chambers.

POPPY PARK

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) [11.05 a.m.]: The red poppy has special significance for Australians and is worn on Remembrance Day, 11 November. Red poppies were among the first to flower on the battlefields and have come to symbolise the blood of the fallen soldiers from northern France and Belgium during the First World War. Australians wear a red poppy on Remembrance Day in memory of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom that we all enjoy today. As part of the Remember A Soldier organisation, two Penrith brothers—Owen and Martin Rogers—had a vision to plant a field of poppies to commemorate the lives of more than 102,000 Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen who were involved in conflicts from the Sudan in 1885 to present day Afghanistan. On 15 March 2015 their vision became a reality.

The first of 102,804 poppies were planted in Judges Park, Penrith. Throughout the ensuing days a team of more than 700 volunteers worked together to plant all of the remaining poppies. The poppies form the shape of a giant poppy, covering an area of more than 2,000 square metres, which was designed by a local school student from St Dominic's College. Anyone who saw the images of Poppy Park from the sky would agree that it looked truly extraordinary. Each of the 102,804 poppies features a soldier's name, details of their war service and the date of their death. The Poppy Park committee invited all Australians to participate in remembering a fallen soldier by purchasing a poppy to ensure that every soldier, sailor and airman is remembered for their service to our country.

At the conclusion of Poppy Park, each poppy was collected and mailed out to all those who purchased them to be kept as a memento to ensure that the fallen are individually remembered. I have attended Poppy Park on numerous occasions, but I was honoured to attend the official opening of Poppy Park on 21 March. Visitors to Poppy Park have ranged from a 101-year-old New Zealand veteran to many relatives of the fallen soldiers. I am pleased that Premier Mike Baird was able to visit Poppy Park, and I understand that the Governor of New South Wales has also visited. Many people have visited Poppy Park, which represents the commitment we have to our country.

The Poppy Park project was a massive undertaking, which would not have been possible without the wonderful support of the local business community. I particularly acknowledge Nigel McKinley from Uphire, Jamisontown, for the boom lift that allowed people to see the park from the air; Chris Wyllie from Built Carpentry, Joinery and Maintenance for building the centrepiece and the stairs of the viewing platform; Andrew from P and C Engraving and Signage for donating the commemoration plaque; Westfield Penrith for the free use

of its centre stage; Kennards Hire for donating tools and a generator, as well as Bunnings, North Penrith. Nepean Legacy was outstanding in providing its support and the Penrith City Council Parks team deserve special thanks for their daily watering and park care over the life of the park.

Projects such as Poppy Park bring out the best in our local communities and there is no better illustration of this than the assistance provided by Mick Boyle, an old schoolmate of the Owen brothers. When he visited Poppy Park with his family, he noticed the damage caused to the footpaths by the rain. Mick organised 10 workers to raze the paths and make them cleaner. Poppy Park is supported by the Remember A Soldier foundation, Penrith City Council, Penrith RSL Sub-Branch, Penrith CBD Corporation and Penrith Legacy. All proceeds from the sale of the commemorative poppies go to the Penrith RSL, Nepean Legacy and Remember A Soldier foundation so they may continue to support our servicemen, servicewomen and their families.

Finally, I congratulate Owen and Martin Rogers on their passion and commitment in ensuring that this remarkable project came to fruition and on their ongoing dedication to the Penrith community. Seeing young children, old people and families walking through Poppy Park, looking at the names of soldiers, sailors and airmen who have given their lives for our country, was truly a humbling experience. It is those moments that make every person in Penrith—and any person who visits the park—incredibly proud to be Australian. The opening of Poppy Park was a high point for my community.

TAXI AND HIRE CAR INDUSTRY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [11.10 a.m.]: Deregulation and the cutting of red tape is very important, and getting the balance right is at the heart of any good government. Indeed, in some industries it is critical to ensure safety standards. Most businesses have some form of licensing and regulation such as childcare centres, retirement villages, hotels, motor dealerships, real estate agents, hospitals, builders, plumbers and motor mechanics to name but a few, which are regulated by government to protect the public. Taxis were first regulated some 70 years ago and those regulations have become more stringent as the years have passed. Today taxis have meters to ensure that the public is not ripped off, security cameras to protect both passengers and drivers, and sophisticated computer dispatch and alarm systems. They must be inspected for mechanical and safety issues three times a year in metropolitan areas and twice a year in rural and regional areas.

Third party insurance for a taxi ranges between \$3,000 and \$7,000 annually, depending on whether the taxi is registered for use in metropolitan areas or country New South Wales. The high cost of running a taxi is due to excessive regulation. Taxi networks in most areas are required to ensure availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Licences for taxis, which were first set by the Government, vary in price. Today more than 7,400 taxis are on the road in New South Wales. The vast majority of those represent one owner per taxi, and that owner has generally put his or her life savings into the purchase of the taxi licence. Nine years ago, in isolation of the taxi industry, the New South Wales Labor Government partly deregulated the hire car industry and, as a result, rogue hire car operators interpreted the vague regulations that resulted to mean they could operate in almost the same way as taxis—without the same costs, regulations and safety standards. This is happening around Sydney and across the State today, including in my electorate.

In some country areas once viable taxi operators are facing ruin as hire cars, which have none of the huge compliance or licensing costs of taxis, advertise under "taxis", look like taxis and operate as taxis. The taxi industry, both individually and through the NSW Taxi Council, has made its concerns clear about the potential threat it faces. The industry wants to ensure that hire car operators work under clear regulations and that they operate as they were originally designed to operate—namely, for chauffeur-type work. Currently Uber, an American-based organisation, is attempting to market its form of ride sharing without the same safety regulatory burdens as taxis. An interview with the chief executive officer of Uber, Travis Kalanick, was published in the December 2014 edition of the English *Vanity Fair* magazine. Mr Kalanick is reported to have said:

My mission is to totally disrupt what I consider to be a very broken transport system around the world.

Every car that Uber puts on the road without the same regulatory burdens as a taxi potentially means a taxi is taken off the road, with no gain in employment and a massive loss in taxation revenue. Under Federal law taxi drivers must register for GST, which they pay and they are then tracked for income tax. Australian operators also pay GST and income tax. My question is: Does the same apply to Uber drivers? The international accounting firm Deloitte Access Economics has assessed the New South Wales taxi industry as contributing more than \$1 billion each year to the economy. Each year more than 170 million passenger journeys are

completed via taxis and more than 30,000 people are directly involved in that, including 24,000 authorised drivers, 5,000 accredited operators, 4,000 licensees, and 100 licensed taxi networks and their staff, as well as hundreds of other downstream organisations that rely on a sustainable and commercially viable industry.

Taxis are there when we need them—for example, at 4.00 a.m. on a cold winter morning to go to the hospital or to a railway station. Taxis are available not only in peak periods but also 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We must learn from experiences elsewhere. Taxis provide a vital community service; it is not fair that they are more regulated than others. I have no issue with a shared economy, but not at the expense of the potential failing of an industry. Things must be made fairer and safety standards maintained. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hardworking taxi drivers in my electorate and across this State. I ask the Government to consider this issue seriously and to ensure a level playing field so that safety standards do not drop.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.15 a.m.]: I join with the member for Wollondilly in his call to strengthen regulation in this industry. Taxis are the only form of non-subsidised public transport in this State. Indeed, the regulation around hire cars is absolutely inadequate, particularly when one considers that hire cars are being used as de facto taxis in areas such as my electorate, in the Southern Highlands and in other regional parts of this State. That means that those with an extraordinary regulatory burden who are meeting the extraordinary requirements placed on them by the Government are being undercut by those who do not operate with the same level of regulation and control.

Mr Ray Williams: Criminal. It needs to change.

Mr GARETH WARD: I join with my friend the member for Wollondilly and I note also the interjection of the member for Castle Hill, who rightly points out that the situation must change. These small business people, who are working hard to employ people, are at risk as a result of Uber. Anyone who gets into an Uber vehicle is doing so without the insurance protection provided in taxis. I call on the Government to change the regulation. I support the member for Wollondilly.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) [11.16 a.m.]: Constituents in my electorate, who live in the local government areas of Strathfield, Burwood, Ashfield and Canada Bay, are concerned about the New South Wales Government's plans to amalgamate councils. I acknowledge Save our Strathfield, in particular Councillor Helen McGlucas, Karen Pensabene and Nella Gaughan, which has led local efforts to oppose the New South Wales Government's plans to amalgamate the inner-west councils of Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville. In the lead-up to the last election I was pleased to sign their pledge against forced amalgamation. Councils have until 30 June to prepare their submissions, so the level of concern in communities such as mine is increasing. With the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] yet to release its final assessment methodology, the deadline of 30 June seems increasingly unfair to councils that have to assess their performance against the criteria, consult with communities and make a decision on the model to be pursued.

The shadow Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Peter Primrose, recently met with Save our Strathfield and local Strathfield councillors to talk through some of the issues, and give support to the council's efforts to oppose amalgamation and stand alone. Undoubtedly some councils should, and could, be more efficient but, like others in this place, my concern is that the only indicators of a good versus a bad council according to the New South Wales Government relates to efficiency, assets, scale and financial stability. A population of 250,000 should not be a measure of whether a council is fit for the future, yet the Government has chosen this as a measure. What is missing from the Government's Fit for the Future approach is acknowledgement of the importance of local representation. No mention has been made of how residents will be represented on local issues.

Over the coming years two burning local issues in my area will require strong representation from both State and local governments: WestConnex and the Parramatta Road urban renewal project. The widening and lengthening of the M4 will have significant implications for my community. The Government has failed to release the business case for WestConnex. We have not yet seen detailed traffic modelling, the location of the stacks or confirmation of the properties to be resumed, et cetera. Report after report has questioned whether WestConnex will actually relieve traffic congestion on Parramatta Road. The most recent report by CGS Economics and Planning, released in April, found that traffic on parts of Parramatta will increase by more

than 20 per cent as motorists seek to avoid paying the tolls on the M4. This will, of course, significantly impact on the Parramatta Road Urban Renewal project, which brings me to another issue in my electorate that also requires strong local representation.

The New South Wales Government wants 60,000 extra dwellings on Parramatta Road, 43 per cent of which will be in my community. The draft plan, released in November, made no mention of the infrastructure or services that will support this population growth. I raise these two issues as examples of why amalgamation at this time seems convenient for the Government. This is the most significant urban renewal project in the inner west in the past 100 years, and one of the biggest transport infrastructure projects ever seen. At the same time, the Government has set about weakening the voice of local residents by reducing the number of councils and therefore councillors in the inner west who would seek to challenge the Government on these issues. At the very least, amalgamation will be a distraction that will allow the Government to continue with these projects while the efforts and attention of local councillors are focused elsewhere.

I welcome last week's announcement of the parliamentary inquiry into council amalgamation. There remain many questions yet to be answered by the Government, and while I do not intend to cover them all in this address to the House I believe that the weakening of local representation is one issue that has not received enough attention in the debate over the merits or otherwise of this policy. I am not one to box at shadows; however I have very serious concerns about the benefits the New South Wales Government will reap from its amalgamation approach. In my area it will silence the elected voices that would otherwise challenge and question two of the Government's most significant projects—WestConnex and the renewal of Parramatta Road. Perhaps it is time to look at why this policy is being pursued at this time.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.20 a.m.]: I am sorry that the member for Strathfield has used her address to oppose WestConnex and the widening of Parramatta Road. I am quite surprised to hear the member, who I note is now leaving the Chamber, oppose something that was done by the last Government in which she served: The last forced council amalgamation occurred when the member for Strathfield was the member for Newcastle and involved the formation of the City of Canada Bay. How the member for Strathfield can come into this House and shed what can only be described charitably as crocodile tears is beyond me. Her community should take a close look at her record when it comes to council amalgamations. Her community also should question why she wants more congestion, why she wants families to spend more time waiting in traffic and why she is part of a campaign to oppose major infrastructure that will turbocharge this State. I am disappointed in the member for Strathfield, and I am sure her constituents will be as well.

THE HILLS TREFOIL GUILD

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.21 a.m.]: On Friday 17 April I had the pleasure of attending The Hills Trefoil Guild's annual general meeting. I am pleased to inform members today about this wonderful organisation and the incredible work these women do in the Hills community caring for people who are a little less fortunate than themselves. It was ironic that I should be in the presence of such fine, hardworking women on this day as it was also our wedding anniversary—my wife, Wendy, and me.

Historically, a trefoil guild was a group of women who, having enjoyed membership of girl guides, wished to continue their friendships whilst contributing to their community and to guiding; hence the trefoil guild was formed. Today the guild is open to any adult women who wish to help others and provide support to people in need. Currently there are guilds in all States and Territories in Australia, with a total membership of almost 2,500. The guild works quietly to serve the community and younger members, with the underlying theme of fun, fellowship, food, flexibility and freedom.

At the annual general meeting I had the pleasure to meet The Hills Trefoil Guild President Patricia Shaw, Vice-Presidents Evelyn Caulfield and Elaine Wickham, Treasurer Stephanie Humphries and Secretary Janet McLennan. Also in attendance were members Helen Barlow, Shirley Holden, Shirley Robinson, Coral Harrison, Mary Herbert, Shirley Cox, Rosemary Kemble, Shirley Lee, Pat Page, Diana Sharpe, Allison Lawrence, Pat Mitchell, Sheila Cocksedge, Bev Potts and Jennifer Hattingh. Other special guests on the day were women from the Red Cross and senior journalist and editor from the *Hills Shire Times* Bev Jordan as the guest speaker.

It was fantastic to hear of Bev's career as a journalist and what inspired her to take up the profession. Bev's incredible work on behalf of the Hills community saw her awarded the 2015 Hills Citizen of the Year and

nominated as the 2015 candidate for the Australian of the Year Award. Bev has been an incredible advocate for the Hills relay for life, raising important funds for further cancer research. Bev is much more than just the editor of our leading local newspaper the *Hills Shire Times*; she is an active participant in our community. I have the great pleasure of seeing her on many occasions when we attend community functions together. Bev spoke about her early life as a young journalist in England and how she adores the job of presenting the news to our community.

The Hills Trefoil Guild's theme for the day was the "Spirit of the ANZAC", with lamingtons and Anzac biscuits in no short supply. Several ladies had stayed up late into the night to cook these lovely treats. It was lovely to hear from President Patricia Shaw. In her president's report she outlined the fabulous work these women do for our Hills community. The ladies have been busy knitting and crocheting items of clothing to keep those less fortunate warm during the winter season. In particular, they have knitted and crocheted rugs and shawls for local nursing homes and trauma bears for the police, ambulance and fire brigade. The ladies have collected towels and household items for the Matthew Talbot Hostel; socks, beanies and gloves for the Presbyterian Park Patrol; school items for Samaritan's Purse; sheets, clothing and household items for the North West Helping Hand; and toiletries and children's knitwear for various charities.

Added to this, the women have collected food for Parramatta Mission, Anglicare and the Salvation Army, whilst supporting The Hills Girl Guides, Samaritan's Purse, the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and Retina Australia. Needless to say, these women contribute enormously to the fabric of the Hills community and beyond. I had the pleasure of hearing from member's who, in between all their other fantastic work, attended the Australian trefoil gathering in Toowoomba, where they celebrated "Thinking Day" with an emphasis on women and education. The members have also attended CWA luncheons, Brisbane Water's "70's in Review" night, Hills Evening's High Tea and the Cumberland Gang Show. This year's guild anniversary saw the ladies celebrate with a back to school theme.

It is great to hear from the amazing women in our Hills community about the incredible work they do out of love and compassion for others, and the Hills Trefoil Guild is certainly no exception. It is work like theirs, from our community's volunteer unsung heroes, that truly illustrates the goodwill in our community. I hugely admire all they do and the wonderful contribution they make to the general public. I thank the ladies of the Hills Trefoil Guild for their outstanding work in caring for others. As I have said often, the most precious aspect of my electorate is its people. In the Hills we have the largest number of volunteers found anywhere in the country. They rarely ask for a hand out and are more likely to offer a helping hand to those who most need it. Congratulations to the ladies of the Hills Trefoil Guild and the other wonderful volunteers across the Hills.

BARWON RURAL COMMUNITIES

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon) [11.26 a.m.]: I speak today about the Barwon electorate and the survival of some of our small towns. Some of our small rural communities and towns are no longer the thriving hubs that they once were. Over the past 30 years climate conditions and commodity prices have resulted in their populations dwindling, in some cases businesses have closed their doors, services have wound down and towns have gradually shrunk. Some towns have been overcome by issues that go hand in hand with unemployment—crime, alcohol consumption and depression caused by watching people leave for larger centres. However, all is not lost. There are towns like Dunedoo, where, despite the obstacles, the community pulls together and points the town in a new direction.

In 2008 the Dunedoo Lions Club took the local art show and turned it into Art Unlimited. The aim of the event was to give the town a small economic boost each year. Fast forward seven years to two weekends ago and Art Unlimited attracted more than 400 entrants over three fields, including hanging art, photography and ceramics. This event is now firmly established as a major event on the regional arts calendar. The exhibition enticed entrants from all over Australia with more than \$11,000 in prizes. The 300 tickets for the opening night of the event sold out weeks in advance, with organisers reluctantly forced to turn hopeful attendees away.

In my eyes what makes this event such a success is that it is a truly local project. The event is held in the Dunedoo Central School Hall, which remarkably is transformed into a gallery by a team of dedicated local volunteers. The catering—which I can assure members is as impressive as the art—is undertaken by Dunedoo Central School hospitality students and the wines provided by the award-winning Robert Stein Winery and Vineyard of Mudgee. Most of the prizes are donated by local organisations. This year they included accommodation at a local artists' retreat, an exhibition opportunity at a local gallery and cash prizes donated by

local groups. Perhaps most importantly, the event's main award, the Pro Hart Prize for Hanging Art, is donated each year by Barwon local Raylee Hart in honour of her late husband Pro's philosophy of making art more accessible to people in regional areas. That is the vision on which Art Unlimited was built.

Further to the original goal of raising money for the town, Art Unlimited does much more for the community of Dunedoo and indeed for the wider community of New South Wales regional artists. The event gives young and up-and-coming artists a chance to exhibit and sell their work while in turn offering event goers the opportunity to invest in original artworks at a range of prices. Artists from out of town stayed for the weekend to see the pieces and attend the opening night, thereby providing Dunedoo small businesses with income and a clientele who are likely to spread the word to other travellers about the town's attractiveness.

Most importantly, Art Unlimited gives the community of Dunedoo an opportunity to dress up, catch up with friends and tell a few stories. Above all, it gives them something to be proud of. In an era when rural communities are facing increasing obstacles, the importance of that cannot be underestimated. I acknowledge Andrew Dunkley and his team from ABC Western Plains at Dubbo for their great work in promoting the event. I also acknowledge Rob Ingram from Dunedoo Lions Club, who is a well-known reporter and writer on rural issues and who has made Dunedoo his home. He and his partner, Penny Stevens, have done an outstanding job in setting up one of the must-see regional art exhibitions in country New South Wales.

NORTHERN BEACHES BUSINESS EDUCATION NETWORK

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.31 a.m.]: Engaging our young people is a key to unlocking the future of industry and innovation in New South Wales. In 2010 one in every eight New South Wales residents aged from 15 to 19 years was not fully engaged in education or work. That represents thousands of lost education and employment opportunities for our young people, which impacts families, businesses and communities across New South Wales. Young people are the lifeblood of our community and so it is vital that we provide them with opportunities to exercise their passion, ideas and energy as they navigate the transition to adulthood. I strongly support a holistic approach to youth empowerment that allies local government, educational and vocational institutions, industry and communities with our young people.

On that note, it is my pleasure to acknowledge the Northern Beaches Business Education Network, or NBBEN, which Samantha King is currently leading. Over 20 years NBBEN has achieved an outstanding record in assisting youth within the local community as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. The NBBEN is committed to achieving equitable outcomes for young people on the northern beaches and the north shore by pioneering various initiatives to bridge the gap between education, business and the wider community. I commend its commitment to inspiring and informing young people.

I recently spent some time at the Northern Beaches Career Expo, which was an NBBEN event. The forum successfully enabled 2,700 high school students and their parents to speak with a diverse range of service providers and to investigate further educational options and career pathways beyond school. Those arrangements connect educational institutions, businesses and young people. They inform young people about the extensive opportunities available to them and they provide an opportunity for local businesses to meet youth who have new perspectives on current practice.

The strategic necessity of linking the schoolroom to the workplace is further exemplified by NBBEN's Links to Learning program and community partnership and work placement support programs. Those programs seek to train young people in vocational capacities and align them with local business employment opportunities in the business services, construction, hospitality and beauty industries. Many of the organisations will subsequently employ those young people permanently. The NBBEN programs have generated more than 100,000 student opportunities in northern Sydney.

In an age of rapid development and increasingly non-linear career progression, we must engage and inform our young people to better address the issues of youth unemployment and underemployment. It is imperative that we continue to build those bridges to harness the great potential that young people offer our local communities. In that respect, I again commend the work of the Northern Beaches Business Education Network.

MOOREBANK MATERIALS RECYCLING CENTRE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [11.36 a.m.]: On Monday, on behalf of my community, I attended a Planning and Assessment Commission [PAC] meeting regarding the Moorebank Materials

Recycling Facility. My community is fighting strongly against the building of the facility because all of its boundaries will join residential areas. When the facility was first proposed many years ago the site in Moorebank was an industrial area. Since then the area has moved on and become more residential. People have paid a lot of money to pick out their block of land and build their dream home. They have moved their families to the area because it is close to the city, employment opportunities, schools and bus stops. The area is an ideal location to raise a family but it is not ideal to have a materials recycling facility literally across the road.

I am joining with the community to help stop the development. I hope that the PAC members listened to the 40 or so people who voiced their opposition on Monday night. Approximately 300 people attended the meeting to hear their presentations. In addition, 400 or 500 people attended a protest meeting last Saturday. That shows the level of opposition against the proposal, and that does not take into account that more residential areas are being opened up and blocks of land are being cleared as we speak. The area is set to become an even bigger residential zone. More than 1,300 people expressed their concerns during the community consultation period. Many of them were hard to get in touch with because they are yet to move into their homes. Many of them own vacant blocks of land, and advertisements in the newspaper about the meeting were not too helpful because they do not live in the area. But those future residents all expect and deserve a say. They need the PAC to look after them.

I thank the people who spoke at the PAC meeting for standing up for their community. Mayor Ned Mannoun spoke on behalf of Liverpool City Council and made an excellent case. Mark Sawyer and Moorebank Residents Action Group president Fiona MacNaught also spoke. Fiona and Rebekah Foxe are amazing ladies who have stood up for the community and made their voices heard. I also thank Denise Piata for her contribution. John Anderson from Residents Against Intermodal Development Moorebank also spoke.

The intermodal development is another massive concern. The area will become a zone of intensely poor air quality if the intermodal development and the recycling facility both go ahead and we will be exposed to far more fine particulate matter than the World Health Organization recommends. That is a scary thought for young lungs, especially in a community where more than half of the population is under 30 years of age. I was very impressed that John Anderson brought that issue to the meeting. Federal member for Hughes Craig Kelly addressed the meeting on the issue of fine particulate matter as well.

Maxine, who is all of 10 years old, put her case forward. I thought that was wonderful. She is a confident young lady who I am sure will be someone to contend with in future. I thank Katherine Hammill, John Blakeney, Gregory Willmott, Anthony Iacovella, Ernest Dupere, Wayne Mamo, Randhir Singh, Parthasarathi Guha, Bin Zhu, Sue Dwyer and Tim Horder for their contributions. Paul Mitchell and Najah Ishac addressed the meeting on behalf of Benedict Industries and EMGA Mitchell McLennan Pty Limited. Ashton Main, who is in year 3, was another young person who made his case for why his area is special. That was a fabulous opportunity for the PAC to hear from a voice of the future. Ashton's father, Richard Main, as well as Helen Birrell, Michelle Wilson, John Borello, Jeff Russell, Ron Sewell, Mark Grabe, Todd Hensworth, Robert Lukunic and Councillor Naji Najjar from the Bankstown City Council also attended.

As I have said, this development application has been around for a long time. It is one we need to deter for the sake of the health of the river and the local community. Fine particulate matter is scary. The number of trucks on Brickmakers Drive as well as their egress and ingress are matters of concern. The area is not a dumping ground, but that is what this application would make it. If approved, the application would make our area the dumping ground of Sydney. We are better than that. My electorate is a beautiful area and the community deserves to be supported by the Planning Assessment Commission.

FULL EMPLOYMENT

Mr DAVID MEHAN (The Entrance) [11.41 a.m.]: On Wednesday 30 May 1945 Mr John Dedman, who was the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction and Minister in charge of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in the Curtin Labor Government, presented a white paper on full employment to the House of Representatives in the Australian Parliament. On Saturday 30 May 2015, my local university, the University of Newcastle, held a workshop in Sydney to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the presentation of that white paper, which was a historic event. The opening line of the white paper stated, "Full employment is a fundamental aim of the Commonwealth Government". At around the time the paper was delivered, Germany had been defeated on 8 May—VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day. Japan had yet to surrender but did so on 14 August, which is known as VJ Day, or Victory over Japan Day.

The commitment to full employment espoused in the white paper led the Australian Government and all other governments in Australia to adopt something of a bipartisan commitment to what became a matter of public policy. That ushered in 30 years of full employment in this country, which extended from 1945 to 1975. During that period, unemployment rates rarely went above 2 per cent. It was truly a golden age for employment in this country as well as a golden age of bipartisan commitment to the ideal of full employment—a commitment that I suggest is not held across houses of Parliament in this country at the moment. In New South Wales at the moment the unemployment rate is approximately 6 per cent. It is worth reflecting in this House on the achievements of the past and whether we can do better than our current rates.

In February 2011 there were 3.64 unemployed persons for each job vacancy in New South Wales. In November 2014, it increased to 4.64 unemployed people for each job vacancy. Things have not got better in New South Wales over the past four years, particularly on the Central Coast where the youth unemployment rate, at 16 per cent, is higher than should be considered acceptable in this country. That rate of youth unemployment is far too high and it is a waste of the talent of our youth on the Central Coast. Members of this House should spend more time developing a bipartisan commitment to an idea of increased employment in this State. If we cannot achieve a bipartisan commitment to full employment in this day and age, at least we could agree across this Parliament that a 16 per cent unemployment rate, or any double-digit unemployment rate, among young people is unacceptable. We can do better.

While remembering the 1945 white paper, I congratulate the University of Newcastle, particularly Professor Bill Mitchell of the Centre of Full Employment and Equity. The 1945 white paper pointed the way. A commitment to full employment will be started by the Government becoming actively involved. The Government cannot just hope that the market will create the necessary jobs. I again congratulate the University of Newcastle for reminding us that full employment is possible but I reiterate that it takes a bipartisan commitment and government action to achieve it.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.45 a.m.]: I thank the member for The Entrance for his admirable emphasis on the importance of employment in our economy and our society. I point out that this Government has improved unemployment rates in this State from being the worst across Australia under the previous Government to now being the best or second best across Australia. It has been a particular focus of this Government to drive employment, and more fulsome employment of those who already are employed, in the interests of not only those who are working but also those who are members of the broader community.

The Government has developed a number of initiatives, such as payroll tax incentives—which unfortunately have been opposed by the Opposition. Those incentives are aimed at driving the creation of more employment in our society. In the spirit of calling for bipartisan cooperation and for the achievement of an admirable goal, I point out that the record of the Government is clearly and markedly better than the record of the previous Government. The Government asks the Opposition to show a spirit of cooperation by supporting payroll tax incentives and other incentives that are put forward for small business and others in our society.

TRIBUTE TO ABDALLAH TABBAA

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [11.46 a.m.]: Born in Nigeria in 1950, Mr Abdallah Tabbaa grew up knowing the future could be made better through facilities that would seek to unite people and their communities as well as engage youngsters in meaningful activities. As a child, adolescent and young man, he saw firsthand the problems associated with not having a suitable recreational place. It is true that our experiences shape the person we become and the actions we take. I acknowledge Mr Abdallah Tabbaa for the outstanding contribution he has made to the people of the Lakemba electorate and the wider south-western Sydney community.

Mr Tabbaa has been acknowledged for his leadership role in the establishment of the National Sports Club in Lakemba. A long time ago he saw a void and, through his hard work and determination, he sought to fill that void through the building of a multipurpose facility. Mr Tabbaa was a past recipient of the Pride of Australia Fair Go Medal. He was a well-loved and highly respected community leader who was known for going above and beyond in serving young people and others in need. Today, the National Sports Club—a club that was built from scratch—is a reminder of the legacy he leaves. It is a place that offers mentoring and sporting opportunities as well as community meeting facilities for new and emerging communities. One of the

current initiatives being run on site is the Wise Up program, which is offered to teenage boys at risk of disengaging from learning and turning to antisocial behaviour. When Mr Tabbaa founded the National Sports Club he said he envisaged it to be:

... a safe environment for the youth of the community to involve themselves in activities that are constructive rather than destructive.

At this stage, we can clearly see the need for such a facility. This man was a visionary. He perceived a void and filled it. Mr Tabbaa achieved his success because he had the skills and determination to unite all stakeholders of the community to believe in the possibility of building a better society for all. He is a perfect example of the saying, "to put your heart and soul into it". He believed in a greater sense of purpose and always put others before himself. Indeed, he is well regarded for treating all children as though they were his own. There are many stories of occasions he would dig deep into his own pocket to ensure that activities could continue to operate.

I often saw Mr Tabbaa mowing the oval with a push lawn mower, manning barbecues, driving kids to sporting events and encouraging parents to allow their sons and daughters to participate in activities that would keep them engaged in a positive manner. As a school principal, my personal experience of him was when the school sought to use the facility for indoor soccer. Mr Tabbaa would take the absolute minimum fee. He would charge the children \$2 to play sport for an entire afternoon because he believed that it was more important for children to be involved in an activity than it was to make money. He believed that a price could not be put on the social benefits of activity.

Abdallah was diagnosed with myeloma 20 years ago and lived with the cancer until he passed away on Saturday 23 May 2015. He is survived by his wife, four children, four grandchildren and countless people who saw him as a father figure. His funeral brought together the diverse community he served and it was truly a people's funeral. It was a reflection of the remarkable man he was, and his achievements in the community will still be felt for a long time to come. Over the past two weeks the enormity of his positive impact has been felt through the many stories members of our community have shared about the way in which he has touched their lives.

As circumstance would have it, the day following his death I attended a Biggest Morning Tea cancer fundraiser held by members of our Bangladeshi community in the very same centre that he built. It was a perfect example of everything that Mr Tabbaa had envisioned the club to be: an inclusive space for people to share in order to create a positive impact in the community. As I sipped tea and enjoyed food from cultures across the globe, I was immediately reminded of the legacy that Mr Tabbaa leaves behind. It remains pertinent to keep in mind the ways funding and community capacity building can influence lives for the better. As leaders, our role is to assist in any way we can those who are willing to make a positive difference. Across our great State, suburbs are filled with community heroes, the unsung giants, who make our community a better place. It is appropriate to conclude with words Mr Tabbaa spoke just before his death. He said:

I have been blessed with more than I deserve—65 years to walk this earth, family friends and the many opportunities by the grace of God "to do". I say "to do" because to me, it is doing that matters the most. I believe in action, not position. The question should always be, "what have we done?" That's what means something to me.

STEWART HOUSE

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [11.51 a.m.]: It is a privilege to speak about Stewart House today. Stewart House is an institution that has proudly supported schools, people and communities across the State. I have a close affinity with Stewart House because as a former teacher I knew many children and families from the country who attended Stewart House, and I witnessed the incredible opportunities they were given from attending this institution. Many of the students who visited Stewart House were from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their family lives may have been difficult and Stewart House gave them the opportunity to have a break from those difficult circumstances. Stewart House provides hope to many in our communities and schools who deal day in, day out with kids facing very difficult situations.

Each year around 1,800 public school children in need attend Stewart House from many parts of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. During their stay children are provided with optometric, dental and medical treatment as well as emotional support. This is balanced with health and educational programs and out-of-school activities to boost their self-esteem and to promote a healthier lifestyle. Children in the care of Stewart House attend a specific purpose school on site for eight days of their 12 day stay. The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities provides infrastructure and staffing support for this school. All other costs associated with the children's stay are met from charitable donations.

Once the children leave school for the day they are cared for by suitably qualified supervisors overnight and at the weekend. Meals, accommodation costs, transport and entertainment expenses, as well as salary costs for supervisors, cooks, cleaners and maintenance staff are all sourced from donations made to Stewart House. Fundraising efforts to pay for these costs are undertaken by teachers across New South Wales. I know from experience that many teachers make these donations through their salaries to ensure that Stewart House is able to provide support to disadvantaged children across our communities. Almost all public schools are invited to participate in this great fundraising program. As I have said, often the kids come from broken families and many children attending Stewart House, which is located at Curl Curl, get the chance to see the beach and ocean for the first time.

Recently I attended a fundraiser in my electorate of Bathurst, organised by an extremely committed and dedicated lady, Carole McDiarmid, who has inspired both teachers and students across the Central West to support Stewart House. Carole has made an enormous contribution to public education. She has recently retired as regional director, but over her nearly 40 years she was an educator leading the Central West's 195 public schools, almost 40,000 students and more than 4,000 staff, who continue to support Stewart House. Throughout that vast region, which spans more than 385,000 square kilometres, Carole's passion gave her a reputation for caring for each child in her area of responsibility as if he or she were her own. This is also the reason that she was and remains a primary motivator in supporting Stewart House. Even in her retirement she continues to raise funds and to organise different events for this very worthy cause. Stewart House is pivotal to those students in need.

Earlier this year just over 300 guests were invited to a function where more than \$20,000 was raised through auctions and other fundraisers. This money will help to ensure that Stewart House continues to operate. One of the most incredible outcomes of the story that is Stewart House is that the measurement of success results not only from the commitment and dedication of teachers and people like Carole McDiarmid but also from the schoolkids who take the time to care for each other. These young people, particularly those isolated in rural areas, are given an incredible learning curve to develop an understanding during their informative years of how they, too, can help those in need. It is a lifetime lesson. It is appropriate that we take the time to recognise amazing Australians like Carole McDiarmid and the kids from the bush who continue to make Stewart House a special place.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.56 a.m.]: We are fortunate to have in this House a number of former teachers, and the member for Bathurst certainly is a great demonstration of the quality of those former teachers. He has educated the House about the contribution of Stewart House in supporting schools and communities with disadvantaged students and I commend him for his excellent work in this regard and for all his other great work in the community.

RICE RESEARCH AUSTRALIA

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [11.57 a.m.]: It is estimated that three billion people eat rice on any given day. It is one of the most widely grown crops on earth and it fulfils many roles beyond food, whether as a sign of celebration and fertility when thrown over a newly married couple or in the manufacture of footwear from rice straw. It is the seed of a grass species, yet we make wine out of it. On Friday 27 February 2015 I went to the heart of rice research country when I toured the McCaughey Memorial Institute at Old Coree at the invitation of the Riverina and Murray Organisation of Councils, known as RAMROC. This was both a gathering of local councils from across the region and an opportunity to find out more about the important work carried out by Rice Research Australia. I made the visit along with the Deputy Premier, the member for Murray Adrian Piccoli and the member for Barwon Kevin Humphries.

The McCaughey Memorial Institute's Rice Research Australia [RRA] is a wholly owned subsidiary of SunRice, which sells rice in 60 countries. It is based at Old Coree, which is a research and demonstration property for rice production and for a range of other agricultural activities. The property lies approximately 20 kilometres west of Jerilderie on the Conargo Road. Old Coree was originally gazetted as a pastoral property back in 1848. In 1881 it was purchased by Sir Samuel McCaughey and it stayed in his family as a working farm for many generations. At the end of World War II the McCaughey Memorial Institute was established to honour members of the family who had lost their lives in the conflict.

A large section of Old Coree, approximately 9,713 hectares, was gifted to the nation by the family for agricultural research and training purposes. This gift included the historic homestead, which I visited on the day. In 1953 a research unit from the University of Sydney took over the homestead and began its work. The

McCaughey Memorial Institute was formally opened in November 1960 by then Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, who was a close friend of the McCaughey family. Since that time the institute has funded research and educational activities across a range of agricultural issues, including animal husbandry, irrigation and the breeding of sheep.

The chair of RRA, Russell Ford, took us around Old Coree, explaining the research underway at the facility. The RRA at Old Coree is best known for its core work to maintain a supply of pure seed, of which there are nine current varieties and several upcoming varieties in development. Here rice is selected for improved water use efficiency, yield and grain quality, and in some cases for tolerance to cold temperatures. In Australia we produce some of the highest quality rice in the world, with styles ranging from medium and large grain to specialty rices like jasmine, sushi and arborio. Mr Ford is also the current chair of the International Temperate Rice Research Consortium, which brings together 18 national and international institutions for collaboration on research, training and technology, which support the rice industry across the world.

Shortly after my visit on 5 March, Old Coree hosted the Rice Industry Field Day. Around 400 farmers attended this event where they could inspect the latest machinery and technology, including telemetric systems for controlling water use in irrigation. There was also the opportunity to hear from experts from the CSIRO and New South Wales Department of Primary Industries about developments relevant to their farming work. One of the subjects discussed was how current research could be used to improve rice farming profitability. There were sessions on business innovation and biodiversity, machinery and technology displays, and weed and disease management.

Rice Research Australia [RRA] is at the cutting edge of agricultural research. Recently RRA hosted trials of a self-steering robotic tractor which can sow, plough and spray crops without a human operator in the cabin. The Japanese design utilises coordinates of a particular paddock and then draws positioning signals from Japan's Quasi-Zenith Satellite System to control the tractor's movements. The level of precision for placing the tractor is now down from several metres to two centimetres. At present, testing of the robotic tractor takes place late at night into the early hours of the morning, which might seem odd, but this is when the Japanese satellite is passing overhead. Our RRA has been working closely with the Japanese government and an aerospace corporation on development of the tractor. According to Russell Ford, the trials have produced good results that bode well for future adoption of autonomous machinery for improved and more economic farm management. If the testing proves successful, we will one day see farmers freed from the tractor seat to manage other matters on their properties.

As an aside, those who saw the recent Hollywood movie *Interstellar* would have seen robot tractors working on a farm. This is a case of technology moving from the movies and science fiction into farming fact. I thank Russell Ford, Manager of Rice Research Australia, and Councillor Terry Hogan, Chairman of the Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils, for the invitation to Old Coree to learn of the work of Rice Research Australia. It was impressive to see international research carried out on a farm in Jerilderie that is delivering improved crops for the world to eat and more competitive farming for Australians.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): I welcome to the public gallery student leaders from high schools across New South Wales who are in Parliament today as part of the Secondary Schools Leadership Program, which is conducted by the Parliamentary Education Unit. I hope you enjoy the proceedings.

DORA CREEK AND WYEE RAILWAY STATIONS EASY ACCESS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.02 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of members of the House and the new Minister for Transport issues relating to poor accessibility at Dora Creek and Wyee railway stations in my electorate. Accessibility has been the subject of past requests by me to the former Minister for Transport and was aired in this House in a question without notice on 7 August last year. Wyee is a busy commuter station. According to information in the "Train Statistics 2014" publication, it has approximately 700 passenger movements on an average weekday. The station is used by many commuters travelling to work but also by many older patrons and people with mobility impairment, despite its incumbent difficulties.

Wyee has a central platform which can be accessed by a pedestrian bridge traversing the rail lines. One must use the overhead bridge to access the platform to catch a train in either direction. Unfortunately, many older patrons have great difficulty navigating the steep stairs. The task is impossible for people in wheelchairs or with significant mobility problems. The difficulties with access to Wyee station have been the subject of many

complaints to my office. People have pointed out the danger and inconvenience posed by the unsatisfactory facilities. One of those complaints, which I forwarded to the former Minister for Transport, was from the family of an 80-year-old Melbourne man who was seriously injured in 2013 after suffering a fall on the Wyee railway station steps while visiting the area with his wife.

The man suffered multiple facial fractures and spent a month in hospital. He also sustained a suspected neck injury so he was unable to sit upright. Lying down for a prolonged period caused him to develop pneumonia and he subsequently suffered a heart attack. All of his ailments manifested from a fall on the stairs. The man's daughter said that when paramedics arrived to treat her father, they had no way of stretching him down the steep railway steps and instead had to support him on their shoulders as he walked down to the ambulance.

This man was not the first person to be injured negotiating the Wyee railway station stairs and, sadly, he is unlikely to be the last unless something is done urgently. Access to the platform is clearly inadequate and far below the reasonable community expectation for 2015. If people visit the Sydney Trains website they can find out what amenities are available at individual stations. On the Wyee station page they will see a lot of red crosses and few green ticks next to the facilities listed under the headings "Getting around the station" and "Accessibility". There is no escalator, lift or ramp, no toilet with wheelchair access and no car park or public phone. Ironically, the station does have a portable boarding ramp, but I am not sure how anyone needing it would access the platform to use it.

Similar access problems exist at Dora Creek station, which is a few stops further north. Dora Creek station services many elderly patrons so accessibility is a significant issue. The absence of a ramp onto the northbound platform makes access for wheelchair users or mobility-impaired passengers virtually impossible because they can only reach the platform via the stairs. There is a ramp on the southbound platform, but access to it is problematic as well because there is no safe road crossing to the station from the business and residential area opposite. Alternative access from the road underneath the nearby rail bridge is, again, via a stairway, so it is unsuitable for people in wheelchairs or people who have difficulty walking. Dora Creek station also has prompted a number of representations to my office. Among them was a plea to upgrade its accessibility from the Westlakes branch of the Retired Mineworkers Association on behalf of its members who use the station.

Last year the former Minister for Transport wrote to me in reply to my representations about problems with access to Wyee and Dora Creek stations. She indicated both stations would be considered for upgrades as part of the Government's Transport Access Program, which is a four-year, \$770 million program announced in 2012. I commend the Government for that program. Minister Berejiklian reiterated the situation in her response to my question without notice on the same subject on 7 August last year. At the time of her response, upgrades had been completed at 24 stations under the program and upgrades were underway at another 18, but only one station—Cardiff—was in the Lake Macquarie local government area. At the time it was not in my electorate, but it now is following the boundary redistribution. It is time that more money from the Transport Access Program was directed to stations in southern Lake Macquarie. I ask the Minister for Transport to give favourable consideration to funding accessibility upgrades at both Wyee and Dora Creek in the near future.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.07 p.m.]: I, too, welcome secondary school leaders to Parliament and acknowledge that students from Bomaderry High School, Albion Park High School and the Illawarra Christian School also are taking part in the program. I commend the member for Lake Macquarie for raising the important issue of transport access, particularly at Wyee station and Dora Creek station. The member for Lake Macquarie raises concerns articulately on behalf of his community. He outlined that the Government has a \$770 million Transport Access Program, which is seeking to address many of the access issues across the network.

We must do the greatest good for the greatest number. Under this program, this Government is looking at the number of users and the proximity of other stations with accessibility problems in order to make the investments we need with the limited funds we have. The strident advocacy of the member for Lake Macquarie will allow him to continue to do great things for his electorate, including improving transport access. He has done well throughout his tenure in Parliament.

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.08 p.m.]: I use this opportunity today to bring to the attention of members of the House some disturbing claims by former and serving firefighters about

mismanagement, workplace bullying, sexism and other harassment within Fire and Rescue NSW. I do not intend to use parliamentary privilege to name particular individuals because I do not consider it to be appropriate at this point. Parliamentary privilege should not be abused. In my view, it should be used sparingly and only as a last resort. I am indebted to the *Illawarra Mercury* journalist Cydonee Mardon for publishing a series of articles in March and April this year. Her articles are available for review on the *Illawarra Mercury* website. I lay the published material on the table for the interest of members. These articles highlight some very serious concerns. They range in nature and make for very disturbing reading.

Members of Parliament rightly praise the work of our emergency service personnel who do a tremendous job in protecting our communities. We all have a clear responsibility to ensure that our emergency service personnel are able to undertake their essential tasks in a safe working environment. All workplaces should be free of any incidence of bullying, sexism, discrimination, and harassment. In an article published on 20 March 2015 titled "Blowing whistle cost me my job", a firefighter outlined in a statutory declaration that he had:

... witnessed and made reports alleging: workplace safety matters; theft and unexplained loss of plant and equipment; inappropriate workplace conduct, including bullying, intimidation and harassment; serious maladministration in relation to Community Fire Unit establishment, appropriate volunteer staffing levels, training, equipment and resources; and inappropriate financial expenditures by unit management of both State and Federal funding allocated to the Community Fire Unit program.

In addition, the firefighter claimed in his statutory declaration that management within Fire and Rescue NSW had:

... refused to act upon reports made of alleged criminal conduct in accordance with the New South Wales Crimes Act 1990, have utilised their positions to conduct, interfere, impede, obstruct or taint investigations, in breach of FRNSW regulations.

In an article published on 13 March 2015 titled "Traumatised at work, belittled by superiors", a female firefighter claimed she:

... was forced to undress in public view, belittled by her superiors and became the butt of practical jokes for speaking up against unprofessional and unsafe work practices within New South Wales Fire and Rescue.

This shameful behaviour should never be tolerated in any workplace. In an article published on 22 April 2015 titled "Fire Chief 'appalled' at bullying and harassment claims", Commissioner Greg Mullins said that he:

... hoped the very serious issues that need to be aired and spoken about were isolated incidents and not the tip of the iceberg.

I note that a KPMG report in 2010 made some damning findings about the workplace culture in Fire and Rescue NSW. That report contained 14 recommendations to reform the culture of the organisation and the commissioner said they have been implemented. The commissioner also wrote an email and posted an intranet article warning that there would be consequences for anyone in Fire and Rescue NSW who acted inappropriately. Despite this, the *Illawarra Mercury* has confirmed that at least 10 former and serving firefighters from the greater Sydney area have filed statutory declarations with the Independent Commission Against Corruption [ICAC]. At least two of those former and serving firefighters who have made complaints about mismanagement in Fire and Rescue NSW reside in my electorate.

The former member for Londonderry, Bart Bassett, told the *Illawarra Mercury* on 13 March 2015 that he had made representations to the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services calling for an investigation and the former Minister referred the matter to the ICAC. I have also made numerous representations to both the former and the current Minister on behalf of my constituents. Mr Bassett told the *Illawarra Mercury*:

I feel very frustrated for these ex-members and some still existing members of Fire and Rescue in the manner in which they have been treated by the authorities.

It is disgraceful. They've got legitimate claims that have been ignored, in my opinion, and the authorities obviously don't want to look at it because I actually think it's in the too hard basket because of the culture of the organisation.

It is time it was sorted out. The victimisation of these members is unacceptable.

I absolutely agree with his comments. The claims made by these former and serving firefighters have been played like pinball—bounced from one appeal agency to another. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The way the bureaucracy deals with such complaints is designed to wilt the spirit of all but the most determined of individuals to withstand the frustration of not having their substantive claims addressed. In the

meantime the victimisation, bullying, intimidation, sexual harassment, discrimination and mismanagement simply continue hidden from view. This unacceptable behaviour and culture flourishes only in organisations that so heavily rely on hierarchy and rigid structures such as Fire and Rescue NSW. The current Minister for Emergency Services has advised me that ICAC does have a referral from the former Minister but I do not believe that it will make any inroads when investigating these claims. It is time for these allegations to be tested in a transparent public inquiry, and let the cards fall where they will. Indeed, it is time for a parliamentary inquiry to be conducted into Fire and Rescue NSW. I call on the Minister to organise the establishment of a parliamentary inquiry in the other place as soon as possible. It is time for these former and serving firefighters to be given an opportunity to have their matters heard. I hope the Minister will act on my request.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.15 p.m.]: I thank the member for Shellharbour for raising these matters on behalf of Fire and Rescue NSW workers in the area for which I serve as Parliamentary Secretary. Anyone who engages in bullying or harassment in any government workplace should be fully dealt with under the law. I note the member mentioned that a referral has been made to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I believe those bodies empowered to investigate issues should seek to discharge their responsibilities in full but, as I said before, any public servant in any part of this State who seeks to bully, harass or intimidate anyone in any regard will be investigated and they will feel the full extent of the law should they be found to have engaged in such behaviour. I thank the member for advising the House of those issues. I also note the contribution of the *Illawarra Mercury* in this regard and look forward to seeing the outcome of these investigations. I would also support any further action that may necessary to be taken.

OXLEY ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATIONS

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [12.16 p.m.]: This is my first private member's statement as the member for Oxley and, significantly, I will inform the House about the magnificent Anzac Day commemorations that were held in my electorate. Given that two of the students seated in the public gallery are from Wauchope High School, Eliza Corby and Willis Thompson, I will start with the Anzac Day Centenary service at Wauchope. An estimated 4,000 people, or about one-third of its population, attended the service, and the participation of young people was amazing. Indeed, the Wauchope RSL, in particular its president, Des Hancock, played a key role in ensuring that our young people appreciated the meaning of this special occasion. Ben Morton, the bugler who played the *Last Post*—what a performance from one so young—will remain long in many memories, not to mention the triple-barrel rolls by Rod Hall. I note that the new memorial wall, which has been installed at the entrance to the Wauchope RSL Club, was part of the Centenary of Anzac Grants program.

More than 5,000 people gathered at Bowraville to attend the Nambucca Valley commemorations. Whilst many of the communities in the Nambucca Valley held their own dawn services, it was wonderful to see the people of Nambucca Heads, Bowraville and Macksville come together to attend the service, which commenced with a welcome to country and wreath laying ceremony. Importantly, the *Nambucca Guardian News* reported that on 15 April, just 10 days short of Anzac Day, the last surviving Light Horseman in the Nambucca district, Hilton "Joe" Mitchell of Mitchells Road, Valla, had passed away at age 97 years. A guard of honour was formed by members of the 15th Light Horse Brigade at his funeral. In 1939 Hilton enlisted in the army and in January 1945 he joined the 2/32 Transport Platoon and sailed to New Guinea to join the war. He returned home in December 1945 after the war.

In Bellingen there was a flyby by two RAAF planes to mark the end of Bellingen's Centenary Anzac Day mid-morning commemorations. The 9.00 a.m. service was attended by one of the largest crowds the town has seen, and included representatives from schools, community groups and church organisations. Bellingen RSL sub-branch spokesman Rick Maunder led the proceedings—I know that sub-branch president Brian Mortimer would have been particularly proud—which featured Debbie Locke, the amazing sister of Matthew Locke. Matthew died in Afghanistan and his name is the last on the Bellingen cenotaph. Many hundreds paid their respects at that dawn service.

Before I was elected as the member for Oxley, the president of the Dorrigo RSL sub-branch was the first to approach me and said, "If you are successful, we want you to come to the Dorrigo dawn service." I agreed. As I walked up the main street of Dorrigo that day I was very moved as I heard the beautiful song by Eric Bogle and saw the mist fall over the cenotaph. Many hundreds of people gathered for that record dawn service, which was followed by a beautifully cooked breakfast by the ladies at the club—the mince on toast went down a treat for people who had been up so early.

During the day, the largest service ever held in Dorrigo took place. Every ex-service man and woman buried in Dorrigo Cemetery had a sprig of rosemary and an Australian flag placed on their headstone. Dorrigo also put in an outstanding effort in the Anzac shop window display competition, in which many shops and schools participated. Year 11 students, resplendent in magnificent uniforms, took part in a re-enactment of the World War I recruiting march at the Dorrigo service. After the Dorrigo dawn service I travelled to Kempsey for the Macleay Valley Anzac Day services. Terry Hunt, the Kempsey Macleay Sub-branch President, was very excited by peoples' performances. Young and old attended the 11.00 a.m. service and the beautiful march past, and formed the largest Anzac Day service attendance in Kempsey's history.

The *Macleay Argus* reported the largest crowd in a decade for the dawn service at South West Rocks. At Crescent Head many people on horseback attended the Anzac Day services. Services were also held at Frederickton, Gladstone, Hat Head, Willawarrin, Bellbrook and Urunga. I particularly acknowledge the contribution of Mick Eller, Principal of Kempsey High School, at the Macleay service—he gave a very moving address. He was accompanied by a guest speaker from New Zealand, Jim Love, and a representative from Turkey—given the 100 year commemorations of Gallipoli—Tas Tasdemir. It was a magnificent day in the Oxley electorate.

HORNSBY KU-RING-GAI RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.21 p.m.]: Late last month I joined more than 270 people to walk laps around Rofe Park in Hornsby Heights to support our community's annual 24 hour charity event, the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Relay for Life. This year the Hornsby community raised almost \$42,000 on the day for cancer research, support for cancer patients and education programs. I am happy to say that since the relay on 16 May 2015 the fundraising total has reached more than \$53,000. This total does not seem an awful lot, but we had a short time to organise it and have raised a substantial sum of money to help in defeating this insidious disease.

I thank the Cancer Council team for all their hard work behind the scenes to make the event possible. Cancer Council team members such as Monica Mikhael, Becky Banfill and relay committee chairman Vedant Tijoriwala helped put together a wonderful day with a variety of live entertainment options, including the Hornsby RSL Pipe Band march, Harbour City Hoppers Sydney swing dance troupe, and even a Bollywood dance act. There were also food stalls, children's rides and activities for the entire family to enjoy. Others in attendance included cancer survivor Phil Burge; my good friend and the Federal member for Berowra, Phillip Ruddock; Hornsby Deputy Mayor Gurdeep Singh; and Hornsby Councillor Nathan Tilbury, who kindly volunteered to be master of ceremonies for the day and did an outstanding job.

It was truly wonderful to see the community rallying behind the spirit of the relay. Relay walkers opened the day with a special "survivors and carers" walk on Saturday morning, in which I participated. Many also stayed for a touching candlelight ceremony that evening as dusk fell on Rofe Park, signalling the start of the night section of the relay. I met several people, including Robyn Twigg, who were preparing to walk the relay for 24 hours straight and brave the cold, windy weather. Robyn had plenty of residents to keep her company during the night section of the relay. Fun activities were provided for relay walkers, such as the popular "silent disco", where revellers use earphones to dance the night away, midnight trivia and a movie screening.

This year more than 40 local volunteers gave up their time to help make the day a success. There were also 28 registered teams on the day, walking the relay together to raise money and awareness. The top team fundraisers for the Cancer Council were Karen Pendwick and the Pink Ribbons, with whom I was fortunate enough to walk for the morning, and who raised more than \$11,000. They were well supported by Carole's Girls, Hornsby RSL Club, Specsavers Hornsby and Mullion Concepts, each of whom raised more than \$3,000. The relay also had committed and hardworking individual fundraisers such as Robyn Twigg, who matched her 24 hour walking effort by raising almost \$3,400. Virginia Fortunat, Brad Stratton, Ali Elliin, Andy Rabbitt, Tsee Tan and Stuart Gabriel also deserve special mention for their fundraising efforts.

The many residents who walk the relay year after year deserve mention for their ongoing efforts to support this great event. My good friends such as Jason Plumridge, Morgan and Cora Andrew, Peter and Patsy Marshall, and Carolyn Hill all gave up their time to continue to help make the relay the special event that it is. I also acknowledge other outstanding community members who are involved in the organisation committee, including Lyn Murphy, Ashley Nair, Hussein Musa, Roger Lin and Tsee Tan. Becky Banfill, Vedant Tijoriwala, and Alan and Rowena Clarke, who were involved in the Pink Ribbon fundraising team, also did an outstanding job. Residents such as these can truly make a difference through their individual efforts.

The relay concept itself was born in 1985 in the United States of America when Dr Gordy Klatt walked for 24 hours continuously and raised more than \$27,000. It is heartwarming to see residents like Robyn Twigg, Matthew Wearingford and Brad Stratton continuing this tradition of walking for 24 hours to raise money for cancer research. Every year the Hornsby community rallies to support the Cancer Council in a range of events as we work towards finding a cure for cancer. The financial support shown by the community is critical to further improve cancer research and provide expert care for cancer victims and their families.

Late last month I was fortunate enough to participate in another Cancer Council fundraiser at Australia's Biggest Morning Tea at Hornsby library with Hornsby Mayor Steve Russell, historian Neil Chippendale and the team at the library. The gold coin donation event was a great opportunity to connect with another section of the local community who also wanted to support the Cancer Council. I look forward to continuing my support of the Cancer Council at upcoming events such as Daffodil Day on 28 August 2015 and Pink Ribbon Day on 26 October 2015.

I have no doubt the Hornsby community will rally again to dig deep and support these great fundraising opportunities. All money raised from these events will go towards Cancer Council NSW and their vital work in cancer research, support services for patients, carers and families, and education programs to teach the public about the importance of early detection and treatment options for those affected. I remind the House that donations can still be made to the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Relay for Life on their website at relayforlife.org.au or by visiting the relay Facebook page.

SIR HENRY PARKES ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.26 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a special visit by the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove, AK, MC (Retd), to Parkes last Wednesday to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Sir Henry Parkes, rightly regarded as the father of Federation in Australia. Sir Peter Cosgrove flew into Parkes in the morning for a full day of events. The day was also the first anniversary of the appointment of Sir Peter Cosgrove as Governor-General. He undertook 875 official engagements in his first year; this event was his 876th.

The day commenced with the opening of an exhibition at Moat House Cottage. The cottage is a replica of Sir Henry Parkes' home in Coventry, England. The birthday cake was cut, Sir Peter Cosgrove and the Mayor of Parkes, Ken Keith, OAM, unveiled a plaque, and we then viewed the audiovisual display. Moat House Cottage is located at the impressive Henry Parkes Centre. The centre includes the King's Castle Elvis exhibit, which includes items provided by Greg Page, formerly the yellow Wiggle. The centre also incorporates the Parkes Motor Museum, the Henry Parkes Museum and the Pioneer Park antique machinery collection. At a cost of \$4.6 million, the precinct was one of the council's major infrastructure projects for 2010.

Also on 27 May 2015 a civic reception was held in the Coventry Room at Parkes Shire Council to launch the book *Welcome to Parkes*, written by local historians Lex and June Weaver. The Governor-General commented that while we like to think we know many details of Sir Henry Parkes' life, upon reading the book, there is still much more to learn. The Governor-General presented books to school captains from schools in Parkes Shire. There was a special visit from Healthy Harold, who appeared out of the crowd—Sir Peter Cosgrove is Patron of Life Education Australia, so it was wonderful to see Healthy Harold there as well. Sir Peter Cosgrove also officially opened the recent rejuvenation of works at Memorial Hill in Parkes, where he was joined by ex-service men and women and local scouts. He also read the book *Only a Donkey* to local schoolchildren, and there was also a visit to the Linfox operation at the Parkes National Logistics Hub, so it was a very full day of events.

I pay tribute to the wonderful community of Parkes, in particular the Parkes Shire Council, which is very dynamic and well run. In many ways it is an example of the great things that can happen in local government. I hold it up as an example for other local councils to follow. I make particular mention of: Councillor Ken Keith, OAM, who did a great job of hosting the event and making the Governor-General feel very welcome; Councillor Alan Ward and his wife, Kate; and Kent Boyd, the general manager. We also welcomed Councillor Peter Petty, the mayor of Tenterfield, and his wife, Kate. Tenterfield was the site of the famous Tenterfield oration—one of the greatest Australian speeches. It was very important to have the mayor present and it was great to see him.

I make particular mention of Elise Spedding, the acting executive assistant who organised the day; Sally Chapman, the grants funding officer, who took many photos on day; Beth Link, the acting tourism

manager; Emily Mann, Parkes Elvis Festival director; and Anna Wyllie, the economic and business development manager at Parkes Shire Council, who does a wonderful job. I also acknowledge the very enthusiastic and hardworking team from the Parkes Library, in particular Shellie Buckle and Tracey Morrow. I also make mention of all the Parkes shire councillors, including Councillor Belinda McCorkell, Councillor Michael Greenwood, Councillor Bob Haddin, Councillor Louise O'Leary, Councillor Patricia Smith, Councillor Ken McGrath and Councillor George Pratt.

Last Wednesday Parkes also hosted the national town crier championships. All the town criers met Sir Peter in their regalia. They did a joint bell ringing at the civic reception. In many ways the bell ringing is still echoing in my ears as if it were only yesterday. The Henry Parkes Centre proved to be the ideal location for the event, which attracted 10 town criers from across Australia, who competed for the title of Champion of Champions. Local judges Kate Ward, Liz Matthews, Ann Olson, Warwick Tom and Stan Kingham had a very difficult job judging who would be declared the winner. Shellie Buckle acted as the adjudicator on the day.

Parkes Shire Council event development officer, Chia Barlow, was also on hand to help organise. Parkes Town crier, Tim Keith, did a wonderful job hosting the town criers. He has been a leading light in the world of town criers for a long time. He said that the town criers always enjoy their visit to Parkes, with the last championships held there in 2008. I thank everyone involved in the Governor-General's visit to Parkes for the 200th anniversary celebrations and congratulate all the people involved. They have done Parkes and the Central West proud.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): I congratulate the member for Orange on a very successful visit by the Governor-General.

SRI LANKA ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [12.32 p.m.]: I inform the House today about the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales annual dinner dance held last weekend. Since being elected as member for Riverstone, it has been my pleasure to have been engaged with the Lankarama Buddhist temple at Schofields. From humble beginnings some 20 years ago, this temple has been gradually developed and enhanced by the Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Sydney to become a major gathering centre, a major place of worship, and a major place of learning and Sri Lankan culture.

Through my involvement with the Lankarama temple, I have been privileged to be part of the broader activities of the Sri Lankan community in Sydney. For a number of years I have attended what is generally referred to as their annual winter ball. However, this year the ball was held on 30 May, two days before the commencement of winter, so its theme was "Autumn Blast". The reason for the minor adjustment to its usual scheduling was that the renowned Sri Lankan band Misty was in the country performing at the time. The association took advantage of that by inviting the band to play at the association's annual ball. The band was a big drawcard for people of Sri Lankan background in Sydney. Many people came to enjoy the occasion.

The Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales, which has existed since 1973, brings together Sri Lankans from all backgrounds. That is critically important for this particular community in New South Wales. Whether people are Sinhalese, Tamil, Burger, Muslim or from any of the other minorities in Sri Lanka, the association welcomes and includes them all. It is a non-racial and non-religious association that has formed social networks and a welcoming home for people of Sri Lankan background in Sydney and New South Wales for 40-plus years. During much of that period civil strife was occurring in Sri Lanka.

This unifying association in New South Wales was very valuable for this community in building bonds, and establishing harmony and peace in what otherwise might have been a fractured community. I congratulate the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales on performing that function for more than 40 years. Thankfully, we have now reached a point where the armed conflict in Sri Lanka is well and truly over and the slow and painful process of rebuilding peace is underway.

It was my privilege to represent the Premier of New South Wales at the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales ball. The president of the association, Dr Ruwan Walpola, and his wife, Kamini, graciously hosted the evening. Other special guests were the Vice-Consul of the Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Sydney Mr Aruna Ratnasena Liyana Waduge and Parliamentary Secretary Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, representing the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Tony Abbott. My special thanks go to my good friends Prasan

Ulluwishewa, current vice-president of the association, and Roshan Wickremanayake, former president and now trustee of the association. They have helped me to learn about the Sri Lankan community in New South Wales, and the particular needs and history of that community.

One aspect of the Sri Lankan community that one cannot fail to notice when attending any of its events is that Sri Lankans love to dance. Many functions are held at places with a dance floor but few people get up to dance—maybe 10 or 20 per cent of the people in the room are up dancing at any given time. At a Sri Lankan function 80 or 90 per cent of the community are on the dance floor at any given time. It is wall to wall. You have to look after your own elbows.

Mr Mark Coure: Did you dance?

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My wife and daughters will be embarrassed that I admit this, but yes, I did dance. But one cannot help oneself at a Sri Lankan function where everybody is involved, everybody is enthusiastic, and everybody is dancing. There was an important underlying purpose for the evening—to raise funds to establish an aged care facility in New South Wales for people of Sri Lankan origin. This is an ongoing project the association is working on. It is a challenging goal—one familiar to many ethnic communities in New South Wales. I wish the Sri Lanka Association of New South Wales well in this project and in continuing to bring together Sri Lankan Australians for many years to come.

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.37 p.m.]: I speak today about an event that has touched many lives in my electorate and, indeed, across Australia. The recent earthquake and associated aftershocks in Nepal claimed more than 8,500 lives, injured nearly 22,000 people and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless. Entire villages across Nepal were completely flattened, world heritage buildings were destroyed and aftershocks continue to be felt across Nepal. We saw pictures on television of the devastating impacts of this terrible disaster. These impacts will continue to be felt for many years to come. However, Nepal is now on the path of rebuilding and recovery, and there are many in our community who are working hard to assist these efforts.

My electorate of Oatley has one of the highest Nepalese populations in Sydney and the St George region is home to a quarter of the State's Nepalese community. More and more Nepalese people are coming to Sydney and choosing to make our great State, and my local area, their home. I am pleased to welcome them with open arms and to do what I can to support their community during times of need. Last week I hosted a fundraising event in consultation with Mr Deepak Khadka, Honorary Consul of the Consulate General of Nepal in New South Wales, and in consultation and cooperation with the New South Wales Parliament Asia-Pacific Friendship Group [APFG].

More than 120 people attended to show their support for Nepal and raise much-needed funds for the relief effort. I am pleased to say that on the evening we raised more than \$10,000 and members of the Australia-Pacific Friendship Group presented an additional \$1,000 donation to the Consul General. I acknowledge the great work of that friendship group, which the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Davidson are part of. I thank the member for Riverstone, Mr Kevin Conolly, the member for Parramatta, Mr Geoff Lee, the member for Davidson, Mr Jonathan O'Dea, the member for Wagga Wagga, Mr Darryl Maguire, and the Hon. Sophie Cotsis from the other place for attending the event. I acknowledge the extent of the earthquakes and aftershocks that have been felt in Nepal over the past eight weeks.

I thank the institutions in Sydney and across Australia that are looking after the welfare of many Nepalese families, including the Nepalese Australian Association and the Nepalese Australian Welfare Society. Many people in my electorate from a Nepalese background still have friends and family living in Nepal. Many of them, unfortunately, remain homeless. On behalf of members and my electorate I wish the Nepalese community the best for the future. As a member of Parliament with a high proportion of people from a Nepalese background in my electorate, I am happy to do anything I can to support the Nepalese community in times of trouble.

SURF LIFE SAVING MOVEMENT

SWANSEA ELECTORATE SURF LIFE SAVING NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [12.41 p.m.]: At the age of 16 I rocked up to my local surf club at Caves Beach and signed up to do my bronze medallion. I had no idea then that surf lifesaving would be part of

my life for the rest of my life. I also had no idea that the people who I met on the beach then would be amongst some of my best friends today. Surf lifesaving is quintessentially Australian. Every Aussie goes to the beach looking for the red and yellow flags, and lifesavers wearing the red and yellow caps. Surf lifesaving has been and will always be an Australian way of life.

Swansea is home to four fantastic surf clubs—Lakes Beach, Catherine Hill Bay, Caves Beach and Swansea Belmont. The surf life saving movement began in Australia in 1907 when volunteer lifesavers began to protect the lives of fellow beachgoers on Bondi Beach in Sydney. Since that time volunteer lifesavers have saved more than 615,000 lives. Our trained surf lifesavers spend more than 1.4 million hours a year patrolling our beaches and coastlines. Surf lifesavers and lifeguards rescue around 12,000 people, provide emergency care to 64,000 and give safety advice to more than 900,000 others every year.

The primary role of surf life saving is to save lives on the beach. Our 129 surf life saving clubs and 76,000 members in New South Wales make surf life saving one of the largest volunteer movements in the State. The statistics showing the amount of work that surf lifesavers do in New South Wales are phenomenal. In 2014-2015 alone New South Wales surf lifesavers performed an incredible 5,876 rescues, and 138,366 preventative actions, and attended to 9,180 first aid cases and responded to 470 emergency calls. All in all, our surf lifesavers have put in a staggering 581,257 hours of volunteer time.

One of my favourite parts of the surf life saving movement is our wonderful nippers. I have always said that nurturing and developing our nippers—our next generation of fully fledged surf lifesavers—is one of the most important roles that any surf life saving club can undertake. Nippers is about learning, gaining confidence and having fun in a safe beach environment. For nippers the beach is the classroom. They gain confidence by passing the tests of swimming, board riding, beach sprinting and flags, spotting a rip and having fun with new friends. Nippers carry the skills they gain with them for life. More than 60,000 children nationwide are gaining essential skills that will one day save lives on our beaches.

I am so proud to announce that following the recent Australian Surf Life Saving Championships at North Kirra Beach on the Gold Coast we can add a number of new Australian champions to the Swansea electorate. The national champions from Swansea are: Lawson Christiansen from Caves Beach, who placed first in the under-15 male flags event; Angela Leadbeatter from Swansea Belmont, who came first in the 35 to 39 two-kilometre beach run; Sue Ellen Goynes from Caves Beach placed first in both the 40-plus long board and the 40 to 49 surf board riding events; and Mark Watson, Murray Davies and Bryan Searle, who came first in the 150 years men's board relay event. Incredibly, Marilyn Clarence from Swansea Belmont came first in the 60 to 64 division of the one-kilometre beach run, flags, board, iron man, tube race, ski and surf race events. Those are fantastic results for Swansea that certainly reinforce how significant surf lifesaving is to the electorate. I congratulate our new national champions.

Over the past couple of weeks I have had had the absolute pleasure of attending local club presentation nights as the member for Swansea. What an enormous honour it has been. Last Saturday I attended both the Caves Beach and Swansea Belmont surf life saving clubs annual presentation nights. The previous Saturday I was thrilled to be invited to the Catherine Hill Bay annual presentation night. The one thing that stands out to me when attending every one of those wonderful ceremonies is that surf lifesaving is generational. It is a movement made up of families—fathers and their sons, mothers and their daughters, grandparents and their grandchildren. They are generations of volunteers all working together to protect people who visit our beautiful beaches. I am so proud to be part of the surf lifesaving movement.

CRONULLA TO SUTHERLAND ACTIVE TRANSPORT LINK

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [12.46 p.m.]: Last week I was delighted to join the transport Minister and the member for Miranda, the member for Heathcote and the member for Holsworthy to announce a proposed route for the active transport link connecting Sutherland and Cronulla, following an announcement the previous week of the release of a call for tender. There has been significant community support for the project for some time, particularly since the establishment of the Sutherland to Cronulla Shared Path Coalition in 2006, which comprises around 20 local community groups. The coalition lobbied the former State Government and at the time presented a petition with more than 3,000 signatures. Members opposite failed to develop a comprehensive plan to integrate cycling with the broader transport network. I am proud to say that the Baird Government is delivering a plan to support the changing cycling culture in Sydney.

Cycling is a great way to cover a short distance quickly and to link up public transport services. At the moment cyclists have few options when travelling between Sutherland and Cronulla other than using congested and dangerous arterial roads. The new development will mean that we are one step closer to providing a long-awaited transport link for Sutherland shire commuters. Initial investigations support a link that starts on President Avenue in Sutherland, rather than in the rail corridor, to provide a more direct connection into Sutherland. It would then join the rail corridor at Kirrawee and continue on the southern side of the rail corridor. Between Caringbah and Woolooware the path would be next to Denman Avenue on the existing verge next to the rail line fence. Between Woolooware and Cronulla the route would be on the southern side of the rail line, with details to be developed.

Design of the path will include a number of features to ensure the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists. It will be designed as a two-way path with pedestrian and cycling zones separated by line marking. We will also look at physical separation of the zones where possible. I was pleased to help secure the initial \$2 million that helped kick the project into gear as part of the Baird Government Sydney's Cycling Future plan. Research on the costs and benefits of cycling has increased markedly in recent years. It has identified many transport, environmental, economic, social and health benefits that can flow from increased levels of cycling. Sydney's Cycling Future is significant because it marks the first time in our State's history that a plan for active transport has been comprehensively canvassed.

Bicycle riding is already enormously popular. Since 2006 the number of people riding to work has increased by 50 per cent in metropolitan Sydney. The feedback from customers indicates that they would cycle more if it were made safer. That is why the New South Wales Government has employed a number of strategies to diversify cycling options and to educate the public about safer road behaviour. By continuing to incentivise cycling we will alleviate pressure on the transport system. As part of the strategy the New South Wales Government will partner with local councils to offer regular courses aimed at building people's confidence and safety when riding, reinforcing compliance with road rules and providing bike riders with practical ways in which they can share roads and footpaths in a courteous fashion.

The courses have contributed to substantial increases in safe bike riding when they are coordinated with infrastructure improvements and other promotional activities. Indeed, safety will be a key structural feature of the Cronulla to Sutherland active transport link. I understand Transport for NSW is working closely with the Asset Standards Authority, which has developed the new standard for active transport links in rail corridors. This infrastructure—and others like it across New South Wales—is set to provide a new level of service for customers, whether they ride their bike to work, to transport interchanges or for recreation. Last week's announcement was welcome news for my electorate, but naturally there is plenty of work still to be done to finalise the alignment, secure funding for construction and ensure integration with surrounding environment and facilities. The Government will be engaging with stakeholders in coming months. I look forward to updating the House on future developments on the Sutherland to Cronulla active transport link.

TORCH PUBLISHING COMPANY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.50 p.m.]: I take great delight in informing the House of the upcoming ninety-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Torch Publishing Company. Like most local residents, for almost as far as I can recall the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* newspaper has been the first port of call to read about the breaking news and issues that matter in Bankstown. The Torch Publishing Company was founded by Mr Lesley Engisch in 1920. Since this time, Torch Publishing has remained as a family owned and operated local business, with four generations of the Engisch family managing the company. Torch Publishing has become a true icon of Bankstown and has blossomed into one of the most highly regarded and respected publishing institutions throughout New South Wales.

The Torch Publishing Company expanded over time to produce four newspapers, including both the Bankstown and Canterbury editions of the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch*, *Auburn Review*, and *Cooks River Valley Times*. It is my understanding that the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* has a readership of approximately 140,000 residents throughout the Bankstown-Canterbury region, with more than 90,000 copies being delivered on a weekly basis to every suburb in the Bankstown electorate. Above all, the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* is best known for its fair and honest reporting of community news and for being the watchdog of Bankstown for the past 95 years.

Torch Publishing's longevity and success over the past 95 years can be attributed to many factors, but what has distinguished the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* as one of the most successful local newspapers in our

State has been the lifelong intrinsic connection that the Engisch family has had with our local community, which has enabled the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* to become a staple in every family home in Bankstown. I have had the pleasure of knowing the Engisch family for more than 10 years, in my capacity as the member for Bankstown and previously as the mayor of Bankstown and as a Bankstown City councillor. Mr John Engisch, OAM, has been the managing director of Torch Publishing for the past 30 years. His son Trent Engisch, who is the great-grandson of Torch founder, Lesley Engisch, is the general manager of Torch Publishing.

The Engisch family has made an outstanding contribution to the Bankstown community not only through their dedication within the realm of newspaper management but also through their commitment to charitable causes and philanthropy. The Engisch family are strong supporters of cancer advocacy and research charities. For many generations the entire family has long supported initiatives, such as the Bankstown Relay For Life, which supports the Cancer Council with fundraising initiatives. Torch Publishing also hosts an annual Torch Charity Golf day, which has been driven by the passion, enthusiasm and energy of Trent Engisch. I had the pleasure of attending the fifth annual Torch Charity Golf Day on 17 October last year, when more than \$30,000 was raised to help provide world-class cancer research for the Australian Cancer Research Foundation. Approximately \$100,000 has been raised since the inaugural event. I look forward to joining both John and Trent Engisch at this year's anticipated event in October.

Mr John Engisch has served the Bankstown Rotary Club for more than 35 years. In that time, John has held a variety of positions with Rotary, including fundraising and programs chairman. John also was responsible for organising the Queen of Bankstown competition, which ran for 21 years, from 1979 to 1999. In that time, the competition raised more than \$1.6 million for many non-government organisations in the Bankstown community, as well as the oncology unit at the Children's Hospital, Bankstown YMCA, Bankstown East Hills Handicapped Association and Bankstown Children's Handicapped Association. The entire Engisch family is deeply admired and respected within our local community. The ongoing success of Torch Publishing for more than 95 years is testament to their commitment to Bankstown.

I take this opportunity to also recognise the management team at Torch Publishing—Mr John Engisch, the managing director; Mr Trent Engisch, the general manager, Mr Christian Engisch, the web press manager; and Mr Bernie Temple, the group sales manager—for their efforts and great service to the Bankstown community. I also pay tribute to the hardworking, respected and longstanding editor of all four newspapers produced by Torch Publishing, Mr Mark Kirkland, a Bankstown-Canterbury journalist, Mick Roberts, and the many staff and photographers at Torch Publishing with whom my office and I have interacted. I appreciate their utmost professionalism, journalistic nous and integrity. I congratulate Torch Publishing on achieving the milestone of 95 proud years and look forward to reading the *Bankstown-Canterbury Torch* for many more.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [12.55 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House that at this very moment a rally is being held at the front of Parliament House calling for deaths from domestic violence to be stopped now. Outside Parliament there is a coffin and 39 cardboard cut-out coffins being carried by women, all of whom have been affected in some way by domestic violence or family violence. So far this year 39 women have been killed across the country, the vast majority of whom died as a result of domestic violence. The rally is clearly stating that this is both a crisis and a national disgrace, and I agree. It is time for true leadership to be demonstrated and immediate steps to be taken to address the appalling situation.

In January 2014 Parliament was recalled to enact legislation around the coward-punch laws and related licensing restrictions in response to a crisis. That was done after two men had been killed over a two-year period as a result of alcohol-fuelled violence. So far no bill has been put before this Parliament to address the number of women who have been killed in their homes at a rate that is 40 times higher than the one-punch death rate. Nothing concrete has been done to address the deaths of 39 women and an epidemic of domestic violence. That is the situation at a time when an average of two women a week across the country is dying as a result of domestic violence.

This morning at the rally I heard of the recent death of a woman who will never show up in domestic violence statistics. She committed suicide after going through the domestic violence system so many times without feeling safe that she felt the only way she could be assured she would be safe from then on was to end her life. Late last year the New South Wales Government's Going Home Staying Home reforms resulted in specialist women's domestic violence services, most of which had been in operation for 30 or 40 years, being forced to enter into a competitive tendering process against other large charitable organisations. The rally to stop

death caused by domestic violence is telling members of Parliament that where there previously were more than 100 women's services that specialised in providing support and a safe refuge for women and children who are escaping domestic violence there are now fewer than 20 across the State.

Although it has been stated that there has been no loss of services, the vast majority of services are required to accommodate people experiencing all types of homeless crisis, but many do not have experience in providing services to victims of domestic violence. New funding arrangements have resulted in services scaling back positions, casework loads increasing with no additional staff or funding, and many services that formerly operated on a 24/7 basis operating during business hours only. The rally, which is being attended by women who have suffered domestic violence and their family members, is telling the Government that they need a phone number they can call so that they can find a safe place, just for them, when they are experiencing domestic violence.

According to the third annual report of the New South Wales Domestic Violence Review team, in two-thirds of all intimate partner homicides that resulted in a woman being killed, the victim and the perpetrator either had recently separated or were in the process of separating. The recent death of a Sydney woman, Leila Alavi, highlights the crisis. Ms Alavi made up to a dozen attempts to get into a refuge in the months prior to her death, but was turned away because there were no vacancies. The group out the front of Parliament House is calling on the Government to look upon the number of women dying as a State emergency that requires an emergency response.

They are calling for adequate services for women and children that are easily accessible in times of danger and for police to act on breaches of apprehended domestic violence orders and to make arrests. They are asking that the judiciary impose adequate sentences if and when the matter reaches court, that there be an immediate inquiry into the impact of the Going Home Staying Home reforms on women's safety and that funds be reinstated that have been cut or spread across a wider client-type group as a result of the Going Home Staying Home reforms to ensure that these funds are quarantined specifically for domestic violence support and safe accommodation. I support the rally out the front of Parliament House as it is bringing to the attention of this place the crisis of domestic violence deaths in this State.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! While I empathise with the sentiments of the member for Charlestown, private members' statements must relate to a member's constituency and new members must establish that connection when speaking.

BAYS PRECINCT URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAM

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [1.00 p.m.]: Today I refer to the Bays Precinct—80 hectares of public land on the south-western fringe of Sydney Harbour, approximately 90 per cent of which is located in the electorate of Balmain. Some of the land which has significant heritage value represents a once-in-lifetime opportunity to develop this project and thus leave a legacy for future generations. The project was announced with much fanfare almost 12 months ago, with the Premier and Minister for Planning claiming it would be the biggest urban renewal project in the world—four times the size of Barangaroo. Whilst that is exciting for some—mainly the consultants, contractors and developers—others were immediately left with concerns.

The board of UrbanGrowth NSW was stacked with developers, the former managing director of Mirvac, the former managing director of Stockland and former Leightons executives and did not have the diversity and breadth of experience to deliver more than just residential apartments and development. The Treasurer then boasted that 16,000 new dwellings could be squeezed into the Bays footprint. The Barangaroo project demonstrated the lack of transparency, incompetence and trashing of public interest in favour of private benefit—something that cannot continue. I was concerned about the startling report regarding Mr Pitchford, who in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 17 May 2015 said:

... apartments could match the existing height of 28 to 32 storeys at Jacksons Landing, and be built "over, around and on top of facilities that exist", including the fish market and boat sheds.

It is important to have a clear understanding of the public interest. I refer to a report prepared by SGS Economics and Planning for the City of Sydney, which outlines a number of best-practice urban renewal principles for the Bays Precinct to successfully deliver on public interest objectives. First, there needs to be a collective vision for long-term public interest. The long-term view often is missing from major civic projects and the community is rightly cynical about whether short-term and medium-term profits for big developers, contractors and investors would trump the long-term goals for the community.

Secondly, it is essential to develop a plan with stakeholders. That means early and meaningful engagement with the community and ongoing engagement and representation to develop the vision, setting of objectives and evaluation of options before progress is undertaken. I acknowledge stakeholders in my community, including Leichhardt Municipal Council, City of Sydney, local precinct committees, community groups and residents involved in the previous Bays Precinct consultation and the Bays Community Coalition. Next we need to agree to the non-negotiables, including design standards, housing mix, targets, priorities for community facilities, active and passive open space, new transport options and other public services such as schools and child care.

There is already a clear expectation, for example, of public access to the foreshore without it being monstered by massive development, and the provision of active and passive open space for our kids to play, and affordable and, importantly, social housing. It is concerning that UrbanGrowth NSW sees affordable housing in the Bays Precinct as micro-apartments, not rent-controlled properties as defined under the Act as affordable housing and it is not proposing one new social housing property. We need social housing to be part of the diversity of our community. These residential developments should not be an enclave for the rich that are beyond the reach of not only key workers but also low-income communities.

The financial objectives should be developed and there should be a reasonable financial profile. To date that has been missing from the consultation. Financial objectives should be subordinate to long-term public interest objectives but an appropriate return on government assets may well be achieved when holistic evaluation techniques are applied. Community values, community infrastructure and assets like open space and heritage need to be assessed and must be prioritised in that financial assessment model. We call on UrbanGrowth to reveal the model it is using to determine the return on the investment that the taxpayer would be making.

The next important step is to establish clear, measurable development objectives for the best environmental, social and economic outcomes. This means moving beyond motherhood statements of the principles already outlined by UrbanGrowth. As developer and real estate agent for the New South Wales Government we need more clarity and transparency about the basis for the decisions, what tools it will use to measure the performance of the Bays Precinct area and how the community can be directly involved in the process. We do not need infill development simply to meet grandiose housing targets set by Treasury or by UrbanGrowth. UrbanGrowth is in the process of developing a transformation plan but we need a process for including the community in the development of this plan, not merely commenting on it once it has been produced—having genuine and serious input.

Much can be learned from the Barangaroo experience when that opportunity has been squandered at a significant cost to the taxpayer and a great loss to the Treasury of this State. We have the opportunity to make Sydney more liveable with a vibrant, connected, diverse, inclusive and sustainable Bays Precinct. With world-best practice for engagement, planning, governance, development and evaluation we can deliver in the long-term public interest, and inspire not only the people of the inner west of Sydney but also all Australians.

NEWCASTLE CROWN LAND LEASE

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [1.05 p.m.]: Two weeks ago I held a mobile office in Stockton and the people who attended said that enough was enough. Today I speak about 147 Fullerton Street, Stockton—known locally Rose's Garage—which is situated on Crown land. For decades the locals were able to get their motor fuel needs at that location, but they are no longer able to do so. It is situated near the boat ramp, a popular launch site for local and visiting boats, and it is within a convenient distance of most residences in this tight-knit peninsula community. In mid-2012 Crown Lands leased the site to the current owners and the fuel stopped. An important service to this area and its people was lost.

Stockton is an active community that stands together. In this capacity the people made me aware of the impact of losing their service station and perhaps more importantly the impact that the neglect of this site is having on the wider community, beyond the boundary lines of the property. Local residents have made me aware of alleged breaches of council regulations in my capacity as a councillor on Newcastle City Council. They have also made me aware of alleged breaches of Crown land lease conditions as a member of Parliament. Two weeks ago at the mobile office in Stockton the locals said they had had enough. They asked me to draw a line in the sand and campaign to have the lease revoked, the site remediated and the community consulted on how they would like to use the site.

In response, I wrote to the Minister and urged him to revoke the current licence, remediate the site and consult with the community on the use of the site in the future. There have been a number of documented and alleged issues on the site—namely, under the current ownership of Stockton Garage Pty Ltd fuel has never been sold from the pumps. This means that many residents on restricted driver licences, primarily the elderly, no longer have access to fuel maintenance as the nearest facility is a 25-kilometre round trip. They have to get their children to deliver jerry cans to their houses.

Other issues include an environmental spill in March 2015; dumping of rubbish on a public reserve and the banks of the Hunter River in April 2015; dumping of building materials on the ballast ground in June 2014; lopping of a tree on public land in October 2014; people residing on the premises contrary to zoning and without adequate hygiene facilities, which is ongoing; unapproved and incomplete development resulting in safety concerns, creating a visual eyesore and serious damage to the site due to a storm event; service station facilities replaced by sporadic trading of second-hand goods, including vehicles; frequent attendance at the premises throughout the night by multiple persons, with concerns from many residents as to the dubious use of the property regarding the visits; and multiple investigations by Newcastle City Council, Crown Lands and WorkCover in relation to the premises.

As a result of chemical spills and the storage tanks no longer being used for keeping petrol, there are serious concerns about the health of the land. It sits within metres of a shared walkway and cycle track in which council has invested to promote the beauty and economy of Stockton. Understandably, the residents of Stockton want the site inspected properly and remediated and they want to be consulted on how the site will be used when remediation has taken place. Many of them want their service station back selling motor fuel. Everyone wants it to be a useful site for the community and visitors in the future. Unfortunately, the Minister has yet to respond to my letter. He will, no doubt, be prompted when the Stockton community takes further action on this most unsatisfactory situation.

MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC FUN RUN

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [1.09 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to speak about the Mother's Day Classic, which was held on Sunday 10 May at Saltwater Park in Long Jetty on the Central Coast. The Mother's Day Classic is an initiative of Women in Super, which is a national organisation of women working in and for not-for-profit superannuation funds. Women in Super care about the health of women as well as their financial wellbeing. In 1998 it established the Mother's Day Classic and the event has become Australia's largest research fundraiser, having donated \$43 million to the National Breast Cancer Foundation since the event began. The Mother's Day Classic fun run and walk has become a calendar must-do for thousands of families, friends and community groups who revel in a festive event that supports funding research into Australia's most common cancer affecting women. The event is also a great way to honour those affected by breast cancer. In 2014 more than 130,000 participated in a record 99 locations, including every capital city and large and small regional locations.

By 2020 it is predicted that 17,210 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer every year in Australia, which is an average of 47 women every day. Currently one in eight Australian women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. On average, seven women will die from breast cancer in this country every day. Since Women in Super started the Mother's Day Classic, the five-year survival rates for women diagnosed with breast cancer has been increasing and now stands at 98 per cent. Improvements in the survival rate are attributed to the early detection of breast cancer and improved treatment outcomes, which is why research is vital.

The event at Long Jetty offers a four kilometre walk or run and is organised by the Central Coast Pink Butterflies. Many of the Pink Butterflies are breast cancer survivors. They are a dedicated group who are very passionate about this important cause. I took part in the Mother's Day Classic fun run this year as I have done in other years with my wife, Sherelle, and my daughters, Rachael and Jessica. Hundreds of other "coasties" participated in the four kilometre walk along Tuggerah Lakes foreshore to support breast cancer research.

I thank and acknowledge the following people, community groups and local personalities for their ongoing support: Wyong Shire Councillor Lisa Mathews; Wyong Lions Club; St John First Aid; Chris Wallace, who runs the Fun Fire Engine; Captain Craig and his crew from Berkeley Vale Rural Fire Brigade; Jo Thompson from Bn2 Health; Joe from Cruzin Coffees; NSW Environmental Services; Wyong Hospital; Lake Haven Shopping Centre and Stephanie Zalfelds, promotions marketing director; Bendigo Community Bank of Wyong; Southern Cross Austereo; Natalie Wilkie from Step into Life, Terrigal; and Anna Coughlin, an accredited exercise physiologist.

The local organisers include Sharon Ray, who is also a cancer survivor; Lachlan Pass and his mum; David Merrell-Rose; Monica and Rick Lee; Kim Goddard; Beryl Gillard; Kathy Bree; and Casey Ray as well as many others. Volunteers are the lifeblood of any community and without them it would be impossible to organise many of these community causes. They deserve to be thanked for their ongoing efforts. This is the fifth year the Mother's Day Classic fun run has been organised and it gets bigger every year. The Pink Butterflies assist the Wyong Lions Club in organising the event. I am sure my parliamentary colleagues will support the important work of the Mother's Day Classic to help improve and support the lives of thousands of people who are diagnosed with breast cancer every year and to support their families through a tough time. It is a great opportunity for people to remember their loved ones who have died as a result of breast cancer.

Private members' statements concluded.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

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

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WARREN GLENNY

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.15 p.m.]: I advise the House that Castle Hill RSL Group President and my good friend Warren Glenny has been honoured at the 2015 Clubs and Community Awards for his ongoing commitment to the not-for-profit club industry and the wider community. Warren Glenny won a Club Industry Award for Outstanding Contribution for his ongoing passion for the industry and his drive to make the Hills District and Parramatta a better place for future generations. Castle Hill RSL chief executive officer David O'Neil said that Warren is a remarkable man and has the utmost respect of all who know and work with him. He is admired and respected by his fellow board members, staff, club members and the wider community alike. I congratulate Warren Glenny.

FRANS INC.

Ms JODI McKAY (Strathfield) [1.16 p.m.]: Today I speak about FRANS Inc., a local disability support and advocacy organisation. FRANS has operated in the inner west for 32 years, providing services for people with an intellectual disability. It offers a range of 50 programs, including respite care, an extremely popular life skills program and recreational day outings. More than 400 clients are served by 150 staff under the direction of a volunteer board comprising 12 community members. In April this year I had the pleasure of attending For Arts Sake 2015, which exhibited 38 pieces of art from 25 participants with an intellectual disability collaborating with seven professional artists.

In support of the exhibition, I purchased a painting by Nicola Chapman with the assistance of Shining Rainbow. It hangs proudly in my office in Burwood. For Arts Sake typifies the FRANS philosophy of care and service. It not so much provides a service to individuals with an intellectual disability but empowers them to take a lead in their lives. FRANS is a leader in its empowerment approach to disability services. I congratulate the staff and volunteers of FRANS on their great contribution and success.

WESTCARE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.17 p.m.]: I congratulate WestCare Community Services on more than 25 years of continued assistance to people in need in the Nepean region. WestCare has been committed to the relief of poverty, suffering, distress and helplessness of people in the Penrith community regardless of age, sex, race, ethnic background, religion, or political beliefs. As a locally based, not-for-profit, non-government registered charity driven by a compassionate desire to make a difference in our city, WestCare continues to restore dignity and hope to the lives of the needy.

I congratulate more than 100 local individuals, ranging in age from five to 76 years, who participated in WestCare's fundraiser "Steps of Hope" on Saturday 23 May. It was an awesome day. My family and I participated in the walk and helped raise much-needed funds to continue the support of WestCare's core community activities in Penrith, including the Emergency Relief Service, Community Connection Van, Correctional Care, do-it-yourself classes, and many more services. Special thanks go to director Sonya DeMartin, assistant director Andrew Paech, Michelle Epati and all the WestCare volunteers.

NEPAL EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUNDRAISER

Ms JULIA FINN (Granville) [1.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Harsha Gautama, Help Nepal Network Australia and the National Resource Centre for Non-Formal Education on their successful joint fundraising lunch on Sunday 31 May, which raised more than \$6,000 for earthquake relief projects. The earthquake that struck Nepal on 25 April and the subsequent aftershocks and second earthquake killed more than 8,500 people, injured thousands more and destroyed the homes and businesses of millions of people. The Australian community has generously supported the relief effort and my local community is no different. The Granville Nepalese community contacted me immediately after the earthquake and sought my support to use the Parramatta Town Hall free of charge for a fundraiser, which was unanimously supported by Parramatta City Council. A month later, around 250 people gathered for a delicious Nepalese meal to raise much-needed funds to ensure that those who have lost their homes will have watertight shelter before the monsoon rains set in.

APPIN ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.19 p.m.]: I commend the Appin community for its excellent Anzac Day service, which was held at the Appin Public School on Thursday 23 April 2015. The event marked the first community inclusive service that the school has hosted. I was moved by the dedication of staff and students who worked hard to make it a solemn and memorable event. Mr Ken Wright, who is a respected local veteran of the Vietnam conflict, played an integral role in the organisation of the service and is to be commended for the success of the day.

Also worthy of mention are talented bugler Adrian Munn and lone piper George Thompson, whose performances visibly moved some members of the audience to tears. From those who served in the Korean War through to current conflicts in the Middle East our service men and women stood amongst the crowd in Appin. With their hands on their hearts, students brought flowers to the cenotaph and bowed their heads in respect. I extend a sincere thank you to all the year 6 students who lead the service, and to the school principal, Vivian Harrison. The service was truly humbling and a reminder of why I am proud to represent the Appin community.

ELLA CHILDREN'S CENTRE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [1.20 p.m.]: Back in the 1970s members of St David's Presbyterian Church and other Haberfield locals came together. They dreamt and worked hard to build a charity that would care for the most vulnerable in our community. Henry Ella shared this dream and generously donated to secure the financial future for what is now known as the Ella Children's Centre. Recently I had the pleasure of attending the centre's fortieth anniversary gala dinner. For 40 years the centre has connected people with disabilities, dementia, older people, carers and others with the wider community. It has grown to become a major provider of services in the inner west and a source of great pride for the people of Haberfield. The abiding values of social justice, inclusion and community participation are at the heart of what the centre does. I congratulate chief executive officer Philip Coller, the wonderful staff, volunteers and the clients on a successful 40 years and many more to come.

ST IVES MEDIEVAL FAIRE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.21 p.m.]: I congratulate Ku-ring-gai Council on its recent event award. In late May the St Ives Medieval Faire won the events category of the Parks and Leisure Australia, NSW Regional Awards, held at the Moore Park Golf Club. The faire is now in contention for the national award to be presented in October this year at the National Parks and Leisure Australia Conference in Sydney. The inaugural St Ives Medieval Faire was an outstanding success. The two-day festival at St Ives Showground was an enchanting medieval experience. It attracted visitors of all ages from all over Sydney. It featured jousting of the knights, a Viking war, a bird of prey show and a trebuchet.

Other activities included exploring an historical village, archery, medieval stalls and a fancy dress competition. Ku-ring-gai Council staff did a fantastic job in bringing this new event to life and the success of the event demonstrates how local government is capable of delivering events of this size and complexity. As Parliamentary Secretary for Major Events and Tourism, I support the role of local government in developing interesting and popular events for local people and visitors to enjoy. As the member for Davidson, I particularly look forward to the second annual St Ives Medieval Faire, which is planned for September this year.

LEBANON RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION DAY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [1.22 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about two events that I recently attended in celebration of Lebanon Resistance and Liberation Day. Politicians from other major parties also attended these events. The first event was held on Sunday 24 May at the Imam Moussa Sadder Centre and was organised by the Amal Movement Australia. The second event was held on Monday 25 May and was organised by the Lebanese Community Council of New South Wales and held at its offices at Bankstown. On 25 May 2000 Israel ended its occupation of 22 years and withdrew from southern Lebanon.

The occupation included an invasion that reached to Beirut and led to the massacres at Shatila and Sabra, and the condemnation of Ariel Sharon as a war criminal. One of the speakers at the first event talked of this day as being Lebanon's gift to the world, a demonstration that resistance gives liberation, and that oppressed people can overcome massive military machines even if backed by the world's one remaining superpower. Having over a number of years attended functions deploring invasion and occupation, it is a pleasure to be able to continue to celebrate resistance and liberation.

TRIBUTE TO JEANETTE RAINBOW

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [1.23 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about a magnificent representative of the Wauchope community, Jeanette Rainbow. Jeanette as chairperson led the Wauchope Centenary of Rail Celebrations, and what a celebration it has been for the Wauchope community. It started with an exhibition at the Glasshouse gallery at Port Macquarie and this was followed by a display at the 105th Wauchope Show. On 11 April many young children enjoyed rides on the Hastings Miniature Railway at Yippen Creek Reserve.

On 14 April the celebrations culminated in a magnificent dinner with guest speaker Tim Fischer, former Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Federal Nationals—who happens to be in this building today—who has not lost a moment of passion for the railway. Many reflected on the fact that in 2½ years the railway was able to be extended from Taree to Wauchope—imagine trying to do that today. I am proud of Jeanette and her team who will now help other mid North Coast communities celebrate their centenary of rail.

COAL SEAM GAS

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [1.24 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the incredible work by the members of Stop CSG Sydney over many years in stopping the spread of coal seam gas in the inner west and throughout Sydney. I note the tireless efforts of community members such as Jacinta Green, Lou Steer, Josie Evans, Pip Hinman, Adrian Shilling, Sandy Thompson, Isabel Mcintosh, Colin Charlton and many others and congratulate them on finally achieving the cancellation of PEL 463 over metropolitan Sydney in March 2015. I congratulate Marrickville and Sydney councils for their stand against coal seam gas and note that the people of my electorate of Newtown stand in solidarity with other communities across the State, including Gloucester, the Pilliga and the northern rivers in their fight to stop the spread of invasive gas fields.

GLOBAL CANTONESE ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [1.25 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to the Global Cantonese Association of Australia and extend my congratulations to that association. The Cantonese community in Sydney is vibrant and active. It is a clear example of how multiculturalism is an essential element of the Australian nation. Indeed, the Global Cantonese Association is testament to a uniquely successful multicultural society. Multiculturalism is not only a social asset but also a significant economic asset, and the contribution that organisations such as the Global Cantonese Association of Australia make to this State's trade investment are not to be underestimated. The people of Cantonese background, particularly those living in my electorate, have played a significant role in our society since the 1840s and have helped to shape the proud multicultural society that we enjoy today.

ORGAN DONATION

Ms PRUE CAR (Londonderry) [1.25 p.m.]: Today I recognise the generosity of local police officer, Detective Senior Constable Tony Blair, who recently donated a kidney to his colleague Senior Constable Tony Mascherin. Both work in the St Marys Local Area Command. Senior Constable Mascherin, a father of four, was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease in 2007. Thanks to the selflessness of Detective Senior Constable Blair, Senior Constable Mascherin will now be able to witness his children grow up and continue his service to

the St Marys community. This act is a reflection of the altruistic work St Marys Local Area Command does every day to keep our community safe. I commend Detective Senior Constable Blair and encourage everyone to register as an organ donor.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE BUTCHER

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.26 p.m.]: On Saturday 25 April the Southern Highlands and greater Wollondilly community said goodbye to one of our most treasured personalities, Mr Mike Butcher, OAM, following an extended battle with cancer. Mr Butcher was the much-loved conductor of the Southern Highlands Concert Band for almost 10 years, following his tenure as Director of Music for the Royal Australian Air Force and the NSW Police Force. Mr Butcher was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2001, and was also named as a Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International.

Mr Butcher, a Southern Highlands icon and prominent musician, has left behind a legacy of skilled musical arrangements and original compositions for concert bands and singers, as well as the legacy of the many musicians he has tutored to greatness over the years. Mr Butcher is succeeded in his role of conductor by his good friend Mr Gerry Foster, who played together with Mr Butcher in their Air Force band days in 1971. Mr Butcher will be greatly missed; however, all who knew and played with him will proudly carry on his legacy through his music.

ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.27 p.m.]: Today I inform the House that on Sunday 31 May 2015 I had the honour of attending the Italian Republic Day Festival, or Festa della Repubblica, at Club Marconi. This event commemorates the day when Italy became a republic; that is, on 2 June, 1946, and since then Italians worldwide have celebrated this occasion annually. This was particularly evident at Club Marconi on the weekend where the Festa della Repubblica attracted more than 20,000 people. It was a wonderful day for those families who were able to witness and enjoy the rich culture and traditions of Italy. It is well-known that the Italian community has played a focal role in the development of Australia in many ways, and I commend its contribution to society particularly in my local area. I thank the festival's organisers as well as the President of Club Marconi, Mr Vince Foti, for organising such a fantastic celebration.

RADIO 2NBC

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [1.28 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to Radio 2NBC, which over the past 20 years has been broadcast from the Narwee Baptist Church. Radio 2NBC is beamed across the St George area and can clearly be heard in the Sutherland shire and south-west Sydney. I acknowledge the great work that station manager, Paul McGrath, has done over the years, in particular his morning program, on which I am a regular, as well as Terry Booker on Wednesday mornings. Terry also does an outstanding job as the Sunday morning presenter for radio 2NBC on the around the grounds sports wrap-up. I pay tribute to both Paul and Terry for the great work that they do at radio 2NBC. I also pay tribute to Paul for the great work he does as a master of ceremonies for many local community events.

NEWCASTLE BHP STEELWORKS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [1.29 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to the 100th anniversary of BHP's expansion into steelmaking. On 2 June 1915 the then Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, officially opened the Newcastle Steelworks. Yesterday the Newcastle Industrial Heritage Association, which has worked to promote and preserve the importance of BHP's Newcastle operations, hosted a commemorative event to mark the 100th anniversary of steelmaking beginning in Newcastle, to unveil the Newcastle Steelworkers Memorial, designed by Will Maguire, and to launch a time capsule into a three-tonne bloom of Newcastle steel.

Newcastle is a city that has long been synonymous with steelmaking. It has employed vast numbers of our people and has supported our families. When BHP closed its facility in 1999 it marked the end of a significant base of our economy and a place in our history. Hundreds of Novocastrians went to Mayfield to clap out the last workers from their last shift. The site and the industry took many of the men who worked there over the years, and that will be recognised by the memorial. Since that time, we have reinvented ourselves and our city. Newcastle is now emerging as a vibrant, innovative and smart community with a diversified economic base. The sons, daughters and grandchildren of BHP workers now work in a whole host of other industries. Today, however, the contribution of BHP to Newcastle is to be acknowledged.

HEAVEN CAN WAIT CHARITY SAILING REGATTA

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [1.30 p.m.], by leave: I would like to acknowledge the organisers of the annual Heaven Can Wait Charity Sailing Regatta for another outstanding fundraising effort and a successful event in 2015. This year's regatta was the ninth such event and raised \$25,000, primarily for the Hunter branch of the Cancer Council NSW to provide domestic support services to local cancer patients but also for Lake Macquarie Marine Rescue. The event is the brainchild of cancer survivor Shaun Lewicki, who was ably supported by a cast of enthusiastic supporters and sponsors, including the Lake Macquarie Royal Motor Yacht Club, Marmong Point Marina and Lake Macquarie Marine Rescue.

QUILTERS AND PATCHWORKERS OF NEW ENGLAND

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.31 p.m.], by leave: I recognise the Quilters and Patchworkers of New England group for their generous donation to the Side-by-Side choir and the music therapy program at the New England Conservatorium of Music. Members of the group worked for three weeks to create a quilt, which raised \$2,300 at a fundraising auction. President Barbara Nevin presented the donation to the conservatorium, ensuring that the positive impact of the program for the community can continue. The group has now turned its efforts towards making blankets for residents in aged-care homes around Armidale. I congratulate the Quilters and Patchworkers of New England group on their generous and community-minded projects which make a positive impact on members of the local community. I wish all members of the group all the very best for the future and I thank them sincerely.

[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 thank the member for Tamworth for supplying members with badges for Project Koala in Gunnedah. I invite members to put on their koala badges. I hope the project is successful and I congratulate the member for Tamworth on his involvement. I extend a very warm welcome this afternoon to the father and other family members of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Justice and Police, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Racing, the member for Dubbo. I welcome them all to the Chamber. I congratulate you on raising a fine son. Many of us here have fine sons, as do you. I am sure the member for Keira has a fine son too and probably is a fine son as well.

I welcome to the Chamber today school captains from the following high schools: Barrenjoey High School, Pittwater High School, Mater Maria Catholic College, Narrabeen Sports High School, Northern Beaches Christian School, Galstaun College and the German International School Sydney, guests of the Minister for Planning and member for Pittwater.

I welcome to the gallery 12 students and their teacher from Kadina High School, Lismore, guests of the Deputy-Speaker and member for Lismore. I welcome to the gallery 50 students and their teachers from Heathcote High School, guests of the member for Heathcote. I also welcome to the gallery 17 students and their teacher from Belmont High School, guests of the member from Swansea. I welcome everyone to question time today.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ETHICS CLASSES

Mr LUKE FOLEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier give this House an undertaking that public school enrolment forms will not be altered to deprive parents and pupils of a real choice as to whether to study scripture or ethics?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It is fascinating that the Labor Party would talk about ethics. I make this point: I have been very consistent on this issue.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am a supporter of special religious education [SRE] in public schools. It has been in place for a long time and I have asked for the status quo. There was a change of form at the Department of Education. All I have asked for is the status quo—no changes, just the status quo. We are proud of maintaining the status quo for SRE in our schools. I note that the Leader of the Opposition seems to have reduced his whole policy down to an enrolment form.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will come to order and cease interjecting. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It has come to my attention that a new enrolment form has just come onto the market. It is an application to enrol in NSW Labor. I do not know exactly what all of it says but part of it says: If you need an explanation of any of the questions or help in completing this application please ask for assistance from your union organiser. That would make sense.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The answer has nothing to do with the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question he was asked, but he is now straying from the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The form then goes on to try to work to out who is suitable to join the Labor Party and asks: The best approach for public transport in New South Wales is (a) to announce projects but never fund them; (b) to cancel projects whenever possible; or (c) we do not like public transport.

Ms Jodi McKay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I ruled on the previous point of order about relevance and noted that the Premier answered the question he was asked.

Ms Jodi McKay: My point of order is relevance. The question is about ethics classes. I would think that the Premier would want to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question on ethics classes.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The next question is: Should small businesses pay higher taxes? There is only one box for that—"yes".

Mr David Harris: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong will resume his seat. I ask the Premier to return to the leave of the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The question is about ethics. The application form also asks: When is the appropriate time to use xenophobia in an election campaign?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member's point of order different to the previous points of order?

Ms Linda Burney: The Premier is flouting your ruling. My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question. He has now identified that he is talking about ethics and is being relevant to the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I find it incredible that Labor Party members are talking about ethics when they oversaw an election campaign that was full of xenophobia. It has been called out—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. It would be hard to explain how xenophobia has anything to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that the Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is quite easy to settle this. I invite members of the Labor Party who condemn the xenophobia campaign to put their hands up.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled three times that the Premier is being relevant. I call the member for Kogarah to order for the first time.

Dr Hugh McDermott: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 73. The Premier is impugning the reputation of members on this side by saying we are xenophobic.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has not specifically named a member. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members on my side of the House are proud to stand up for multiculturalism and stand against xenophobia. We are happy to put our hands in the air on that basis. Two Labor members have stood up, the member for Lakemba and the member for Kogarah. My suggestion is that if Labor members want to talk about ethics they should be standing up for that. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. Members will come to order. Members will not shout out.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dr GEOFF LEE: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government improving public transport and how does that compare with the plans of members opposite?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are very proud to be the government for public transport. We are investing a record amount in public transport across this city and State. It is unprecedented in the history of New South Wales. We will argue very strongly that investing in public transport is a good thing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Our record is impressive and it is getting even better. One-third of the tunnelling for the North West Rail Link is now complete. Members opposite promised, cancelled and never delivered that project. We are delivering it. The South West Rail Link was completed on time and under budget. We have also completed the Inner West Light Rail Extension and introduced the Opal card. We remember the efforts of members opposite to try to deliver a transport card. They gave us a bill for \$100 million and nothing else. In about 20 months the former Minister for Transport delivered the Opal card system across the network, which now has 2.8 million users. We have delivered more than 12,000 extra transport services. In addition, we are delivering light rail for Newcastle. That is something that this member for "Newcastle" absolutely loves but it is something that that member for Newcastle and the member for Maitland cannot stand.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Maitland will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I draw to the attention of members, particularly the new Greens members, that the Labor Opposition has become the first party in political history across the country to stand against public transport.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is a brand new platform. The shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure will go down in history as the shadow Minister who is against public transport.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what the member for Keira stands for. He cannot believe it. The Leader of the Opposition and the party are against public transport.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Let me go through what Labor did. Labor was happy to cancel the North West Rail Link. Labor did not fund the second Sydney Harbour rail crossing. Indeed, the shadow Treasurer said that it was not economical and should not go ahead. Now we have the recent revelation that Labor is against light rail in the city.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. If he continues to interject, he will be removed from the Chamber for the remainder of the sitting day.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor is against light rail in the city, despite it being a plank in Labor's election platform. Page 19 of Labor's plan stated that Labor would build and deliver it. I do not know what has happened a couple of weeks later. The member for Cessnock got into them; he does not like light rail either. For some reason the member for Bankstown is against it. They are all against it. Labor has not seen a public transport project that it does not want to cancel.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will not respond. This is not a debate.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor loves the opportunity to cancel public transport projects. The Government is very proud to deliver them. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to take heed of his Facebook page. When he suddenly announced he was against light rail, comments started to pour into his Facebook page.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn Opposition members that if they do not cease interjecting they will be removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time. The member will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Lachie Drummond said, "The city is already clogged due to too many buses and cars. The only way to solve this problem is high-capacity transport mode at street level in a dedicated corridor, another harbour rail crossing with exit stops in the CBD." He sounds very sensible. He went on, "Currently the ALP opposes this and as a member I say our transport policy is a joke." That is what he said. Michael Finn of Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] fame said, "Bad Labor policy. Travelled the world. Trucks and cars out. Light rail in." That is what he said. Philip Bull said it best of all. Philip Bull said, "Luke Foley, you truly are a Muppet opposing public transport." This Government is very proud to be a government that is in favour of public transport, even though the member for Campbelltown and the rest of them are against public transport.

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier's time has expired.

Mr Greg Warren: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73, improper motives.

The SPEAKER: Order! The time for the Premier's answer has expired. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will come to order.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ETHICS CLASSES

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Did the Minister or why did the Minister refuse repeated requests to meet with or speak to the Chairman of Primary Ethics in April this year regarding ethics classes in schools? I repeat: "to meet with or speak to".

The SPEAKER: Order! The question implies that the Minister did refuse, and that is a statement of fact. I ask the member for Canterbury to rephrase her question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Why did the Minister refuse repeated requests to meet—

The SPEAKER: Order! That implies that action has taken place. I ask the member for Canterbury to rephrase her question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I will rephrase the question. Did the Minister refuse repeated requests to meet with or speak to the Chairman of Primary Ethics in April this year regarding ethics classes in schools?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am pleased to answer the question. The Director of the St James Ethics Centre, Dr Simon Longstaff, who is a great champion of ethics classes, rings me on my private mobile phone number. I think the last time was on a Sunday and we had a long chat. He lobbies me about ethics in schools. It is in the legislation that it can be offered. The Government proudly offers, and has offered for many years, special religious education [SRE] in public schools and will continue to do so. For students who choose not to participate in SRE, ethics is now an option. That was introduced by the previous Government and nothing changes around that. It may be that I have been asked to meet with a particular organisation and my diary may not have permitted that meeting to happen. I do not suggest that there is anything sinister about that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Blacktown will remain silent.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I do not know whether the member for Canterbury is suggesting something sinister about that. As I said, Simon Longstaff is the chief advocate for ethics classes and he certainly does a very good job of advocating for that. He lobbies me about ethics classes. He has my private mobile phone number and he calls me.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked.

Ms Linda Burney: I seek clarification.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury cannot seek clarification.

Ms Linda Burney: The question relates to the Chairman of Primary Ethics, not Simon Longstaff.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is remaining relevant. The member will resume her seat.

Ms Linda Burney: Could the Minister refer to the right person?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am asked by lots of organisations to have meetings but there are only 24 hours in a day. I meet with whomever I can and I meet with people whom I think it is relevant to meet. I endorse what the Premier has just said. Labor's debate, particularly on education, has boiled down to one form, or one section of one form.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Former Minister for Education Verity Firth said that her greatest achievement was to introduce ethics into schools. It certainly was a change, but it is nothing compared to what this Government has done over 4½ years in education, particularly public education.

Mr Jihad Dib: The Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR]—

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Lakemba is right that the LMBR was started by the previous Labor Government. I know that the former principal of Punchbowl Boys High School is very familiar with it. The question I am being asked as the Minister for Education is about one section of one form.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question is not about one section of one form.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked. There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: The question was: Did the Minister refuse repeated requests to meet?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: That was the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Mike Baird: We know this was not your tactic today. It was someone else's tactic.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have asked the member for Maroubra three times to resume his seat.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am just trying to help the Labor Party because, dare I say, there are more important issues than one section of one form. Walgett has been in the papers. When the member for Canterbury stood up I thought, "Here is a question about Walgett." With all the things that have been going on in Walgett over the past few weeks particularly, I thought, "Here we go, I am going to be asked a question about Walgett." But, no, I am asked a question about one section of one form.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Minister's answer has nothing to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will listen further as to whether the Minister is straying from the original question on ethics. The Minister has been entirely relevant to the question he was asked. The Minister has the call.

Ms Linda Burney: I am not sure what Walgett has to do with it.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is the Speaker who determines whether the Minister is being relevant.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: As I have said, I am asked to meet with lots of organisations, presumably with Primary Ethics as well. But my diary is my diary and I meet with organisations that I think I need to meet with.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not sure of the conspiracy theory being put by the Opposition. Most members and Ministers could name organisations that have sought a meeting with them and they have not been able to accommodate them. It happens all the time. I am sure that when Labor was in government the Ministers did not meet with every single organisation that asked for a meeting. I know that the department meets regularly with SRE providers and ethics providers, as it should. There is nothing sinister about my not having met with Primary Ethics. As I have said, we have been offering SRE for many years and we will continue to do so. Ethics classes are an option that is available to students in schools where it is available. That is a change that was made during the term of the previous Government and it remains in place under this Government.

LIQUOR LICENCE REFORMS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the community benefiting from the Government's liquor licence reforms?

Mr TROY GRANT: I thank the member for Tamworth and congratulate him on his leadership of the local Tamworth Liquor Accord, which in a voluntary capacity is setting a new benchmark, in tackling alcohol-related crime and liquor problems in the Tamworth area. The accord is setting new benchmarks and doing an enormous job. In the Tamworth local government area the licensed premises have self-imposed measures to combat alcohol-fuelled violence, including 12.30 a.m. lockouts and a policy of barring patrons. They are looking at implementing their own ID scanners.

That is something that the Government has not had to regulate in Tamworth; it is something that the licensed premises in Tamworth have done off their own bat for the good of the community. So I offer my sincere congratulations to them; they should be proud of their achievements in that area. This Government, initially under former Premier Barry O'Farrell and Minister George Souris and now under the leadership of

Mike Baird, has set a new standard for New South Wales in relation to the conduct of licensed venues and the conduct of the general public with respect to alcohol. We understand, and we heard, that the changes we introduced were polarising. We know that changes are often not welcomed.

I make no apology for not defining a good night out as going out late at night and getting punched in the face or ending up at St Vincent's Hospital. That is not my definition of a good night out. But 12 months after we introduced those changes the results are starting to come in. They show their significant impact and the changes which have occurred because of those measures, particularly in the Kings Cross and Sydney precincts. The latest Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] figures show that in the two years to March, 16 of the 17 major crime categories across New South Wales have either fallen or have remained stable.

In the 12 months since the lockout and last-drink laws began operating, alcohol-related crime in the CBD precinct has dropped 26 per cent and has fallen 36 per cent in Kings Cross. Going out is much safer and more enjoyable under this Government's stewardship. These issues were not formed overnight. They built up and built up. When those opposite were in government liquor reform was stymied for over a decade. They worried about internal factional fighting and they forgot about their responsibilities to the community. They had no guts and no glory in relation to tackling alcohol-related crime. Those on the opposite side of the Chamber are a disgrace.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. The member for Kogarah will come to order and cease interjecting. I call the member for Strathfield to order for the first time.

Mr TROY GRANT: There are now fewer problems with licensed premises across New South Wales than there ever were under the watch of those opposite. Impressively, the number of incidents inside violent venues has fallen by 39 per cent. I offer my congratulations to members of the industry on taking the lead in making sure their own premises meet these new standards that the community spoke long and loud about. The community has said, "Enough is enough; we want you to run your shows better." Members of the industry are doing that. It is now safe to go out and drink inside licensed premises. I inform the House that when venues do not get it right we have not been at all afraid to show them the door or to close them down.

I bring to the attention of the House one very disturbing incident in the township of Temora. On Monday, the Government shut the doors of the Royal Hotel in Temora for 28 days for repeatedly serving alcohol to minors. I have a very simple rule: if they look younger than me, ask for ID. It is not that hard. That is all the licensed premises need to do. There were 15-year-old kids in the Royal Hotel and they were getting drunk. The police came along and the operators of that hotel instructed the kids to scull the drinks right in front of the police. The children were dealt with by the police and put out the back of the premises. When the police drove away the licensees brought them back in and got them drunk again. Those are not the sorts of people we want in the industry. That is why their doors are closed. That is the type of action we are going to take every time.

I congratulate those people who are taking the lead. Others are not doing the right thing and just recently I barred a number for life. I barred them from ever holding a liquor licence because of their appalling disregard of the rules about the service of alcohol to minors. It resulted in them being kicked out into the streets; being kicked in the guts. Illicit drugs were being supplied on their premises. I have a simple message: That sort of behaviour is not on under a Baird-Grant Government. We will not tolerate it. I would also like to compliment the industry. The industry is embracing a whole raft of reforms. The success for our communities will result from a hand-in-hand approach of the Government and industry into the future.

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr GREG WARREN: My question is directed to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. I refer to section 131 of the Australian Energy Regulator's determination on Ausgrid which states that where costs for safety and reliability are above efficient levels they should be borne by Ausgrid's shareholders and not its consumers. In light of this why is the Minister seeking, through legal proceedings, to pass this cost on to consumers?

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call on the Minister to answer the question, I welcome to the gallery this afternoon the Hon. Ian Armstrong, a former member for Lachlan and twelfth Deputy Premier of New South Wales. Welcome, as always.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is quite interesting that I have been asked this question considering those opposite backed us yesterday in supporting lower prices for consumers, which is what is happening. I just cannot believe this. Yesterday I lost \$100 to my staff when I bet them that Her Majesty's loyal Opposition would not be stupid enough to ask me another question about the AER determination. I was wrong. In an attempt to recoup my losses—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! It is very early to raise a point of order. The Minister is entitled to make some introductory remarks, so I hope the member is not raising a point of order on relevance.

Mr Greg Warren: Standing Order 72 says that a member shall not use offensive words against those opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! It would be nice if both sides of the Chamber observed that standing order. I have not heard any evidence of the Minister—

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Not yet; I have not got to that part.

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

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the point of order was about the Minister resuming his seat, that was my fault. The point of order has been taken. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Last week the Leader of the Opposition was demanding that we give consumer advocates the right to appeal the AER determination. Did I ignore the Opposition's bleating, whining press release? To be fair, yes, I did. But then yesterday one of my staff came to me and bet another \$100 that the Leader of the Opposition would publicly demand that we give consumer advocates the right, again, to appeal the AER determination. In the mistaken belief that those opposite would not be stupid enough to put out yet another press release demanding that consumer advocates be given the right to appeal the AER's determination—

Mr Greg Warren: Point of order—

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

Mr Greg Warren: Under Standing Order 72 a member cannot use offensive words.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has not used any offensive words.

Mr Greg Warren: It is inappropriate that the Minister calls people stupid. I do not find it appropriate.

The SPEAKER: Order! He did not single out any individual and call him stupid—not yet.

Mr Greg Warren: That makes it even worse, Madam Speaker. He is referring to everyone; he is being offensive to everyone.

The SPEAKER: Order! No member has been insulted. There is no point of order. I will continue to listen to what the Minister has to say.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: In the mistaken belief that those opposite would not put out another press release demanding that I give consumer advocates the right to appeal the AER determination I thought, "Well, here's a chance to get my \$100 back." But yesterday, to my utter disbelief—

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

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I think the Minister has misheard the question. The question was not about consumer advocates.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not need the member for Maroubra to repeat the question. The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. These points of order are becoming spurious.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Yesterday we had another zinger demanding that consumer advocates be given the right to appeal the AER determination. I am happy to table the zinger that has cost me another \$100. Members in this House may question why I thought those opposite could not so be stupid.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Point of order: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not consider further spurious points of order. This is the last one. The Minister will resume his seat. These points of order are intended to interrupt the flow of the Minister's answer and are contrary to the standing orders.

Dr Hugh McDermott: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. That is a spurious point of order. The member will resume his seat. There is no point of order. There will be no further points of order taken from Opposition members.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Why do they publicly demand again that the consumer advocates be given the right to appeal the AER determination?

Mr Michael Daley: To the point of order: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is this another spurious point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: Standing Order 93 gives any member of this House the right to take a point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I gave the member for Maroubra the opportunity to state his point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat or be removed from the Chamber. I have warned members not to raise spurious points of order. If they do I will stop the clock.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I ask for an extension of time; I have the right to answer a question. [*Time expired.*]

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

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning. How is the Government protecting our precious natural environment and, in particular, safeguarding The Drip for generations to come?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: I can see some worried faces opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members on one or two calls to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order and will be removed from the Chamber for the rest of the day if they continue to interject.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: However, I clarify for the benefit of members opposite that it is not a reference to anyone opposite. Instead, it is a question about a stunning natural sandstone formation through which water percolates and literally drips down the Goulburn River. I thank the member for Upper Hunter for his question and congratulate him on his strong advocacy on this issue and many others. The Government has fulfilled its election promise to save The Drip. This natural water feature and the 23 hectares of land surrounding this culturally significant site will be a wonderful addition to the Goulburn River National Park. Let us go back to 2010 and—wait for it—another bad decision by the Labor Government. What a surprise! When Labor was last in power it disgracefully sold this natural wonder and surrounding land for \$2,000 in a dirty deed, done dirt cheap.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that most of them are on three calls to order.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Indeed, \$2,000 would have bought 250 chicken kebabs at the table of knowledge in Wollongong. Two grand could have bought 400 of the \$5 bargain basement Labor Party memberships in the seat of Auburn. But let us face it, two grand would not get you past entrees at lunch—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. This is completely irrelevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not irrelevant. The member for Keira will resume his seat. If Opposition members refrained from interjecting they might hear the answer. They are taking spurious points of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: As I was saying, \$2,000 would not get you past entrees at lunch at Catalina with Ian Macdonald and \$2,000 might only buy one week's laughing yoga classes for the member for Maitland.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 73. Referring to the member for Maitland in that manner is unacceptable. The Minister is better than that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Minister has the call.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: That is how little those opposite valued this asset. The Drip is also the site of rare Brett Whiteley murals painted in 1970. His canvas entitled "My Armchair" sold for \$3.9 million in 2012 so Labor's \$2,000 price tag shows that it truly has no idea. Now we right their wrong by fulfilling our election commitment to protect this iconic natural wonder in perpetuity. That means there will be no mining activity affecting The Drip and there will be no tunnels under this land. I recently travelled to Mudgee with the Minister for Planning. We were told how important this spectacular natural asset was to the community. That is why the Government has acted.

I thank the local Aboriginal community, the Wiradjuri people, and the Mudgee District Environment Group, for their work to save The Drip. And now further work is ongoing to secure more land nearby. This is part of a binding agreement reached with Moolarben Coal that secures no impact on water supply feeding The Drip and no subsidence impact from mining on The Drip and adjacent lands. With this we have now made 81 additions to existing parks and created eight brand new parks since 2011. Since 2011 we have also reserved over 38,000 hectares of land in the parks system for the first time.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: We have acquired 77 hectares of land of Aboriginal cultural significance at Kariang for Brisbane Water National Park. We are including a further 240 hectares in Wianamatta Regional Park. We have now protected an extra 5,000 hectares of internationally significant wetlands in the Everlasting Swamp National Park, the Gwydir Wetlands State Conservation Area and Doodle Comer Swamp Nature Reserve. Since 2011 we have moved over 46,000 hectares of land into nature reserve and national park to increase protection, including around 2,400 hectares to the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve. We have also announced the \$40 million Green Corridors program to purchase high conservation land to connect our parks together. We are a government that honours its commitments. We have corrected a dreadful Labor decision to flog The Drip for a measly \$2,000. Under this Government The Drip will have full protection for future generations.

MURWILLUMBAH DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Ms JO HAYLEN: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government's response to mothers and their babies who are rallying today against the closure last week of Murwillumbah District Hospital's birthing service, forcing them to travel more than 30 kilometres for treatment?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Geography is not my strong point but Murwillumbah is a long way from Summer Hill. I would have thought that the member for Summer Hill might want to ask about her constituency as she is new to this Chamber, and we welcome her. However, I am happy to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. I remind members that many of them are on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Health services have to be conducted in the safest possible way. Decisions are made around health services that, at times, provide challenges, because geography is part of the equation. We must provide the safest possible health services with the right equipment in the right facilities in the right locations. The member appears to be concerned about this topic but she did not ask the Minister for Health the question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I note that the former shadow Minister for Health, Andrew McDonald, spoke in favour of this approach. He works in the health system and he understands the dangers and the challenges it produces. He also understands sensible health policy. I suggest strongly to Labor Party members that if they wish to move ahead they stop taking up every populist position under the sun. It is about time they stood for something. This Government is genuinely trying to deliver the best health services in the country and members opposite should be supporting that decision. Safety is critically important. It is becoming an increasingly common trend in this place for members opposite to be confused about what they stand for. There are many examples where they stand up for populism, fight the causes and then they are happy to forget about them.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: All members would have been surprised on Saturday when they read the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which I do not do every Saturday.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Standing Order 129. The question was about Murwillumbah birthing mothers. If the Minister for Health was worth her weight, she would pass the Premier a note because he does not have one.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. There is no point of order. The Premier has been answering the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Labor Party will take populist positions, but we were all surprised on Saturday when the Leader of the Opposition announced that it is time the party moved on from its obsessive focus on electricity privatisation.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I would have thought that in Australia in this day and age birthing services were a right not a populist position. If the Premier does not know the answer he should sit down.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members should quote the standing order that is being breached. I do not want to hear arguments. The Premier has the call. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Maroubra is the only leadership candidate in the history of this country who had the numbers when he stood for a leadership position but then pulled out.

Ms Jo Haylen: Point of order. My point of order is relevance. The question was about birthing mothers not electricity.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been relevant.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Minister for Health regularly consults with local communities. This Government is doing everything it can to deliver the best services in the safest way possible. The Labor Party will continue to follow populism. The Leader of the Opposition said throughout the election campaign that the whole election was about electricity privatisation. When the bills were introduced in this House, the Labor Party voted against them and now it says it is time we moved on. That is the attitude of Labor. This Government will deliver substance and policy.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Several members who are on three calls to order are continuing to refuse to come to order.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education. How is the New South Wales Government improving access to quality early childhood education and out-of-hours school care?

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I thank the member for his question and for his keen interest in early childhood education and out-of-hours school care. I also thank him for asking me the first question in my capacity as the first Minister for Early Childhood Education. It demonstrates clearly that this Government is committed to ensuring that more children gain the benefits of an early childhood education in the year before school. Under this Government's preschool funding model, funding has increased to community preschools by 20 per cent compared to 2013 funding levels and 95 per cent have received an increase in the base funding rate.

The funding model assists community preschools in the important role they play in children's early learning and their development in the year before school. Enrolment data from the 2014 community preschool census shows that the preschool funding model is having a positive impact. For example, enrolments of four-year-old and five-year-old children in the year before school has increased by 2 per cent since 2013 and enrolments from low socio-economic and Aboriginal backgrounds have increased by 5 per cent.

The New South Wales Government is also investing \$20 million in a Before and After School Care Fund to help working families across this State by establishing more out-of-school hours care services. Grants of up to \$20,000 will be made available to at least 1,000 Government and non-government primary schools where currently there are no services. Grants will be a single payment to assist with the cost of establishing outside school hours care, which will assist in meeting community demand for those important services. This initiative has the potential to deliver up to 45,000 additional places to support the hardworking families across New South Wales.

I am also pleased to inform the House that a new preschool-primary school partnership trial will commence in the inner city and in Tamworth. This trial will establish new ways to bring early childhood services into New South Wales public schools. The initiative will facilitate the best possible transition of students from preschool to kindergarten. Parents will have greater certainty in accessing quality education and care for their children. The connections between Government and non-government agencies will be strengthened and will provide a high level of service for families and communities.

This Government is also improving the provision of early childhood education in rural and remote areas. The Government will invest \$4 million in rural and remote communities to improve access to quality early childhood education and to respond to the needs of those families. To help services connect with families who are not sending their children to preschool, the Government will provide community preschools with a one-off grant to help develop or improve their outreach initiatives. Community preschools in outer regional remote or very remote areas will receive one-off grants of \$7,000 each for this purpose. This is in addition to the \$5 million community preschool capital program, which is increasing the capacity of preschools in rural and remote areas to cater for additional children.

When the projects are completed, they will have created more than 360 additional preschool places in areas where they are most needed. As well as increasing the capacity of services, the New South Wales Government has taken steps to improve the quality of early childhood education and care. In 2013-14, the Government awarded 102 scholarships to early childhood educators to upgrade their qualifications to a degree. The Government will build on this initiative with a specific rural and remote scholarship program, which it committed to prior to the election. It will offer scholarships exclusively to educators in rural and remote areas to help them become qualified early childhood teachers. The Government is committed to delivering quality preschool and outside school hours care for families across New South Wales no matter where they live. I am pleased with the success that has been achieved so far. I look forward to continuing to update the House on the exciting projects that are currently underway.

WESTCONNEX

Ms JENNY LEONG: My question is directed to the Premier and Minister for Western Sydney. Given the importance of integration across transport, housing and infrastructure, will the Premier explain to the community along Parramatta Road who is responsible for ensuring the integration between the WestConnex Delivery Authority reporting to the Minister for Roads and the UrbanGrowth Parramatta Road Urban Renewal Strategy under the Minister for Planning?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for her question. Members will not be surprised that The Greens have taken seats from Labor. The question is a reasonably sensible one—we are seeing more of this from the crossbenchers—and the answer is simple, but I am a little confused. The Greens do not want the WestConnex so why do they want urban renewal across Parramatta Road? With WestConnex the Government

will have the capacity to do things on Parramatta Road that we otherwise could not do. Those of us on this side of the House have something a little different to what The Greens are used to—we get on well and work together. Just take a look at Mr Brad Hazzard, Mr Rob Stokes and Mr Stuart Ayres who are seated on the frontbench.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This project has various parts. The Hon. Duncan Gay will be responsible for the roads, Minister Andrew Constance will be responsible for transport, and Minister Rob Stokes will be responsible for planning and urban renewal. The Government is delighted to be able to deliver a project that will transform this city. Thousands of cars will be taken off the road, travel time for commuters across Western Sydney will be improved, many motorists will be taken out of the inner west in stage 3, and importantly, consultation will play a big part. The member for Newcastle, sorry the member for Strathfield, I keep forgetting, has already engaged in this process and has said that her community wants to constructively engage in the consultation. That is exactly what the Government wants to see.

All of those Ministers will be working with individual responsibilities to deliver a project along Parramatta Road, which provides an opportunity for renewal that will not exist unless the WestConnex project is built. The Government is proud to be delivering the WestConnex. We are also proud of the legislation, which hopefully will be passed in this Parliament tonight, to provide an opportunity for funding to complete that project. We have only one question time left before the budget is handed down, and yet again those opposite have not asked one budget question. I have a simple message for the backbench: You should be listening to the shadow Minister for Finance, Service and Property, the member for Cessnock, because he pays attention to the budget. Do not listen to the member for Wollongong.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order is that the Premier is not directing his comments through the Chair. The Premier is speaking directly to members across the Chamber. He is also inciting interjections.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Premier will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite focus on an enrolment form, not the whole State budget—namely, \$70 billion of decisions that are critical for driving this State forward. As yet those opposite have not asked one question about the budget. Over the past four years, they do not do their homework and they are not doing it now. The Government is proud to be providing the funding to drive this city forward. The WestConnex is a critical project and the coordination across the Ministers will ensure that we will deliver what is required. We will continue to consult with the community. Indeed, we will make sure that this great city is made even greater under our plans.

SYDNEY WINTER TOURISM

Mr LEE EVANS: I address my question to the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport. How is the New South Wales Government helping to drive tourism and investment in Sydney over the winter months?

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

Mr STUART AYRES: I thank the member for his fantastic question. The member for Heathcote well understands the value and importance of tourism—before coming to this place he educated many people in hospitality and tourism. Sydney and New South Wales has once again got its mojo back due to the good work of those on this side of the House. On top of our strong financial position, the Government is also driving strong tourism opportunities. Since Destination NSW was created four years ago, funding of more than \$3.3 billion from tourism has been added to the New South Wales economy. This is the result of focused tourism and hospitality activity in driving overnight visitations and destinations to this State. Vivid will be our showcase over the winter months, and what a fantastic celebration it is.

Ms Jodi McKay: Introduced by Labor.

Mr STUART AYRES: Absolutely. Under Labor Vivid was bland, under this Government Vivid is vivid.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: More people attended Vivid this weekend than in the first three Vivid events held under Labor. This Government has Vivid up and going, including 60 light installations, 96 music events and 150 ideas events.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: Vivid is the largest festival of light, music and ideas anywhere in the world. More than 9,700 people on specialised travel packages will be coming from China, which shows how important that tourism market is to us. And that is a nice little lead in to the importance and value of trade to our State. Since New South Wales started to re-energise its trade and investment bodies overseas more than \$4.2 billion in direct investment has been generated in New South Wales and more than 2,500 jobs. I note that some members on the other side of the Chamber also understand the importance of foreign investment. In his inaugural speech the member for Kogarah made some very important remarks about the importance of foreign investment and why New South Wales should be open and transparent in collecting that investment and driving jobs growth.

I suspect the member for Kogarah would know that this week the University of Sydney and KPMG released a report that showed that 72 per cent of the \$9.6 billion foreign investment that comes from China to Australia is being invested in New South Wales. I would have thought that a party that has some support for people in employment, people wanting to improve the quality of our manufacturing industries, people wanting to see our transport, roads and infrastructure working better, would be open to that foreign investment. During the election campaign those opposite ran straight to the gutter. They sent a signal to every nation worldwide that they will play race over everything else. They will dog whistle to get what they want. Make no mistake—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Minister's answer is completely irrelevant to the question he was asked. We will not be lectured to on this sort of stuff after what they did in East Hills.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has strayed only slightly from the question. The Minister has been relevant. There is no point of order.

Mr STUART AYRES: We are talking about a nation that invests \$9 billion in our country, 72 per cent of which comes to this State, yet you say my answer is not relevant. That tells us everything about what those opposite think of New South Wales on the international stage. You people are an absolute joke. Let us have a look at what you did during the election. Let us bring up Daniel Andrews, the guy who wanted to cancel—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Under the standing orders the Minister is required to address his comments through the Chair, not to members directly across the table.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: Those opposite are an absolute joke. They are turning dollars away from our State. They are costing people in Western Sydney jobs. Let us think about it. What happened during the course of the election? When they sensed that things were going bad, when they realised they were going to be beaten, what happened to Labor?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Minister is required to direct his comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister was directing his comments through the Chair. There is no point of order.

Ms Linda Burney: As I recall it the Minister did not want Vivid, he wanted Tiger Woods.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Canterbury from the Chamber for the rest of the day under Standing Order 249.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber, accompanied by the Serjeant-at-Arms.]

The SPEAKER: Order! When I ask members to resume their seat, I expect them to do it. The Minister has the call.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr STUART AYRES: When you are starting to lose the election because people have figured you out and you have no substance, when you are not actually talking about renewing assets so that people can get the things they need in this State you run straight to the gutter and you run straight to dog whistling.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: If you really want to reinforce whether you are open for investment, what do you do? You bring Daniel Andrews to New South Wales. He is the guy who tears up billion-dollar contracts.

Mr Matt Kean: Sovereign risk.

Mr STUART AYRES: It is absolutely sovereign risk. This is the guy who is the champion of saying, "Come and invest in New South Wales; come and invest in Australia." The Leader of the Opposition says, "No, thank you." He has said that no-one wants you to come here—if you have the wrong colour, you do not want to invest in our State. That is exactly what he did.

Mr Luke Foley: Point of order: Under Standing Order 73 that is clearly a personal reflection on a member of this House and I would ask that the Minister be asked to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the Minister wish to withdraw that remark?

Mr STUART AYRES: I will not withdraw that statement because they ran their election campaign and took it to the gutter. They are going to spend another four years on the opposition side of the Chamber, and they can rot on that side of the Chamber.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. The Minister did not wish to withdraw the remark. I cannot compel the Minister to withdraw a remark. I asked him to withdraw it. Is the member arguing with me?

Mr Chris Minns: You are doing exactly what you accused us of doing. What a stupid thing to say.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Kogarah for the rest of the day under Standing Order 249.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Kogarah left the Chamber, accompanied by the Serjeant-at-Arms.]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that this is not an argument. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Luke Foley: He insults us and you throw us out; that makes sense.

Mr STUART AYRES: New South Wales is open for business because of what is happening on this side of the Chamber.

Mr Luke Foley: You throw us out. How does that work? He is the one who should have been thrown out.

Mr Michael Daley: No wonder they demoted you, you boofhead.

The SPEAKER: What about that comment? Was that alright with the member for Wyong?

Mr Luke Foley: He says it and you throw us out.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. Members will come to order. The member for Monaro and the member for Lakemba will stop arguing across the Chamber.

Mr Michael Daley: Maybe he is offended by the comments of the Minister.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Maroubra for the rest of the day under Standing Order 249.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber, accompanied by the Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mr Luke Foley: Why don't you referee both sides? You've lost control for a reason.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Auburn left the Chamber at 3.24 p.m.]

Question time concluded at 3.25 p.m.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Chairs and Deputy Chairs

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2) I advise the House that:

- (1) On 2 June 2015:
 - (a) Adam John Marshall was elected Chair and Glenn Edward Brookes was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services.
 - (b) Geoffrey Keith Provest was elected Chair and Jai Travers Rowell was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety.
 - (c) Alistair Andrew Henskens was elected Chair and Bruce Neville Notley-Smith was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure.
 - (d) Bruce Neville Notley-Smith was elected Chair and Mark Owen Taylor was elected Deputy Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.
- (2) On 3 June 2015:
 - (a) Melanie Rhonda Gibbons was elected Chair and Damien Francis Tudehope was elected Deputy Chair of the Committee on Children and Young People.
 - (b) Melanie Rhonda Gibbons was elected Chair and Geoffrey Keith Provest was elected Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General.

PETITIONS

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Elizabeth Bay Marina

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

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Same-sex Marriage

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

Pet Shops

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

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**.

Lake Conjola District

Petition requesting funding to enhance, maintain and upgrade facilities for residents and tourists in the Lake Conjola district, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

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: Order of Business

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Thursday 4 June 2015 to permit:

- (1) General business to take precedence of the Address-in-Reply until 1.00 p.m.
- (2) Consideration of general business notices of motions (general notices) to continue until 1.30 p.m.
- (3) The interruption of any item of business before the House prior to 1.30 p.m. for the consideration of any messages from the Legislative Council returning the Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Bill and cognate bill with amendments.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

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

Noes, 30

Ms Aitchison	Ms Harrison	Mr Piper
Mr Atalla	Ms Haylen	Ms K. Smith
Ms Car	Mr Hoenig	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Catley	Ms Horner	Mr Warren
Mr Chanthivong	Mr Kamper	Ms Washington
Mr Crakanthorp	Ms Leong	Mr Zangari
Mr Dib	Mr Lynch	
Ms Doyle	Dr McDermott	
Ms Finn	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Foley	Mr Park	Ms Hay
Mr Greenwich	Mr Parker	Mr Lalich

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

CBD and South East Light Rail Project

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [3.37 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because the Government is supporting public transport and getting on with building the infrastructure that the city desperately needs. That is the same public transport that members opposite shamefully neglected when they squandered 16 years in government. The CBD and South East Light Rail project will transform the way we move around our great city. It will remove hundreds of buses from George Street and allow central business district pedestrians to reclaim and enjoy the retail corridor.

It is urgent that we get on and build the project. The 16 years that Labor squandered mean that we need to act quickly and decisively to make up for that neglect. Congestion is costing the city \$5 billion a year. It will get worse and worse unless projects such as the CBD and South East Light Rail are built. Members on this side of the House have a great track record in delivering. We delivered the extension of the Inner West Light Rail on budget and on time. The South West Rail Link has been delivered under budget and on time. Incredible progress has been made to date on the North West Rail Link.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: The Government is building the Barangaroo ferry hub, upgrading the Wynyard, Town Hall and Museum stations, constructing the Wynyard walk and redesigning the bus network. This Government is prepared to make the hard decisions in order to deliver the transformative infrastructure projects that the State needs. In relation to the CBD and South East Light Rail project, I am delighted to say that we have heard from many of the key stakeholders about their support for the project. They include Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, the Sydney Business Chamber, the Property Council of Australia, the Australian Retailers Association and the City of Sydney, which together are contributing \$220 million of their own money to the project. The Labor Party supported the project up until the election, but now it does not.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: Up until last week. Something happened.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: Yes. The *Daily Telegraph* changed its view and Labor followed suit. All the groups I have mentioned recognise the benefits that the project will bring to Sydney by relieving traffic congestion and supporting our major health, education, business and cultural precincts. Once the CBD light rail is built, Sydneysiders will wonder how they ever managed without it.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr LUKE FOLEY (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [3.40 p.m.]: This motion deserves priority because the Government has taken a series of steps contrary to public interest simply to achieve its desired privatisation of the electricity network. The public policy priority when it comes to the public services of the State should always be to act in the interests of the users of the State's public services. Under my leadership, that

always will be the position adopted by the Labor Party. We see this Government mounting an appeal against the determination of the Australian Energy Regulator [AER] to lower power prices for every household and business in this State. The Government's appeal will hurt eight million electricity customers in the State, that is every citizen of the State who consumes electricity. To add insult to injury, the Government will use taxpayer funds to force taxpayers to pay higher electricity prices.

When it comes to the public school system, it should always be run in the interests of the State's pupils and parents. What we see here is that the highest office-holder in the State, the Premier, and his office are acting to shift the goalposts when it comes to the provision of scripture and ethics classes. It is not the role of the State to take sides. The Premier's office actively intervened to seek changes to the enrolment form to remove the reference to "ethics". The Minister for Education did not seem to know who heads up Primary Ethics. Bruce Hogan is the chairman of Primary Ethics. I would have thought that the Minister for Education and member for Murray would know who he is because Mr Hogan is also the chairman of Snowy Hydro Limited. A member who represents irrigators might want to know who the chairman of Snowy Hydro is.

The Minister for Trade has had the hide to go for Labor on race when his local party peddled fake Islamic leaflets for three nights during the 2007 election and when in Auburn the Liberal candidate, who stood with the Premier, had the hide to attack me for being a friend of Israel and a friend of Armenia. That is what the Liberal Party did. When it comes to playing the race card, the bloke the Premier stood up with in Auburn two days from the election distributed leaflets in the electorate attacking me for being a friend of Armenia and Israel.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition will direct his comments through the Chair. The member's time has expired.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

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

Noes, 36

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

CBD AND SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [3.53 p.m.]: I move:

That his House:

- (1) Notes that the Government continues to support public transport projects across New South Wales.
- (2) Supports the Opposition's CBD light rail strategy as outlined on page 19 of Labor's Infrastructure Plan that Labor will complete the CBD and South East Light Rail Project.
- (3) Notes that light rail is central to the future of Sydney.
- (4) Calls on the Opposition to join with stakeholders and support its election commitment to revitalise Sydney's George Street.

I was wandering through the Parliamentary Library and I found this document in the fiction section: *A Better Way: Labor's fully funded infrastructure plan*. It was released just before the last election. On page 19 of the document the Labor Party commits to completing the CBD and South East Light Rail project. It is there in black and white. For some reason, in the last seven days the Opposition has decided that it cannot support the CBD section of the light rail.

It was like that throughout the election campaign. The Labor candidate for the electorate of Coogee did not support the light rail. He wanted a metro, and we know what happens when Labor wants a metro. But then the Leader of the Opposition said, "We do support light rail. We are going to complete it." The member for Maroubra wanted light rail and then he did not want light rail. He said that he would support light rail if it was in his electorate but he would not support light rail if it was not.

All the Government is asking is that those on the other side of the House support this plan, support the construction and support the revolutionary change that is going to take place in our CBD and in the way we will move around and enjoy it. This light rail program is a great example of how this Government is investing in the infrastructure that our great State desperately needs. This \$2.1 billion project will transform the CBD. The Labor Party's own transport plan uses the same figure that the Government uses. The congestion in the CBD costs the New South Wales economy \$5.1 billion a year, and that is going to rise to \$8.8 billion in 2021. Labor recognises that there is a problem but it will not do anything to relieve it. By 2031 about 780,000 trips will be made to the city centre each week day—150,000 more than in 2013.

The existing infrastructure cannot keep pace. Sydneysiders need better transport options and a fully integrated transport system. This Government is prepared to make the hard decisions in order to deliver the transformative projects that this State needs. It is not going to be an easy build; it is going to be difficult. But we have faced up to difficult builds before, and Sydneysiders have coped with them and have cheered the final result. The Eastern Distributor caused great disruption around the eastern suburbs but now suburbs such as Surry Hills and East Sydney are completely different because of the absence of that traffic. George Street will be completely transformed by the removal of thousands of buses from that corridor, thereby allowing people to enjoy the area once more.

The light rail vehicles that we have ordered can carry 9,000 passengers in each direction per hour. That is more than the current capacity. The vehicles run at 97 per cent reliability compared to 36 per cent reliability for buses. This light rail project is going to take 220 buses off the roads during the congested morning peaks. The project will provide for passenger numbers equivalent to 50 buses down George Street in the peak hour. The Government is not only removing thousands of buses, it is increasing the capacity by around 50 buses in the morning peak hour. The costs and benefits have been evaluated: 10,000 jobs and \$4 billion in benefits to our great city. We have consulted extensively with the community. More than 31 community and business forums and seven community and business reference meetings have been held. More than 3,000 visits have been made by the project team to businesses and residents.

Early works are underway. We are getting on with the job. The detailed construction schedule was released about a week ago. A bus plan will be implemented on 4 October to help combat the congestion that is expected during the build. Our focus is on getting in, getting the job done and getting out as quickly and as efficiently as possible so that we have the least disruption to the city during the build. This is a transformative

project for our great city. For many years I have dreamed that we would see light rail return to the Anzac Parade corridor up to Randwick and down to Kingsford, and now it is becoming a reality. In 2018 Sydneysiders will be able to enjoy it and wonder how they ever did without it.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [3.58 p.m.]: It is not the concept of light rail that Labor is opposed to. Labor is opposed to the sheer incompetence of the Government in the way it is endeavouring to implement the project and the arrogance that the Government displays to any organisation or council that wants to add value to the proposal. The Government signed off on this deal before the election. Labor had no choice but to honour the deal and try to make the proposal work in order to prevent a sovereign risk.

The implementation of this project has been incompetent not just because it was announced that the project would cost \$1.2 billion and has now blown out to \$2.1 billion—that is, it is \$900 million over budget already with nothing having been done—nor because this project is not part of any integrated transport strategy. Generally, if a government is going to implement a light rail project and spend more than \$2 billion it would at least have an integrated plan and be able to marry in the other public transport routes, including bus routes.

None of that work has been done. There is no plan on where the 200 buses will go. The implementation of this project is like *Fawlty Towers*. The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party scurried out of the portfolio in a hurry and handed it to the member for Bega, who is now stuck with it. He is the Spanish waiter who has to try to implement this shambles of a project. For those with any doubt, I will give some examples. The Government wanted to place a light rail stop at Randwick racecourse. The Government and the Minister were told in writing, not only by me but also by Randwick City Council, that a light rail stop could not be put in front of the racecourse because there was a building in the way—the administrative building of the Australian Turf Club. The stop was to be half a metre from that building.

The Government was told, "A light rail stop cannot be put on that side of Allison Road because there is a flaming building in the way". The Government's response was to relocate it to the other side of the road, take away part of Centennial Park, Governor Macquarie's gift to the people of Sydney in the early 1800s, and remove 20 historic trees that are 100 years old as well as bike tracks and footpaths. The Government will not consider another location in order to save those trees.

The other classic example with respect to the implementation of this project relates to the electorate of Coogee. Instead of a light rail stop being put in front of the Prince of Wales Hospital and Sydney Children's Hospital so that people can access those hospitals by public transport, the stop will be in the middle of Highgrove Park, a war memorial to Australian Anzacs—not within cooee of the hospitals. The council offered to resume land to allow for a stop in front of the hospital but the Government ignored that offer. These people are entrusted with spending \$2.1 billion to date and any other buried money. The Government has sacked the Deputy Director General of Transport and set up another delivery authority. The implementation of the whole project is absurd.

Another classic example is that the Government will put a stop in front of South Sydney Juniors in Anzac Parade, Kingsford. I would defy the logic of anybody who tried to traverse Kingsford Nine Ways from the light rail stop. If those examples are not sufficient, I refer to Albert (Tibby) Cotter Bridge on which the Government spent \$37 million, \$12 million over budget—a bridge that is being investigated by the Auditor-General as we speak—to service a light rail stop so that people can cross Anzac Parade to get to the Sydney Football Stadium and the Sydney Cricket Ground. There is no light rail stop anywhere near this \$37 million ugly bridge. The whole implementation of the project is a debacle. Is it any wonder that the businesspeople of Sydney around George Street have no confidence in the Government's ability to implement a light rail project through the central business district? This whole project is just a debacle.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) [4.03 p.m.]: One immediate example of the ability of the Government to deliver projects under budget, on time, efficiently and effectively bears the name the North West Rail Link. Without doubt, the Government has displayed an ability to deliver projects that it has promised on budget. During question time, the Premier spoke about the application to enrol in New South Wales Labor. The first question to which he alluded related to Labor's approach to public transport in New South Wales, that is, announce projects but never fund them, cancel projects whenever possible, or say "We just don't like public transport". I encourage the Opposition to come on board.

The argument put by Labor against this project is that it likes the project, it just does not like the way in which the Government is implementing it. The member for Heffron says that he likes the concept. If that is so,

Labor should be out there promoting the project. For many years I have rejected going to the Sydney Cricket Ground [SCG] to attend football events because of the difficulty in parking and traffic congestion. It is a dreadful place to get to and to get away from. This project will make those venues eminently more attractive for users.

The great ability of this Government is that it delivers projects that promote jobs. This project will create 10,000 jobs in New South Wales. Aligned with the creation of jobs is the ability to move people more quickly around Sydney, to and from their families, to reduce congestion in the city and to reduce the number of cars on our roads. This is something we should all embrace. A government can never deliver a project of this sort without creating some disruption to people's lives. The great task is to minimise the level of disruption to people's lives, and the Government is committed to doing that. It has wheeled out a plan to ensure that people who are affected by this development are notified and communicated with in the best way possible. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.06 p.m.]: Let us be clear, the new transport Minister has served the shortest term as Treasurer that this State has ever seen. The latest transport project to be announced is the train line to the back bench for him. He has been thrown a hospital pass. I feel for the member for Bega. Not only has he had to swallow his pride and accept that he goes down in history as serving the shortest term as Treasurer, but he has to protect the reputation of the member for Willoughby and ensure she is still in the mix for the leadership. She has been taken out of the very difficult Transport portfolio and put into the more comfortable position of Treasurer.

We are on the side of the member for Bega. He has been running around the gallery saying he does not want this project. He has been running around Sydney saying, "This is not my deal. I've done everything to try to get this contract destroyed but I can't do it." He does not want it; we know he does not want it. Half of the Government members do not want it. Whilst the Opposition supports light rail, we do not support it down through the central business district [CBD]. I refer to a statement on light rail from one of the Government's proud heroes and good friends, Nick Greiner. He said:

Light rail is, however, significantly more expensive than bus services, has no material speed benefits, is less flexible in traffic and if service reforms to the operation of CBD bus services are implemented does not offer significantly greater capacity.

I did not say that. It was said by a former Liberal Premier who was appointed to advise on infrastructure, but his advice was ignored. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.09 p.m.], by leave: I speak in support of the motion introduced by the member for Coogee. The central business district light rail will reform the city for the better. It will reduce congestion by replacing buses that clog up George Street. It will enable city residents and workers to commute easily throughout the CBD. The City of Sydney and Transport for NSW have also conducted consultation forums in the lead-up to the rollout of the CBD light rail. The CBD light rail has the strong support of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce and many communities and businesses in the CBD that will be affected by it. The light rail plan for the CBD was taken to the last local government election by Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and it was taken to the 2015 State election by this Government. Members in this place who supported the CBD light rail at the State election were re-elected.

There is a concern that key cycling infrastructure is being removed or will be delayed. It is important to note that while construction occurs, more people will want to cycle into the CBD. Of course there will be disruption as a result of this plan, as there always is with major infrastructure projects. However, the Government is committed to strong consultation through various community consultation groups. I have attended a number of the consultation forums. A stakeholders group, on which I sit with the member for Coogee, was present in the planning process and is now present in the delivery process. We were able to raise any concerns we had and have them resolved.

At this point we do not need politicians pandering to the *Daily Telegraph*. We do not need residents and businesses in the CBD to be talked down and told about the destruction that will occur. Those comments do not help business confidence. People must look to the future and come together to enable the transformative plan to work so that light rail will transform the CBD for the better.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.12 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Heffron for his comments. I will obtain a copy of *Hansard* to read what he said and it can be volume 2 of the work of fiction from the Labor Party because the member for Heffron spoke a number of untruths.

Mr Andrew Gee: Lies.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: No, that is unparliamentary language. This project has had \$500 million allocated to it because it is a better project. We will have longer trams with higher capacity and the plan is being delivered sooner. We can achieve those results for \$500 million. The Labor Party squandered \$500 million on the Rozelle Metro, which amounted to nothing. Money from State taxes went into a big hole. I thank the member for Epping for pointing out the great project of the North West Rail Link. It will transform not only the CBD but the entire Sydney rail network. The member for Keira could only talk about counting the numbers for leadership. He did not speak a word about transport. He is the Opposition spokesperson for transport, but he hates public transport and has trouble talking about it.

The voice of reason came from the member for Sydney. He said this is a terrific project and congratulated this Government and the member for Bega for getting on with the job of delivering it, which will revolutionise Sydney. It is the start to a broader and larger light rail network that will be rolled out across Sydney over many years to come. When the ribbon is cut in 2018, the member for Bega will be proud. I will be the proud member for Coogee because I made an election promise in 2010 that if I was elected in 2011 I would deliver light rail to Kingsford and Randwick. It is happening. Members on this side of the House honour their commitments. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution government business proceeded with.

HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (PARAMEDICS) BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health) [4.15 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to bring before the House the Health Services Amendment (Paramedics) Bill 2015. The bill proposes to amend the Health Services Act 1997 to restrict use of the title "paramedic" and to make it an offence for any person to use the title of "paramedic" if they do not hold the required qualifications. The required qualifications will be set out in regulations under the legislation. Paramedics are highly skilled health professionals who provide emergency health services to injured and sick people. Paramedics work with a wide range of patients—from those with low acuity to those in primary care through to advanced life support and intensive care. Their patients cover a life span—from birth, to paediatrics, to geriatrics. They perform complex health procedures and interventions, including emergency medical assessment; lifesaving resuscitation and defibrillation; the administration of drugs of addiction, such as morphine; manage complex burns or spinal injuries, and they do so in challenging or uncontrolled settings.

Paramedics are often at the front line, saving lives and ensuring patients are treated and managed appropriately until the patient can be transported to hospital. It can be highly stressful and, unfortunately, sometimes dangerous work. Members will agree with me when I express my gratitude for the work that paramedics do in our society. It is no surprise that, of all the professions, paramedics rate most highly in the community. Paramedics can be contrasted with individuals providing first aid services.

First aiders provide a wonderful service to our community and many do so voluntarily. They are found on our sports fields and at community events assisting members of our communities. All members can agree that our communities benefit from their hard work, dedication and community spirit. There is an effective range of measures in place in New South Wales to regulate paramedics and ensure the protection of the public from unsafe practices. For example, the vast majority of paramedics in New South Wales are employees of the Ambulance Service of NSW and are subject to employment conditions of the service and the NSW Health Code of Conduct.

The possession and administration of drugs by paramedics is regulated under the New South Wales poisons and therapeutics goods legislation. Paramedics in New South Wales are also subject to the Code of

Conduct for Unregistered Health Professionals in New South Wales, which sets out a number of important ethical standards for unregistered health practitioners, such as practising in a safe and ethical manner, adopting standard precautions for infection control, not practising under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and not engaging in a sexual relationship with a client. Breaches of the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners can be investigated by the Health Care Complaints Commission, which has the power to make a prohibition order in respect of serious breaches of the code. Any person can make a complaint in respect of alleged breaches of the code.

However, there is one gap in the regulation of paramedics. Currently any person can call themselves a paramedic in New South Wales regardless of their level of qualifications and training. It can also be difficult for the public to distinguish between highly trained and skilled paramedics and other important, but more routine, first aider and first responder roles. We need to recognise the high degree of education, training and/or experience required of paramedics. This education and training ensures that paramedics can perform the tasks necessary to treat patients in need of urgent and often lifesaving treatment. By protecting the use of the title "paramedic", members of the public can be sure that those who call themselves a paramedic have the necessary qualifications, training or experience.

Paramedics are generally required to hold a university degree or vocational diploma relating to paramedical science. It often takes three years or more of study and on-the-job training to be recognised as a paramedic. It is a long hard slog. While the existing range of regulations covering paramedics is effective, it is time to protect the title "paramedic" and give the community assurance that only those people with the appropriate qualifications, training or experience can call themselves a paramedic.

I am pleased to bring the Health Services Amendment (Paramedics) Bill before the House. This bill will amend the Health Services Act to make it an offence for a person who is not a paramedic to hold themselves out to be a paramedic. A paramedic is defined in the bill to include a person who has the qualifications, training or experience prescribed by the regulations; a person authorised under the law of another jurisdiction to call themselves a paramedic; or a person authorised by the Health Secretary to hold themselves out to be a paramedic.

The Ambulance Service of New South Wales employs around 3,400 paramedics, the majority of all paramedics in New South Wales, to help the sick and injured in our community. The Ambulance Service of New South Wales requires its paramedics to either have an appropriate university course in paramedical health science or undertake an on-the-job vocational diploma, which takes around three years.

The Ambulance Service of New South Wales provides an example of what the public should expect from any paramedic in New South Wales. A large number of university courses across New South Wales and Australia offer a degree in paramedical science. In addition, the vocational training course offered by the Ambulance Service of New South Wales has the necessary educational and training requirements for paramedics—these courses will be listed in the regulations.

I also recognise that there may be a number of persons who may have been working as a paramedic for many years but who will not hold the necessary qualifications, training or experience set out in the regulations and that will be required of persons calling themselves a paramedic in future. However, their work as a paramedic should not be disregarded—in the same way as we make transitions in the training mechanism for any other health profession or otherwise. The bill will allow the Health Secretary to authorise a person to call himself or herself a paramedic. Grandparenting arrangements are appropriate, as this will be the first time that the title "paramedic" is protected.

Paramedics in New South Wales are among the best in the world. It requires intense study and training to be a paramedic. That training and expertise allows paramedics to be authorised to supply and administer drugs of addiction such as morphine, to treat severe trauma and undertake complex medical procedures in emergencies, including manual defibrillation, managing labour or delivering a baby, and treating heart attacks. Therefore it is right that only those with the appropriate qualifications, training and experience will be able to call themselves a paramedic. Protection of the title "paramedic" complements the existing range of regulations in New South Wales in respect of paramedics and will ensure that the community can have confidence that someone who calls themselves a paramedic is appropriately qualified and trained.

The NSW Ministry of Health has consulted with a range of stakeholders, and they are all supportive of protection of the paramedic title, including the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, Australasian Registry

of Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics Australasia, Private Paramedicine Australia, Australian Emergency Care Providers, Australian and New Zealand College of Paramedicine, Health Services Union, Australian Paramedics Association, Safety Australia, Paramedical Services, St John Ambulance New South Wales, and Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Wade, Joint Health Command, Vice Chief of the Defence Force Group. The Ministry will continue to consult with stakeholders on regulations to support the bill.

Under this bill New South Wales will join Tasmania and South Australia. Those States have also decided that the use of the title "paramedic" should be restricted to those with the necessary qualifications and training. This bill is a vote of confidence in the clinical capabilities of our State's paramedics and an acknowledgement of the life-saving role they play in providing critical and emergency care. Their expertise is second to none and I am pleased that the Government is acting to ensure the critical role they play in the health system is protected. The bill acknowledges the high level of qualifications paramedics need to provide critical and emergency care and the essential role they play in the New South Wales health system. It will also ensure that people who do not meet those qualifications cannot call themselves a paramedic. I commend this bill to the House.

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

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [4.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill represents the Government's continued commitment to supporting vulnerable children by tightening and strengthening the legislative frameworks and systems that underpin their safety and wellbeing. It responds to serious issues highlighted in the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and builds on the Government's Safe Home for Life reforms, which aim to keep every child in a permanent and stable home for life.

These important amendments will improve the way that carers of children living in out-of-home care are assessed, authorised and monitored. They will provide important checks and balances within the out-of-home care system to the non-government organisations that care for the most vulnerable children in New South Wales. The bill also amends the child protection legislation to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the new Working with Children Check online system, following its first 18 months of operation.

Of course government cannot do the important work of safeguarding the wellbeing of children without the collaboration and cooperation of partner agencies. In developing this bill, Government and non-government agencies were extensively consulted; and they support the amendments. It is anticipated that these amendments will also have bipartisan support. The reforms in the bill make various amendments to strengthen the out-of-home care system by amending the Adoption Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Under the changes, the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services, or the principal officer of a non-government accredited adoption service provider, can help provide that certainty. They can invite an authorised carer of a child in out-of-home care to submit an application to adopt the child. Currently this may only be done by the secretary. The amendment should help to improve the processes and timeliness for adopting children to provide them with long-term stability of care. The Government also wants to ensure that children in out-of-home care are cared for by people who have gone through significant background scrutiny and background checking.

The bill allows for all carers, regardless of their type or status, to be subject to the same rigorous probity checks. All current and prospective adoptive parents, guardians and authorised carers will also be

required to notify their authorising body if any adult household member over the age of 18 years is residing on their property for three weeks or more. The bill also permits any person to provide information about prospective adoptive parents, authorised carers, carer applicants, guardians or any person residing at the same property as these people.

The information can be provided to the principal officer of an accredited adoption provider, a designated agency or the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services, as the case may be. The information may be used to determine the suitability of a person for the relevant role, and the provider is protected from liability if the information was given in good faith. The amendments affect both adoption and out-of-home care services and aim to protect children and young people within the homes where they are placed.

Members on both sides of this House are aware of the tragic outcomes for children where adequate protections have not been put in place to safeguard their wellbeing. Provisions in this bill represent the Government's response to issues highlighted in the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The hearing focused on the actions of Steven Larkins as principal officer of the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services Corporation. At the time of Mr Larkins' arrest for child pornography charges in 2011, he was caring for a young person in out-of-home care within his own home residence. He also had parental responsibility for a number of other children and young people placed with the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services Corporation. However, he had not been subject to any carer assessment.

The Children's Court had granted Mr Larkins parental responsibility for a number of children and young people. This was in keeping with past practice where the Children's Court directly allocated parental responsibility to specialist Aboriginal out-of-home care agencies or their principal officers. This bill seeks to redress the governance problems of principal officers providing out-of-home care that were identified in the Larkins matter. The definition of the principal officer role of a designated or registered agency has been made consistent with the Adoption Act 2000. Accordingly, the role of principal officer is clearly defined to mean the person who has the overall supervision of the agencies' arrangements for providing out-of-home care.

This bill prohibits principal officers of non-government designated agencies from caring for children from their own agency in their own home—except where their home is also a residential service. The Children's Court is similarly prevented from granting parental responsibility to an organisation or to principal officers of non-government designated agencies. These changes establish transparency and accountability so those in powerful positions are not able to then abuse those positions of trust with the young people in their agency's care. Further, both the principal officer and the agency will now be held responsible for the protection of children and young people in their care.

The bill provides that anything done by or with the approval of a principal officer of an accredited adoption service provider or designated or registered agency is taken to be done by the relevant agency. This is an important distinction between previous legislative arrangements and what we are proposing to the House today. This change addresses the governance concerns arising from principal officers providing care without being subject to standard agency assessment and supervision arrangements. It also strengthens the accountability of out-of-home care non-government providers and provides significant penalty provisions for contravention.

The first hearing of the royal commission highlighted the critical importance of good governance in agencies that provide out-of-home care services. It also highlighted the role of agencies in recruiting suitable carers to provide authorised care to some of the most vulnerable children in New South Wales. This is especially so where the designated agency with responsibility for children has concerns about a carer's suitability to care for those children.

The industrial relations system already recognises that failure to appoint a person to a position is not generally a matter capable of review. To bring the child protection system in line with the industrial relations system, changes will be made in relation to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal review rights. Consequently, a refusal to authorise an applicant as an authorised carer would no longer be reviewable by the tribunal. Current review arrangements will still be maintained in relation to existing rights at law if there are grounds for discrimination.

Applicants will also be able to make a complaint about carer authorisation decisions to the New South Wales Ombudsman through its community services complaints jurisdiction. This is clarified through an amendment to the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993. Additionally, the bill

provides for the cancellation of a carer's authority where they have not cared for children for a significant and reasonable period of time. This will ensure agencies maintain accurate records of carers who are actively providing care to children and young people.

Supporting out-of-home care agencies to recruit appropriate carers is a priority for the New South Wales Government. The NSW Children's Guardian is currently establishing a register of people who are authorised, or have applied to be authorised, as carers of children in out-of-home care. The purpose of the carers register is to be certain that people who want to care for our most vulnerable children—and their household members—are subject to rigorous screening and assessment checks on their suitability.

The register will enable the sharing of information between the different agencies to help prevent unsuitable carers moving from one agency to another agency in New South Wales. To help reduce the likelihood of unsuitable carers simply moving across State borders, the bill also strengthens information sharing arrangements between New South Wales and assessing bodies in other jurisdictions. The exchange may only be in accordance with protocols made by the Minister, in consultation with the New South Wales Privacy Commissioner.

The bill also expands the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to the sharing of carer and household information between agencies. The amendment permits the Children's Guardian to disclose information to the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services for the purpose of the secretary's functions relating to children in need of care and protection. The information that may be disclosed is information about persons that the Children's Guardian reasonably believes is or was an authorised carer, carer applicant, prospective adoptive parent, a guardian or prospective guardian, or adult residing on the same property. With the transition of out-of-home care services to the non-government sector, these reforms offer an additional layer of protection for children while securing greater accountability from the service providers.

Another safeguard for strengthening the child protection framework for children in care concerns the NSW Ombudsman, which oversees agency investigations of reportable allegations involving carers. An amendment to the Ombudsman Act clarifies the scope of the Ombudsman's oversight role in relation to these investigations and extends it to include adults who live with authorised carers for three weeks or more. The bill will allow agencies to provide information and advice to the child victims, parents or carers on the progress and outcome of these investigations. It will also be extended to alleged victims with disabilities and/or their relevant support persons. The proposed victims support amendments will override New South Wales and Commonwealth privacy issues so that persons providing advice are provided with civil protections for disclosure of information. That approach is also more consistent with the approach to informing complainants of police investigations. The Ombudsman will issue guidance as to appropriate disclosure arrangements.

I am pleased to highlight another key reform in the Government's child protection framework that focuses on the Working with Children Check. The new online system has now been in operation for 18 months and the community has embraced the Working with Children Check with great enthusiasm. Since the start of the new system in June 2013 there have been more than 720,000 applications processed for a Working with Children Check either as a paid or volunteer worker. Registering as a child-related employer and verifying that the Working with Children Check number of a paid or voluntary worker has been cleared is an important part of being a child-safe organisation.

So far nearly 600 applicants have been barred from working with children in New South Wales. Approximately 100 more have a current status of interim bar, pending further risk assessment investigations by the Office of the Children's Guardian. One of the strengths of the new online verification system is that it checks continuously for new relevant records that could change a person's status from a clearance to a bar on working with children. By registering as an employer and verifying an employee's status, the Office of the Children's Guardian can ensure relevant employers are notified of the bar and take action to remove the barred employee from child-related employment.

The bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to tighten existing requirements for employers. They will be required to not only ensure employees have a current Working with Children Check application or clearance but also verify the employee's status via the Working with Children Check Register. The legislative requirements on employers are not onerous, and the Working with Children Check has been established to assist them to select appropriate people for child-related roles. However, the

amendment will help employers to understand and comply with their obligation to verify the status of their paid and unpaid employees online. If they do not register and verify, employers will run the great risk of employing someone who cannot work in a child-related role. They will also run the risk of being audited by the Office of the Children's Guardian as part of their ongoing Working with Children Check compliance program.

The bill also extends the employer verification requirements for prospective adoptive parents, prospective guardians, and adult persons who reside with them by prescribing certain agencies as the responsible agency for verification purposes. Further, the bill clarifies the meaning of "residing" as it relates to adult household members for the purpose of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act and applies it across the adoption, care and protection, and Ombudsman legislation. The bill changes the terminology from "reside at home" to "reside at a property" to provide greater protection for children without limiting the definition of what constitutes a home environment for them.

In response to issues highlighted by the royal commission, the bill also focuses on the roles and responsibilities of a governing body of an organisation and its principal officers. These amendments will ensure that a person appointed on a permanent basis to a key position that involves child-related work must have a Working with Children Check clearance or current application for a clearance. Key positions are defined as: the chief executive officer; the principal officer of either a statutory or voluntary out-of-home care non-government agency or an accredited adoption provider; and any other position that may be prescribed by regulation. Failure to comply with that requirement is an offence. The amendment reflects community expectations that principal officers need to be held to the same child protection compliance standards as other employees. The reform will also help to strengthen public confidence in the governance of bodies that are exercising critical functions related to vulnerable children and young people.

Another improvement to the Working with Children Check is reducing the time frame for applicants to provide information to the Office of the Children's Guardian from six months to three months. That requirement will affect only those applicants who are being risk assessed. By reducing the time frame in which they are required to provide supporting information, the Office of the Children's Guardian will be able to resolve these applications in a timely and efficient manner.

There are some instances in which an applicant knows the risk assessment outcome is likely to result in a bar, so they withdraw their current application. The bill will restrict the capacity for an applicant to withdraw their application for a Working with Children Check clearance by requiring the consent of the Children's Guardian. The Children's Guardian will now have the option to withhold consent where there is information to suggest the applicant poses a risk to the safety of children. It provides the opportunity for the Children's Guardian to complete the Working with Children Check application and follow through with a thorough risk assessment and possibly a bar.

The bill also clarifies that interim bars are enforceable against adult household members of authorised carers or home-based education and care services or where a family day care service is provided. Again, that is an important clarification for protecting children from those who have access to them in a home environment. Families and agencies who use the services of people authorised to provide home-based care and education services will also be reassured with the additional safeguards in those situations.

We know that keeping children and young people safe is a shared responsibility that requires a multi-faceted and comprehensive approach by the whole community. A Working with Children Check can be an important tool in helping to protect children, but it cannot identify people who have not been caught previously or are yet to offend. Research and history demonstrates that managing potential risks in the environments where children spend their time is the most effective way to keep them safe.

Child-safe environments are those where paid staff, volunteers, parents and children themselves know what conduct is acceptable and what to do if conduct is not acceptable. This bill helps to improve the legislative frameworks that encourage organisations and individuals to be safer for the children in their care. It reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to protect our children and young people, particularly those most vulnerable in our society. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Tania Mihailuk and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

FAIR TRADING LEGISLATION (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) BILL 2015**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 27 May 2015.**

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.50 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the New South Wales Labor Opposition, representing the Hon. Peter Primrose from the other place, in debate on the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015. From the outset, I place on the record that the New South Wales Labor Opposition does not oppose the bill. The objects of this bill are as follows:

- (a) to repeal the Consumer Claims Act 1998 and re-enact the substance of that Act in the Fair Trading Act 1987,
- (b) to repeal the Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act 2000 and the HomeFund Commissioner Act 1993,
- (c) to provide for the repeal of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 no later than 5 years after the date of assent to the proposed Act,
- (d) to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts.

In his second reading speech the Minister pointed out that this bill repeals four Acts to remove unnecessary regulation and to reduce red tape. The Minister highlighted that the Government is encouraging businesses to set up in New South Wales—a view that is shared by the New South Wales Labor Opposition—and to increase efficiency in established businesses. The New South Wales Labor Opposition agrees with the Government's position that unnecessary laws, regulations and fees hamper the progress and efficiency of a business, and that there is a need for this issue to be addressed and rectified as soon as possible.

The Opposition shares the Government's position that a commitment to reducing red tape and regulatory burdens on businesses in New South Wales will promote a sense of positive confidence, which ultimately will lead to growth and therefore more jobs in New South Wales in the long term. While Labor was in government, it also worked towards achieving the goals of cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burdens on businesses. The former Labor Government began that process and, by June 2010, as a result of Labor reforms contributed \$400 million by cutting red tape and reducing regulatory burdens for businesses. The framework established by the former Labor Government has laid the foundation for the current Government's commitment to reducing red tape and the reduction of regulatory burdens on businesses—a commitment shared.

The importance of cutting red tape is something upon which both parties agree. However, there is also a need to focus on innovation for New South Wales. That cannot be done solely by cutting of red tape and reducing regulatory burdens on New South Wales businesses; rather, the Minister needs to delve further into this issue and reveal the Government's plans to stimulate innovation within the State, which will lead not only to increased revenue for New South Wales but also, just as importantly, to an increase in the creation of jobs and trade opportunities with other jurisdictions.

I note from the Minister's second reading speech that the process leading to the preparation of this bill commenced in 2013 with an issues paper setting out potential repeals and calling on peak bodies to make contributions so that this bill could be prepared. As a result of these consultations, the bill proposes to repeal the HomeFund Commissioner Act 1993, the Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act 2000, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 and the Consumer Claims Act 1998. The New South Wales Labor Opposition notes that the Government has consulted with stakeholders with regard to this bill. The Opposition will seek comment from those parties to evaluate whether the consultations correspond with the Government's action in this area.

Furthermore, I ask the Minister whether he has had any consultation with the peak bodies since his appointment as the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation. If so, what were the results of those consultations? I have had discussions with local businesses in relation to this issue. The unanimous opinion is that red tape and unnecessary laws and regulations are a burden to businesses and hamper productivity. Therefore, the New South Wales Labor Opposition does not oppose the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [4.54 p.m.]: I support the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015. As we heard a few months ago from the shadow Minister, this bill is part of the ongoing task to reduce red tape and to remove unnecessary legislative requirements or statutory impediments to doing business in New South Wales. I guess it will be forever part of government that, as we introduce regulations and

rules in the public interest and continue to legislate, we forever will need to be vigilant and monitor the layers upon layers that we create to ensure that when they are no longer appropriate and no longer necessary, we remove legislative layers that might otherwise hold back business.

The bill is a significant contribution by NSW Fair Trading to the reduction by the New South Wales Government of red tape and is in line with the Government's "one on, two off" policy. Since the Government was elected in 2011 we made a commitment that when we bring in new regulations and new burdens on the private sector, we will at least take away twice as much or take away two regulations. In this instance, I think the Government is doing better than that since we are amending a number of Acts and removing some altogether to roll them into core pieces of legislation. The target is part of the Government's NSW 2021 commitment to reduce red tape and increase the competitiveness of doing business in New South Wales.

The "one on, two off" policy is in place for all new principal legislation. Under the policy, each calendar year the Government aims to ensure that the number of principal Acts and principal regulations repealed is at least twice the number of new principal legislative instruments introduced, and that the regulatory burden imposed by new principal legislative instruments within each portfolio is less than the regulatory burden removed by the repeal of principal legislative instruments from the same portfolio under a regulatory burden constraint. The overall objective of the "one on, two off" policy is straightforward. It ensures that Ministers carefully assess the need to introduce new legislation and forces reviews of existing legislation. Together with other elements of the Government's regulatory reform strategy, the policy drives cultural change across government and reduces the overall stock of legislation.

The Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015 sets up the entire removal of four Acts from the statute books. The consumer claims jurisdiction provided by the Consumer Claims Act 1998 will be re-enacted in the Fair Trading Act 1987. This will consolidate New South Wales consumer protection provisions. One of the statutes being wholly repealed, the Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act, is no longer required as the fitness services industry has responded to and addressed the conditions that required the legislation to be enacted in the first place. The industry-specific issues associated with the introduction of the Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act are no longer prevalent as the majority of fitness contracts no longer require substantial prepayment. This is in line with the voluntary Fitness Industry Code of Practice, which prohibits pre-payments beyond 12 months. Accordingly, the potential consumer detriment that the trust fund provisions of the Act were designed to prevent is no longer prevalent.

Other laws will provide protection for consumers. Since January 2011, the Australian Consumer Law has prescribed that a person in trade or commerce must not accept a payment for goods or services if there is no intention to supply as promised. False and misleading representations as well as misleading conduct are also forbidden. Similarly, development of other legislation has supplanted the need for the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899. The year the Act was passed should be a clue: We are addressing an Act from 1899. The Act has been effectively replaced by a number of other specific purpose statutes, including the Residential Tenancies Act 1987, and now the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 as well as other legislation introduced to deal with retail and agricultural tenancies. Provision is made in this bill for the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 to be repealed no later than five years after the date of assent to the proposed Act.

Finally, the HomeFund Commissioner Act 1993 is another statute that is well past its usefulness. The Act established the office and functions of the HomeFund Commissioner to deal with complaints from people who had mortgages under the now defunct HomeFund scheme. This scheme provided home loans to low-income borrowers, and operated between 1986 and 1993. Of the approximately 57,000 HomeFund borrowers, 8,330 made complaints to the HomeFund Commissioner. The commissioner's office was established in May 1993. By December of that year, about half of all HomeFund borrowers had refinanced their loans. All complaints were finally resolved by 30 June 1997 and the appointment of the last HomeFund Commissioner ended on 31 December 1997.

The HomeFund Commissioner's Office was abolished in June of 1998. Accordingly, the HomeFund Commissioner's Act is superfluous to the ongoing regulation of the marketplace and it is appropriate to remove it. Repeal of this Act, as with the others being repealed by this bill, constitutes some necessary legislative housekeeping as part of the Government's red tape reduction commitment. These statutes have been identified as being either superfluous to the ongoing regulation of a fair and efficient marketplace or no longer the best means of achieving the public policy goal that the law was originally designed to meet.

Statutes that are past their usefulness should be removed to reduce the regulatory burden on business, and to ensure that only legislation that is needed to address contemporary social issues is retained. That is what

this Government is doing constantly. We are monitoring the regulatory burden on businesses of New South Wales and, where we can, we will act to remove those aspects of regulatory burden that are no longer applicable. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [5.01 p.m.]: I support the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015. The concept "better regulation" implies that the activity of regulating needs improvement. This is because regulation must have a relevant purpose and be applicable to the contemporary circumstances of the day. Since this Government came to power in 2011, much has changed in the macro policy and economic settings of New South Wales and Australia. This bill, which was introduced by the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, the Hon. Victor Dominello, exemplifies an aspect of the better regulation commitment of this Government to be responsive to business and the community. Legislation that has been allocated to his administration is in the process of being reviewed, repealed and refreshed.

It is a government's responsibility to ensure that its regulations have utility and are still required. Some harm that legislation seeks to redress may now be dealt with through guidance that is available over the internet, thus providing a consumer with options for assessing a prospective purchase. Certainly some of the information asymmetry experienced by consumers is being reduced by access to numerous sources of advice and information. The financial system can support consumers. For example, if a consumer makes payment by credit card, the chargeback mechanism is available if the goods or services are not provided. Market systems such as the credit card chargeback can be leveraged to protect consumers in the absence of explicit regulation.

This Government is committed to ensuring that regulation does not unduly restrict opportunities for businesses to develop and flourish, and meet customer needs at the same time. For this term, better regulation will be smarter. As is demonstrated with this bill, there will be further stocktaking of rules and statutes to identify where changes in the market have rendered a particular regulatory scheme no longer fit for purpose. Retaining any out-of-date or duplicative legislation means that government resources are not allocated efficiently. Meeting the interests of small and micro business is vital and central in a better regulation approach. Better regulation will remove red tape and enable innovative businesses to breed. Regulation needs to be as light a touch as possible. If regulation is unobtrusive it will support a competitive market and the creation of opportunities that enable innovative products and services to be brought to market. I support the bill.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS (Ku-ring-gai) [5.04 p.m.]: The Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015 repeals the Consumer Claims Act 1998 and transfers the jurisdiction to the Fair Trading Act 1987. In doing so, the Government has made minor updates to acknowledge interdependent statutes that have also been modernised. This is good lawmaking and an aspect of the better regulation policies of this Government. Providing capacity to hear small claims is an important aspect of consumer protection and supports small business so that they may prosper. Parties should be able to air disputes and obtain a resolution. The jurisdiction is exercised by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, commonly called NCAT, which was one of the great legislative innovations of this Government in its previous term of government.

It is very important that people are able to resolve their disputes, especially small disputes, in as low cost an environment as possible. That is what NCAT provides—not only for consumer claimants but, importantly, for the people they are claiming against, which is often small businesses. If people are to have access to justice it is important that justice is provided in a low-cost forum. This transfer of jurisdiction provides that facility without changing any substantive rights or remedies for claimants. The concept of "consumer" is still defined very broadly to maximise access to NCAT—that is, access to justice. Small businesses and sole traders still have access because this Government understands that, for relatively simple transactions, user-friendly justice is important to their livelihoods. This is another example of this Government being friendly to small business. This Government understands that small business is the engine room of a good and robust economy, which is what our Government wishes to provide.

Mr Andrew Gee: We care about small business.

Mr ALISTER HENSKENS: We care about small business. The member for Orange, as always, is spot on in that regard. Minor modifications have been made to the definition of "banker" so that this legislation accords with that in the Australian Consumer Law. References to administrative agencies and persons have been updated as a consequence of the merger with the Fair Trading Act and the use of similar terminology in that Act. However, those changes have been kept to a minimum. That is very important because the advantage of terminological minimisation is that existing precedent is able to apply to the new legislation. Where the repealed Act provided a procedural order-making power that NCAT has under its legislation—the Civil and Administrative Act 2013—the order-making power is not duplicated.

An example of such a procedural power that will now reside in the tribunal's Act is the power to make orders with conditions. It is very important that an efficient tribunal for resolving disputes has the power to make procedural orders that most efficiently, and in a cost-effective way, allow their processes to be regulated. Better regulation continues to be an important objective of this Government. Consolidating New South Wales special fair trading provisions in the one statute—which is what is being done with this bill—is efficient regulation. It is also important that the regulations are administered in the most efficient way possible to maximise our valuable public resources. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [5.09 p.m.]: I speak on the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015 as The Greens spokesperson for tenancy and rental housing. The Greens do not oppose the bill, although there are aspects that give us cause for concern that I will raise here and, depending on the Minister's reply, about which The Greens may seek to move amendments when the bill moves to the Legislative Council. This bill provides for the repeal of four Acts, which the Government states are no longer required, and amends the Fair Trading Act. The Greens appreciate that NSW Fair Trading is attempting to reduce areas of unnecessary red tape and regulation from the large amount of legislation that it administers. We support such measures when they improve systems but not when they create confusion or cause disadvantage to those who are already disadvantaged by their circumstances.

The Greens appreciate that NSW Fair Trading has engaged in consultation, in the form of one 2013 review of regulatory burden, before introducing this legislation and has appeared to take on board some of the concerns raised by the various interested parties. I flag concerns with respect to the repeal of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899. The first function of this Act relates to a small class of residential tenancies that are excluded from the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. This includes 99-year tenancies, social housing head tenancies, heritage property tenancies and life tenancies. It provides landlords with procedures for the recovery of possession through the courts. The second function of the Act relates to dwelling houses as defined under the Act and allows for the prohibition of, and penalty for, recovery of these dwellings other than through the courts. We understand that the Government believes that these functions of the 1899 Act are now covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and by the functions of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

In respect of the legislation, The Greens have consulted with the Tenants Union of New South Wales. The Tenants Union has provided initial feedback via its submission to Fair Trading's 2013 review of regulatory burden. The Tenants Union noted that it was originally on the table to repeal the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 1948. In its submission to the 2013 process it strongly opposed the repeal of the 1948 Act. The Government appears to have taken this on board. However, the Tenants Union still has concerns regarding the repeal of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 and has submitted that the legislation we are currently discussing be amended to remove schedule 3.4. The Greens share the concerns raised by the Tenants Union and ask that the Minister, in his reply, address the following concerns.

In the crossbench briefing provided by the Government on this legislation it was noted that the Government had been unable to find a tenant that had recently used the Landlord and Tenant Act. This might be the case in relation to tenants. However, we have been informed by the Tenants Union that the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 has been referred to and relied upon in court on three occasions in the past five years. I ask the Minister to address how repealing the Act will affect those who would rely upon it in this way. Additionally, in relation to the reduction of red tape and regulation, if those landlords and tenants who currently fall under that Act are not sufficiently informed of the new arrangements there is the potential that repealing the Act could cause confusion for those needing to seek remedy and thus add to rather than reduce red tape.

I ask what measures the Government will take to inform all affected landlords and tenants of this change and seek a commitment that all parties affected by the repeal of the Act are provided with clear information about the processes they should follow, should the need arise. The most serious concern raised by the Tenants Union is in relation to how the repeal of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 affects those covered by the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 1948. In particular, the 1899 Act provides an important protection against unlawful eviction for those covered under the 1948 Act.

It is concerning that this repeal could result in these tenants losing their protection against eviction. In particular, section 2AA of the 1899 Act, which prevents an eviction in these cases without a court order, has no equivalent in the 1948 Act. Tenants covered under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 are protected against interference of their quiet enjoyment and also a prohibition on repossession of their premises without a warrant. It would follow that tenants not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act should be afforded similar protections. Therefore, I ask the Minister to outline how these would be addressed in relation to this repeal.

The Government has effectively grandfathered the part of the legislation relating to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899, and we appreciate that the Government has done this. I request that the Minister, in his reply, commit to maintaining the Act under these provisions until the issues I have outlined are fully addressed and the Minister is satisfied that no-one covered under the 1899 or 1948 Acts are losing any of the existing rights. As stated earlier, The Greens do not oppose the bill but, depending on the Minister's responses to our concerns, we reserve the right to move amendments in the upper House.

The Greens make it a priority to address affordable housing and rental stress in Sydney and across New South Wales. During the recent election campaign I promised that, if elected, I would introduce an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act to provide protection to renters, especially in the electorate of Newtown where more than half the residents are renters. They are getting the short end of the stick in relation to the overstressed New South Wales housing market. Given skyrocketing house and rental prices and the fact that the State Government has a poor track record on protecting renters' rights, we will do everything we can in this place to provide them with those protections.

I note the media coverage of activities today in Berlin in relation to rental caps. As a member of this place, I will continue to raise the issues of rental prices and protection to renters. The Greens and the community look to the State Government to address housing affordability and, in particular, the undue pressures placed on people who rent. Sydney is one of the least affordable places to live in this country. It is important for us to look at long-term renters and the provision of rental security in order to make communities more liveable, more vibrant and healthier. This will give people the security to rent long term, send their kids to the local school, join the community local garden and participate and live as a genuine, good community member within their own neighbourhood.

While the repeal of centuries-old legislation, such as the Government is doing with the Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015, is important to reduce red tape and unnecessary regulation, it must never come at the expense of tenants' rights. New South Wales residential tenancy laws are outdated. We have some of the weakest residential tenancy laws in the developed world. This means excessive rent increases, limited security of tenure and increased numbers of long-term renters. The Greens will work with the community sector and the Tenants Union to bring forward positive changes to ensure that renters have the same security as others within our community.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation) [5.17 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions to the debate by the members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Riverstone, Oxley, Ku-ring-gai and Newtown. A large number of issues have been canvassed, predominantly by the member for Newtown, and I will try to provide an answer. The Fair Trading Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2015 is a significant contribution to the reduction of regulatory burden. This relates predominantly to concerns around the 1899 Act. Good government means that the regulation should be easy to understand and should address contemporary social issues. Provision is being made to repeal the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899 because modern tenancy law has replaced it.

Owners and renters are entitled to rely on the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and not be concerned that legacy and feudal rules may apply. The wellbeing of renters has been dear to government for some 30 years, when reforms endeavoured to sever ties with history and base rental relationships on the modern market and its needs. The first of the reformed Tenancies Acts was the 1987 Residential Tenancies Act and then its successor was the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, which prevails today. We believe the current Residential Tenancies Act serves the market very well. Owners and renters are not using the 1899 Act and a recent example of its use cannot be found.

Nevertheless, the repeal is framed with a five-year period. This is because a statutory review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 is due to commence. Through consultation, every effort will be made to identify and take into account any gaps in the scheme. As I said, there is a five-year time line for repeal. Hopefully this will allay some of the concerns. Owners and renters are entitled to rely on a single rule book and access to a tribunal rather than a court for their support. Furthermore, any concerns about the relationship between the 1899 Act and the protected tenancies laws are unfounded. If the Acts had different names, perhaps the entirely separate identity would be stark. No action has been taken at this stage to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1948. For more than two decades, Parliament has been revising and modernising the framework for residential tenancies.

Residential tenancies legislation was introduced and refined because the 1899 Act was inadequate for modern rental arrangements. Although there are exclusions from the old and new statutes, it is unknown when

the 1899 Act was last used for tenement recovery. This indicates that the modern law is well targeted in its coverage and is sufficient for landlords and tenants to manage their relationship. The repeal is based on reality and not on hypotheticals. I reiterate that the time frame for the repeal hopefully allays concerns raised by The Greens. The statutory review of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, which is commencing mid-year, will thoroughly examine the merits of exclusions and whether there should be changes to bring tenancies in or out of modern law.

Governments have demonstrated for nearly 30 years that they want home owners and renters to be provided with rights and obligations that are relevant and useful. There is no factual, theoretical or sentimental reason for retaining a law that is more than 120 years old. I was listening carefully to the member for Newtown. I understand her passion and the genuineness of her concerns. She raised a concern that a number of cases where the Act has been used in recent times. We have consulted with the Chief Magistrate. Five cases have been before the courts in five years and each case was dismissed or withdrawn because the 1899 law had been misapplied. We are trying to bring the law into a modern setting and that is why we are introducing a five-year repeal period. The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction. It has an equity jurisdiction that can never be taken away. Even if there is a small theoretical crack that we cannot foresee, there will always be protections.

The member for Newtown acknowledged the efforts of this Government in introducing the tenancies legislation. I am proud of our legislation to replace the boarding house legislation. When in opposition and in government, I worked closely with the Tenants' Union of NSW to ensure that the boarding house legislation was brought into effect. It provides strong protections for boarders who are some of the most vulnerable renters. The member for Newtown knows about the vulnerabilities because a number of boarders reside in her electorate. They are protected as a result of the laws introduced by this Government. I am proud to be a member of this Government, which looks after the vulnerable members in our community.

The bill provides for the repeal of four Acts, three of which are surplus to current regulatory needs and amends the Fair Trading Act to include the consumer claims jurisdiction for the Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It is the result of consultation that was undertaken in 2013 and has taken into account matters that were raised by stakeholders. I look forward to consulting with industry stakeholders on a range of important reforms in the future. The main purpose of the bill is to remove outdated legislation that is of no benefit to industry or consumers and, in cases such as the 1899 legislation, provides grounds for misguided applications, which we are trying to avoid.

This Government is demonstrating best practice regulation by reviewing the stock of statutes and is acting to ensure that the stock continues to be relevant and required. The bill provides for an Act to amend the Fair Trading Act 1987 relating to consumer claims to provide for the repeal of the Consumer Claims Act 1998, the Fitness Services (Pre-paid Fees) Act 2000, the HomeFund Commissioner Act 1993, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1899, and for other purposes. The Government's commitment to better regulation means that it will continue to remove unnecessary laws, regulation and fees that add to the regulatory burden in New South Wales. This Government will continue to act to reduce red tape across government. I look forward to making further announcements at a later date about how the Government will tackle red tape and burdensome regulation and how the Government will invigorate innovation in New South Wales. I thank all the members for their earnest contributions, and I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Victor Dominello agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAPTAIN COOK BRIDGE

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [5.25 p.m.]: Today I take the opportunity to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the construction of the Captain Cook Bridge, which is the most important piece of infrastructure built in the electorate of Miranda. On 28 April 1770 Captain James Cook, when he navigated the *Endeavour* into the waters of Botany Bay, would have set eyes upon the entrance to the Georges River, across which the bridge named in his honour spans today. The Captain Cook Bridge has become an emblem of the shire and it is the iconic entrance point to my electorate of Miranda and the whole Sutherland shire. Crossing the bridge is a sign that one is crossing over the waters into the stunning shire and many people joke that passports are required to be checked on the Captain Cook Bridge before being allowed into God's country. What is the story behind this bridge that, when first built, was described as a masterpiece of smooth classical lines? What lessons does the construction of the bridge hold for those of us who seek to serve the people of New South Wales today?

On 29 May 1965 the Captain Cook Bridge was opened by Sir Eric Woodward, then Governor of New South Wales. It was the answer to the gridlock plaguing Sydney during the period when the city was experiencing rapid growth. Southern Sydney needed desperately to divert transport from Tom Uglys Bridge, which was bearing more traffic than any three lanes of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Congestion was inhibiting commuters significantly as they made their way north from Sylvania over the Georges River. Even the Taren Point punt, which transported 1,000 cars across the river each day until it was retired, was at full capacity. The transport planners at the then Department of Main Roads envisaged a new piece of infrastructure that was capable of moving 30,000 cars each day to cope with the increasing residential developments in the Sutherland shire.

The Captain Cook Bridge was a herald of Sydney's progress as a world-class city. Its story is linked with that of the Sydney Opera House because the two had synchronised construction time lines so that the same machinery would be utilised at the same time. James Condon, a narrator of promotional films for the then Department of Main Roads, declared Captain Cook Bridge a bold symbol of the nation's progress. The bridge is a bold symbol not only of the progress of the nation but also of the potential of the shire as a hub of development and a major access point for industry. This idea gave rise to what was intended as the first component of the Southern Expressway, which would link the expanding suburbs of Sydney to the industrial Illawarra region.

The Southern Expressway was an embryonic form of what we now conceive is the proposed modern-day F6 motorway, which would also link the industrial Illawarra regions to the city. Unfortunately, only the individual sections of the Southern Expressway were completed between Sydney and Wollongong, which has left southern Sydney, our great shire, with the same challenge the area faced 50 years ago. In 1965 the then Department of Main Roads invested in a bold vision of limitless potential for the people it served. Half a century on, we must take up the mantle and complete its vision and invest in an F6 motorway. The foresight of ensuring we invest in infrastructure has been a central focus of the New South Wales Government through Rebuilding NSW.

In my inaugural speech I affirmed the belief that southern Sydney needs an F6 motorway to ease the gridlock experienced by my constituents and those commuting through the shire. This echoes the problems that the community has faced for the past half century and the guiding vision behind the Southern Expressway. I am proud of my electorate's formation and the early growth of Sydney. The Captain Cook Bridge now copes with 30,600 vehicles on an average week day and plays a central role in the life of the region. In conclusion, on behalf of the people of Miranda, I celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of this iconic bridge, which was named after a bold explorer, built at a time of bold development and is evocative of a bold vision to which we must hold true.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: I commend the member for Miranda for her election to this Parliament. I have known Ms Eleni Petinos for more than a decade. We joined the Young Liberals together. In that time she has proved herself to be one of the most outstanding talents ever seen in the youth wing of our party. I know that she will use her qualities, skills and determination to fight for her constituents in the electorate of Miranda. Ms Eleni Petinos is a ferocious advocate for what she wants. I would want her, rather than anyone else, in my corner.

I have no doubt that she will prove to be the most outstanding member elected to represent the people of Miranda since the great Ron Phillips, the last Liberal member to represent that electorate in this Parliament. I commend the member for Miranda for advocating for an important piece of infrastructure. Like the Captain Cook Bridge, the F6 will make a tremendous difference. It will help to reduce congestion, return streets to local communities and improve the lives of thousands of residents in the Sutherland shire.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the Parliamentary Secretary that it is normal practice for a Parliamentary Secretary to respond to issues raised in a private member's statement and not to make statements about the great work of the member.

TUMUT VISY MILL

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.31 p.m.]: The timber industry is very important to the electorate of Wagga Wagga and to the people of the Tumut region. The Tumut Visy mill, following owner Anthony Pratt's acquisition of the American company Robert Mann Packaging [RMP], is set to become the company's major exporter to America. This \$75 million purchase will mean an 80,000 tonne increase in exports from the mill. It will add yet another export customer to the Tumut operations and give a true national presence in America by opening up California—the only region there that did not have a Pratt and Visy operation. This acquisition and the expected exports will boost this already thriving mill.

Agriculture and packing company RMP has more than a dozen facilities in the western States of America and Mexico, including a 350,000 square metre box-making plant. With exports accounting for 75 per cent of the Tumut mill's production, it already delivers close to 50,000 tonnes per year to the west coast of America. This increase will flow from natural production increases year on year. The mill's capacity currently sits at 680,000 tonnes per annum—it is producing about 660,000 tonnes—and it is currently undergoing an upgrade, related to the recent acquisition, to increase its production capabilities to 720,000 tonnes per annum.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Naturally, extra jobs will be created, but they will mainly be in the temporary construction phase. Extra workers will also be needed during the construction and upgrade phase. The expansion of the timber plantation estate in the south-west slopes is critical to the local timber industry remaining globally competitive, and, according to the Softwoods Working Group, this issue is at the top of its priority list. The group recently met in Tumut. The size of the plantation in this area has not grown in line with expectations and planning due to a range of factors, including the failure of managed investment scheme companies such as Wilmotts, recent fires, pests, disease and new environmental restrictions.

The Softwoods Working Group has welcomed the announced \$70 million investment by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government, in addition to the announced \$10 million in funding, which will make a total investment of \$80 million, in Gocup Road. This group has long campaigned for this welcomed investment. Indeed, the group has now undertaken an economic and engineering analysis of roads in the region. It has found that Bombowlee Creek Road, a timber route, is in need of upgrading, in conjunction with Bilo Road, which is owned by the Forestry Corporation, and Nangroe Road, which is controlled by Gundagai Shire Council. Other roads across the Tumbarumba and Greater Hume council areas also need to be upgraded.

Whilst the Gocup Road upgrade is taking place, thanks to the \$80 million in funding announced by the Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight and the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government, other important projects will need to occur to support the towns of Tumut, Batlow, Tumbarumba and others that use the Snowy Mountains Highway. For example, overtaking and climbing lanes will need to be built at the entry and exit points to Adelong. To upgrade safety on the Snowy Mountains Highway, a study needs to be conducted on the Brindabella Road.

This has been long talked about by those who believe it will increase tourism to the region and provide better access for the timber industry. In the future, I would like to see funds provided to the council to allow it to conduct a feasibility study to ensure that the suggested upgrade to that road will bring about positive outcomes for the Tumut region. A lot more work is still to be done but I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone involved, particularly Anthony Pratt, on the welcomed new investment in Tumut as well as the funding the Government has announced for those roads.

PORT MACQUARIE SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [5.36 p.m.]: Last Sunday we were all asked to dig deep and donate money to one of the hardest working charitable organisations in Australia. The Salvation Army's Red Shield is now in its fiftieth year, supporting local communities across Australia. In the Port Macquarie area the campaign was led by Major Brett Gallagher. His team collected just over \$17,000, which is approximately half of what was collected last year. Some may say that was a disappointing figure, but Major Gallagher was very happy with the result. He well knows the pressures placed on our community being asked every week to financially support a plethora of charitable events.

As I have said, for 50 years the local community has been supporting the Salvation Army in its appeal to help balance its budget. Each year the Salvation Army helps more than one million disadvantaged Australians without discrimination. This translates to about 30 to 50 families being helped each week with a range of services from food, clothing, furniture, energy bills and other expenses. A recent economic and social impact survey conducted by the Salvation Army found that many people were trying to live on just under \$18 a day, after accommodation expenses had been paid. It is these families and individuals the Salvation Army is trying to assist. "I cannot continue to live like this" is a commonly heard theme. An amount of \$125 per week has to cover everything from food, health, medical, clothing, education, entertainment and utility costs—a very difficult feat.

Many people have cut down on basic necessities and over half are going without meals to balance their budget. Many of those helped by the Salvation Army have stated that their financial situation is worse now than it was a year ago. Possibly most concerning is the statistic that 34 per cent of parents were unable to afford fresh fruit and vegetables daily for their children. That is why the Red Shield Appeal is so important. The Salvos continue to support people through chaplaincy at courts and as associate chaplains to Fire and Rescue NSW. Providing accommodation and care for the aged at Bethany Aged Care Nursing Home, providing access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation and family tracing and counselling services are but a few of the number of ways in which the money donated locally goes to help those most in need in our community. I am continually amazed at the local community's capacity to support the Salvation Army in undertaking its work. Last Sunday around \$5 million was raised across Australia. Major Gallagher said:

The annual Red Shield Appeal doorknock weekend has become part of the fabric of Australian society, and by volunteering time or donating financially to the Red Shield Appeal, Australians, through the Salvation Army, are able to do their part and help to make a positive difference in the lives of those less fortunate in society.

The funds raised enable the Salvos on a weekly and daily basis to provide 100,000 meals for the hungry, 2,000 beds for the homeless, 5,000 to 8,000 food vouchers, 1,000 people with assistance in finding employment, 500 victims of abuse with refuge, 500 people addicted to drugs, alcohol or gambling with assistance, several thousand people with counselling, 3,000 elderly people with aged care services and 4,000 people in the court system with chaplaincy services. They are amazing figures. It reminds me of the old Salvation Army slogan, "Thank God for the Salvos."

It is not too late to donate. If anyone in the House missed the knock on the door, they should contact their local Salvation Army office before the end of June to be included in the Red Shield Appeal, go online at salvos.org.au or phone 137258. On behalf of the community I again extend my thanks to Major Brett Gallagher of the Salvation Army and the many volunteers who gave up their time to help. My thanks also go to those who donated money to the Red Shield Appeal. I thank them for their support.

SINGLETON TRAIN SERVICES

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [5.40 p.m.]: Tonight I highlight an important transport issue in my electorate of Upper Hunter. Since 2008, my constituents in Singleton have been working constructively with the New South Wales Government, local government and the community to seek more frequent passenger train services to Singleton. The town of Singleton and its surrounding area has a population of around 25,000 residents. It is 80 kilometres or exactly one hour by train from Newcastle. The first passenger train service from Newcastle to Singleton was in May 1863, more than 150 years ago.

Until the closure of the rail line between Hamilton and Newcastle on Boxing Day 2014, the 6.55 a.m. weekday passenger train between Singleton and Newcastle was the longest continually operating service in New South Wales. The train line continues past Singleton to Muswellbrook, Scone and further north-west.

Importantly, the Hunter line is serviced by Sydney Trains—but not often enough. In 1966 there were 10 daily passenger services to the town in each direction. Today Sydney Trains provides four irregular services in each direction on weekdays and two services on weekends. There are gaps of between three and eight hours in daytime trains, and during that gap the three tracks between Singleton and Maitland are used by freight trains hauling coal to Newcastle for export.

The community has put forward a proposal for two additional daily passenger train services to Singleton—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. I contend that it should be servicing the Upper Hunter to Murrurundi. This may not be a perfect service, but it would make travelling by train much more attractive than it is now and a realistic alternative to driving to Newcastle and Sydney and back. The proposal by the community campaign Two More Trains for Singleton is a workable proposal fitting in with the existing timetable and not requiring significant changes to existing arrangements. It can proceed in the short term with minimal impact on the network, and would especially benefit many school and university students and seniors who travel regularly, people travelling for medical appointments and those travelling to Sydney. More frequent trains would also allow people to travel to Singleton to work and provide tourism opportunities.

Existing trains at appropriate times are well patronised, demonstrating the demand for rail services. Having ridden the train from Scone to Newcastle, I can attest to the number of people utilising the service—people from all walks of life going about their business, heading to school and work, medical and business appointments and leisure activities. The most recently available Transport for NSW Bureau of Transport Statistics data show that passenger numbers based on ticket sales at Singleton station grew an average of 4.5 per cent per year for the five years between 2009 and 2013.

The Two More Trains for Singleton group has outlined its concerns to State and local government representatives and officials. Maitland and Upper Hunter constituents would all benefit from having more frequent passenger services. Members of the group have met with a number of Ministers for transport and their advisers and officers of Transport for NSW. Most people agree that more frequent passenger train services are a good idea. The issue of the number of train services to Singleton highlights the importance of equity in public transport for regional New South Wales.

Passenger rail underpins intercity public transport throughout the world and is a major issue for constituents in the Upper Hunter electorate. They need to access the same education, health and social services as do people in the rest of New South Wales, especially the nearly half of the population who are not able to drive. Other towns in New South Wales located further from a metropolitan area than Singleton—such as Kiama, Moss Vale and Lithgow—have more frequent services. Respectively they have 28, 18, and 14 daily services, compared to four for Singleton.

Since Two More Trains for Singleton started raising this issue, New South Wales Government approval has been given for substantial additional urban development in the vicinity of existing railway stations between Singleton and Maitland, including Huntley, the new town at Branxton which is planned to house up to 25,000 new residents. Now is the time to plan for long-term improvements in passenger train service frequency and to start implementing the proposal from Two More Trains for Singleton.

MEMBER FOR WOLLONGONG ELECTION

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.45 p.m.]: I thank, somewhat belatedly, a number of people who worked very hard during the election campaign in March and assisted me in being returned to this place for the fourth time as the member for Wollongong. I place on the record my sincere thanks to, first of all, my husband, Lee Lawler; to Alison and Darren Kelly and my grandson Ronan; to Leah Hay and my grandson Cameron; to Daniel and Heather Hay, and my grandchildren Nora, Seamus and Bridie; to Mark and Suzana Hay and my granddaughter Chelsea. Seeing my grandchildren in "Noreen Hay" t-shirts on election day and handing out flyers was magnificent. They are a fine-looking family. These fine-looking children are the image of their grandmother. I am very proud of them all.

I make particular mention of supporters within my branches. My branch workers were wonderful on the day. I thank the branches of Dapto, Wollongong, Mount Keira, Port Kembla and Mount Kembla-Unanderra. I give particular thanks to Reg Jago, known to many as Reggie, Maureen Stapleton, Lindsay Stoddart, Satish Deo, the Harrison family, particularly Vania; John Tambakis and Peter Holz. In coming weeks I will mention more people who assisted in my election campaign for the seat of Wollongong.

I also express my gratitude to members of my staff: Jonathon Liddle, his mum, Julie, his dad, Peter, and his extended family; Susan Greenhalgh and Brian, their extended family and the Burnetts; and Kiley Martin, who was my personal assistant for 12 years. I had a wonderful relationship with Kiley, and when she decided not to continue on in that role no-one was sadder than I was. Kiley is like a member of my family. She travelled everywhere with me and I miss her greatly. I place on record my thanks to her. I also thank those who came out publicly and condemned the actions of so-called unionists who sought to undermine and tried to defeat the endorsed Labor candidate.

Mr Gareth Ward: Shame.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Shame on them. The term "ratting" comes to mind. I thank Nick McIntosh from the Transport Workers Union, Len and Sue Hartley, Alex and Diane MacLeod and Jenelle Rimmer. My sincere gratitude goes to Bevan Fermor. He is a lifetime member of the Electrical Trades Union and was disgusted at the division amongst union people. This wasted Labor resources when we should have been fighting the common enemy—that is, those sitting opposite. I thank George Bartolo, Peter Taylor, the Rumble family, Bill Dwarde and Steven Harpley, just to name a few. As I said, I will speak in greater detail on this in the future.

Mr David Elliott: You're not airing dirty laundry here, are you?

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Baulkham Hills can mind his own business. I am expressing my thanks and gratitude to the Labor Party members and Labor movement supporters who assisted in my being re-elected for a fourth term in spite of very difficult opposition.

Mr Gareth Ward: Long may she reign.

Ms NOREEN HAY: You lot can eat your hearts out. If you think any of you will ever be the member for Wollongong, that is not happening. I extend my congratulations to the 23-year-old candidate who the Liberal Party ran against me. The poor thing—fancy doing that to anyone. It will probably take that young man a lifetime to recover; nonetheless, I congratulate him on giving it a good shot. Again, I thank all those who assisted me. I am eternally grateful.

AVALON TATTOO

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Minister for Planning) [5.50 p.m.]: In the run-up to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo in August a far more estimable celebration will take place in my community of Pittwater: the Avalon Tattoo. The event is proudly supported by the Avalon RSL Sub-Branch. I note its relationship to Avalon RSL, which was recently honoured with a New South Wales People's Choice Award at the 2015 Club of the Year Awards. It is ironically appropriate to have the support of the RSL given that the Dutch expression "doe den tap toe", from which we derive the word "tattoo", refers to the signal sounded by drummers for publicans to turn off the keg as a subtle reminder for soldiers to return to their barracks in garrison towns. The Avalon Tattoo involves a celebration of martial music. Some terrific examples of that have been heard at the Aldershot Military Tattoo in Great Britain and the RAF Tattoo at Fairford in Gloucestershire.

In fact, the great composer Gustav Mahler developed his fascination with music from listening to martial bands of the Prussian Guards at the garrison near where he lived in nineteenth century Prussia. The Avalon Tattoo concludes with a Ceremonial Sunset that is extraordinarily powerful because Pittwater is a maritime community in many ways. Much of the area is surrounded by water, many locals are employed at local marinas and the electorate is home to the naval base at Taylors Point. The Ceremonial Sunset carries on a tradition of navies saluting the lowering of the ensign at the end of the day. Also at the Avalon Tattoo sailors fire a fusillade each year to honour the tradition of man-of-war captains emptying their guns of gunpowder to ensure that they were ready for the next engagement.

A ceremony through which Pittwater Council grants freedom of entry to the city also takes place at the tattoo. It is an extraordinarily powerful demonstration of the respect in which the community holds Armed Forces personnel. It also recognises the symbiotic relationship between the Armed Forces and civil society. Civil society depends on the freedom secured by the Armed Forces and the Armed Forces depend on the support of the community in turn. It is an incredibly powerful and important local ceremony that recognises the great historical and current debt we owe to those who have served. It also recognises society's important role in supporting those who offer their careers and their lives in service of the freedom we enjoy.

The Avalon Tattoo has attracted much attention from people right across Sydney. It is a great event and I encourage members who have spare time in June to come to Dunbar Park in Avalon to take in the spectacle. Now in its eighth year, the tattoo is the incredible brainchild of Commodore Graham Sloper (Rtd). He served his nation throughout his career and now serves his community throughout his retirement. He is a veritable personification of service and I certainly admire him. He sets a breathtaking example to everyone in our community.

I thank the many people who have been involved in the tattoo for a number of years. I thank Robert Dodds and master of ceremonies Andrew MacGregor and his wife, Linda. I also thank Peter Wilson and Mark Bradbury, who recovered from a terrible accident to take control of much of the tattoo's operation. I thank the cadets, the members of the pipe bands and everyone who contributes to make the Avalon Tattoo a great community celebration. The last word must go to Dame the Hon. Professor Marie Bashir, who said at the tattoo a couple of years ago:

The Tattoo brings the community together. It reminds us of the traditions of comradeship, discipline and working together.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

MURRAY FARM PUBLIC SCHOOL ANNUAL CRACKER CARNIVAL

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [5.55 p.m.]: On Saturday 30 May I had the pleasure of attending the Murray Farm Public School Cracker Carnival, which is the school's major fundraising event. Money raised in previous years has allowed the parents and citizens association to purchase various items such as iPads, playground equipment, air-conditioning systems and smart boards for the school. The carnival committee, volunteers and local businesses that supported the carnival this year deserve commendation for putting on a night filled with music, food, rides and many creative money-raising activities. As always, the highlight was the traditional fireworks display—it should be mandatory across the State—but the carnival is much more than just a cracker night.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown) [5.56 p.m.]: I acknowledge the great work of staff from West Connect Domestic Violence Service at Penrith, the Outer West Domestic Violence Committee, the Blue Mountains Coalition Against Violence and Abuse and the Hawkesbury Domestic Violence Committee, who organised a rally outside this Parliament today to highlight the thirty-seventh death this year of a woman as a result of domestic violence. Almost 100 people attended the rally to raise awareness that more work needs to be done to combat domestic violence. I congratulate the staff and acknowledge them for their great work on the front line dealing with what can only be described as one of the most disgusting and despicable crimes in our community.

TRIBUTE TO MITCHELL BURGE AND MARK BARNES

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 p.m.]: I recognise two individuals who have risked their lives to save a stranger. They put their lives on the line not for money or fame but to save a fellow human being. On a Saturday night Mitchell Burge and Mark Barnes were out fishing on Mitchell's boat, aptly named *Chillin*, when they heard distress calls on the marine radio. They learnt that a kayak had been reported missing over an hour before and time was running out. Without a second thought, Mitchell and Mark sprang into action and decided to attempt a rescue. With no information on the location or status of the kayak the pair had to rely on their understanding of the ocean.

Using their years of boating expertise they examined the speed and direction of the current and estimated the missing kayak's position. Through a mixture of luck, skill and perseverance they managed to find the kayak, but the ocean conditions had become worse. However, that did not deter Mitchell and Mark, who, despite the rough swells of the sea and howling winds, managed to drag the kayaker onto their boat. The

rescuers did not ask for reward or fame for their rescue, but it is their type of quiet achievement that should be acknowledged most. Words cannot express the value of a human life but I hope at least that this recognition brings a smile to the faces of two of the bravest gentlemen from the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai fishing club. I salute Mitchell and Mark.

YOUNG SPORTING SPIRIT AWARD NOMINEE NGAMATA TUAU

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [5.58 p.m.]: I recognise 13-year-old Ngamata Tuau of Dharruk for being nominated for the Young Sporting Spirit Award. The Young Sporting Spirit Award recognises an athlete who overcomes obstacles and demonstrates fairness, sportsmanship and dedication in their sport. Ngamata is a member of the Mount Druitt PCYC Spartans Junior Rugby League Team. As well as showing excellent sporting and leadership skills, Ngamata volunteers her time at the PCYC helping to mind children at the Kids Care Program. I wish Ngamata the best of luck in her future endeavours.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE AWARD RECIPIENT OLIVIA SIVILLS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: I congratulate 10-year-old Olivia Sivills of Minnamurra, who recently received a State Representative Award for her fantastic achievements in track and field competition. On Monday 20 April I was pleased to present Olivia with her award in my Kiama electorate office. Olivia was accompanied by her parents, Francine and David, and her brother Patrice. I congratulate Olivia on her outstanding achievements in sport in our local region. I have no doubt she will go far and I wish her all the best for her very bright future.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE

Ms TRISH DOYLE (Blue Mountains) [5.59 p.m.]: I speak about the Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise [BMEE] Creative Industries Cluster after opening the Blue Lab symposium last week in Katoomba. I remember being at the very first Creative Industries Cluster Muster two years ago when the chief executive officer, Jacqueline Brinkman, spoke quietly to me of her nervousness: Had she misjudged the appetite for a collaborative approach to industry development among artists and creative enterprises based in the mountains? She had not.

Over 200 people arrived that day to learn about clusters and how they build sector sustainability. The positive feedback was deafening. Kelly Blainey was appointed cluster manager and set about her role with fierce determination. Kelly brokered contracts and partnerships, immediately boosting the industries' financial viability. This grassroots approach kept work in the mountains that may have been lost to other regions. I recognise today the ingenuity, drive and vision of the BMEE team for bringing a powerful idea to life.

GROUP 21 RUGBY LEAGUE COMPETITION

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [6.00 p.m.]: The Group 21 under 15s representative team recently had great success by winning the cup final at the Northern Country Championships, which were played at Port Macquarie. The team played nine other group sides which came from Newcastle, Maitland, Central Coast, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Tamworth. This is a wonderful achievement as no other Group 21 side has won a cup final, bearing in mind that those boys had been selected from rugby league teams from Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone clubs.

The successful players of the under 15s Group 21 team are Robert Drew-Jagger, Harry Duggan, Tom Pickersgill, Tom Baker, Tom Eveleigh, Mitch Dykes, Max Graecen, Nathan Clerke, Pattison Hoffman, Ben Fechner, Harry Kennedy, Bailey Ellis, Lachlan Fry, Hayden Bourke, Zac Howarth, Matt Hamson, Jock Madden, Glen Winsor, Mathew Morgan and Tyler Campbell. The coach was David Madden, the manager was Craig Duggan, the first aid officer was Geoff Eveleigh and the League Safe officers were Jason Morgan and Scott Stewart. Congratulations to all the players and coaching staff on an outstanding combination of local talent representing the Upper Hunter electorate.

ITALIAN REPUBLIC DAY

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [6.01 p.m.]: On Saturday 31 May I attended the celebration of Italian Republic Day which was held at Club Marconi in Bossley Park. Our community is particularly enriched by the contribution that Italian Australians have made for more than half a century. They have brought an

enormous amount of cultural experience to our community that could not have come from anywhere else. I thank and congratulate the organisers of the event, the Italian-Australian community and the board of Club Marconi for their contribution to our community in Prospect. I wish them the best for many years to come. Viva Italia! Viva Australia!

KINROSS WOLAROI SCHOOL

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.01 p.m.]: I acknowledge the achievements of the school with one of the finest rowing programs in Australia, Kinross Wolaroi School at Orange. For the fourth year in a row, Kinross took the title of the Schoolboys Head of the River. The school picked up 14 gold medals, seven silver medals and eight bronze medals. The eight included Liam Taylorwood-Roe, Brandon Straney, Joe Yeomans, Nick Filmer, Zac Whitehead, Jack Lamph, Will Stanley-Davies, Nedd Brockmann and Elise Bennett. Kinross also achieved strong results in the Sydney Rowing Club Regatta, which was held the day before. Kate Hall was a standout, finishing fourth in the under 21s single scull and second in the under 23s single scull and was awarded gold in the under 19s quad scull. I note that Kinross also finished second in the Rowing NSW championships. Kinross is a country school that is really showing the long-established Sydney schools how to do it in rowing, and we are very proud of the school's achievements.

FAIRVALE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.02 p.m.]: I congratulate Fairvale High School on its recent win in this year's NSW Handball Schools Championships. Twelve boys from years 10 to 12 took part in the championships on 30 April at the Sydney Olympic Park Sports Halls, and they blitzed their competition. The boys trained hard for the championships over the past year. They are fiercely committed to improving their skills and performance. The students played against Sefton High School in the final and won 4-3 after scoring the match-winning point in the final 15 seconds. Congratulations to the Fairvale High School students on this outstanding achievement, and to their teacher Fay Prevezanos, on becoming the 2015 NSW Handball School State Champions.

SOUTHERN BORDER RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.03 p.m.]: On Saturday 30 May I attended a medals presentation to members of the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] Southern Border team at the Commercial Club in Albury. Eight National Medals or Clasps and 30 Long Service Medals were presented to 33 recipients with a combined total of 961 years of service. Those who received National Medals were Brian Millar for 30 years of dedicated service to Jindera and surrounding communities, Greyd'n Davis for 33 years diligent service to the Berrigan and Savernake communities, Adrian Keogh for 33 years commitment to the Mullengandra community, Hugh Watson for 40 years of dedicated service to the Billabong, Table Top and Greater Hume communities, Ian "David" Geddes for 48 years diligent service to the Little Billabong, Mullengandra and Greater Hume areas, Peter Jervois for 48 years diligent service to the Bungowannah and Greater Hume communities, Gordon "Vyner" Smithwick for 53 years commitment to Talmalmo and surrounding areas and Noel Shipard for 54 years dedicated service to the Goombargana and surrounding communities.

A posthumous Long Service Medal sixth Clasp for Marie Hoffmann was presented to Sue Gugger to mark her late mother's 72 years of dedication to the Thurgoona and surrounding brigades. Thank you to all RFS members.

EAST COAST ALLSTARS CHEERLEADING SQUAD

Ms JODIE HARRISON (Charlestown) [6.04 p.m.]: I recognise the exceptional athletic talent of the East Coast Allstars competitive cheerleading squad, which is based in Gateshead in my electorate of Charlestown. The East Coast Allstars has been operating since 2008, producing internationally competitive teams in this energetic and artistic sport. Recently a team from the East Coast Allstars competed in the Desert National Championship in California after winning the Australian All Star Cheerleading Federation's All Star battle against teams from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. I was lucky enough to watch the East Coast Allstars rehearsing just before they flew out to compete. They were one of just five teams from Australia to make it through to the international competition. Congratulations to all the young women who travelled to the United States to compete. I look forward to catching up with the team again soon and hearing about their exploits. I also congratulate coaches Derrick and Kassie Turner, who have put so much effort into the teams.

COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.05 p.m.]: Statewide, young people are undertaking tertiary education due to a wonderful growing charity, the Country Education Foundation, whose members undertake the role of encouraging and selecting rural scholarship recipients. Within the Cootamundra electorate, Country Education Foundation member volunteers include: from Harden—Charlotte Middleton, Samantha Flanery, John Horton, Cathy Sanderson, Vicki Fairfield-Smith, Renee Ford and Lynn Douglas; from Young—Jo Hawker, Jenny Jubb, Aditya Jhunhunwalla and Pammie McCloy; from Cootamundra—David Hain, Paul Braybrook and Ken and Liz Martell; from Temora—Rick Firman, Graham Sinclair, Eileen Derrick, Bernadette West; from Cowra—Jenni Fagan, Joan Hurst, Alan Thompson, Sue Whiteley; and from West Wyalong—Michelle Carnegie and Kate Barrett.

Students receive practical assistance with textbooks, the cost of travel and living away from home expenses so that they may attend TAFE or university to study a wide range of careers including agribusiness, engineering, plumbing, veterinary science, medicine and hairdressing. Past recipients from my electorate include medical student Maggie-Kate Minogue and ABC journalist Robert Baird. On behalf of my electorate, I congratulate the Country Education Foundation of New South Wales.

LAKE MACQUARIE MARINE RESCUE AWARDS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY (Swansea) [6.06 p.m.]: Today I recognise the contribution made by the following members of my community through their service to Marine Rescue Lake Macquarie: John Hatton, Peter Skinner, Malcolm Watson, Richard Jarman, Nola Ellis, and Brian Davies. Those individuals have made a significant contribution to marine safety and rescue services in our community, and their long-term efforts and services deserve recognition in this Parliament. Together, these six individuals have a massive 130 years of combined marine rescue service and experience. Marine Rescue NSW has more than 3,000 volunteers in 46 units throughout the State. They assist on average 2,200 boats in trouble every year. Marine rescue services play a vital role in my local area. Knowing that we have such a depth of knowledge and experience at hand to ensure that our boating community is safe is very reassuring to our community. Well done.

MS PHOEBE KAMPER

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.07 p.m.]: I recognise Phoebe Kamper and her horse, Gotico Park Etherial, on their success last month at the Andalusian Horse Association of Australia national championships that were held in Sydney. On the first day of the competition at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre, Phoebe and her horse competed in and won the novice hack, open hack and lady rider class and she was named champion lady rider. Their success continued on the second day with the pair being named reserve champion Australian Andalusian in led class and reserve champion in the ridden class. Six years ago, Phoebe saved Gotico Park Etherial's life, taking him in and training him. I commend Phoebe for her caring nature. I congratulate Phoebe and her horse on their well-deserved success at the championships and wish them both all the very best for a very bright future and more wins.

GOOD MORNING BANGLADESH FUNDRAISER

Mr JIHAD DIB (Lakemba) [6.08 p.m.]: On 24 May 2015 I attended the Good Morning Bangladesh gathering, as one part of the Biggest Morning Tea fundraisers for the Cancer Council of New South Wales. This community based morning tea has been held in Lakemba for six years and is attended by people from across diverse cultural groups, local citizens, community leaders and representatives of cultural media. I congratulate the organisers and the community on raising an impressive \$6,500 on that day. As the organisers of the Good Morning Bangladesh initiative say, "There is no joy greater than the joy of giving." Recently suburbs of the Lakemba electorate were identified as some of the least wealthy in Sydney. Not only is such an event a shining example of multicultural Australia but also it shows our community is a place where people come together because they value charitable acts.

KANGAROO MARCH RE-ENACTMENT

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.09 p.m.]: Riverina residents are being urged to join a re-enactment of the famous 1915 Kangaroo March, a recruitment drive inspiring young men to replace soldiers killed at Gallipoli. The original Kangaroo March left Wagga Wagga on 1 December

1915, with 88 men prepared to volunteer for service for World War I. It picked up another 134 men before arriving at Campbelltown on 7 January 1916. The re-enactment march will leave Wagga Wagga on 5 September and arrive in Sydney for a shared commemoration on 11 November, with others from various parts of the State who are also re-enacting recruitment marches. If there are descendants of the 88 who left Wagga Wagga, or descendants of anyone who joined them, we want to hear from them. Interested people can register on www.kangaroomarch.org.au. I encourage descendants to register and to take part in this march in this centenary year of Anzac.

OCEAN BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Ms KATHY SMITH (Gosford) [6.10 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I commend Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Club for its annual dinner and awards night held last Saturday 30 May 2015. President Scott Hannell and his team have headed up a very successful year with many successes at club, regional, State, national and international levels. The club was established in 1922 and although it does not cover a large area it is an exceptionally busy beach for young families; yet not one life has been lost on the beach since the establishment of the club in 1922. I congratulate the club and thank it for a wonderful dinner, which was served under extraordinary circumstances: The club lost its caterer that week. However, that did not put the club back. I commend the club for holding a beautiful evening.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE JUNIOR CRICKET ASSOCIATION

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [6.11 p.m.]: I acknowledge the Sutherland Shire Junior Cricket Association, whose annual presentation of awards I was pleased to attend on Sunday 31 May 2015. The association is an integral part of our local community, and I applaud the hard work of the entire executive: President Roy Amos, Vice President Brett Bryant, Secretary Tony Hess, Treasurer John Derrick, Competition Manager Councillor Tom Croucher, and Representative Cricket Manager Jim Lee.

I pay particular tribute to 15-year-old rising star Luke Hawksworth, who was the recipient of the John Woodhouse Memorial trophy for cricketer of the year. Luke lives with his family in Illawong and has played cricket in the Sutherland shire his entire life. Last year he scored more than 900 runs, averaging more than 100—a record for his 14A division and a truly outstanding result. I also commend Will Vandermaal of Miranda, who won the Cliff Paddy Memorial trophy for best representative individual achievement. Finally I congratulate the clubs from my electorate that won shields in their divisions.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Mr STEPHEN KAMPER (Rockdale) [9.12 p.m.]: I congratulate the excellent work of Rockdale City Council and my colleague in the other place Shaoquett Moselmane, MLC, on their recent fundraising events for Nepal following the Nepalese earthquake. With very short notice, together they managed to raise more than \$20,000 to donate to the Nepal relief effort. This money will go directly towards UNICEF Australia to help those most in need. Rockdale is home to a rapidly growing Nepalese community, and it is fantastic to see our local representatives acting so quickly to support their relatives in Nepal following the tragedy. I thank all of our local councillors, Mayor Shane O'Brien, council staff, Shaoquett, and our local community, who were willing to give so generously at such a tragic time. I look forward to their continued good works both at home and abroad.

WINSTON HILLS LIONS CLUB

Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) [6.13 p.m.]: I recognise the great work that the Lions Club of Winston Hills does for the Seven Hills community. Founded on 1 June 1974, Winston Hills Lions Club has 33 members, two of whom are founding members. They are a group of humble, hardworking, ordinary people working to support others less fortunate than themselves, fundraising for worthwhile causes and having fun. The club is active in a number of projects, including the Oktoberfest Community Fair, Woodberry Village retirement village functions, the Salvos and Vinnies collection appeals, diabetic kids camps and, of course, Cash-a-Can.

I congratulate outgoing president Stephen Treloar on a productive term in which the club has engaged meaningfully with our local area. I also congratulate incoming president Kieran Gregory on his imminent election and wish him well. I am sure that under Mr Gregory's stewardship, the club's agenda to engage in community service activities will continue in the same way that Mr Treloar has left it.

HIGHLAND DANCING CHAMPION REBECCA SMITH

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [6.14 p.m.]: Tonight I acknowledge the achievements of highland dancing champion Rebecca Smith in my electorate of Wyong. Rebecca started highland dancing when she was just three years old. Now 20, Rebecca has won a total of 43 championships. Rebecca has been overseas recently to compete in the World Highland Dancing Championship. She represented Australia and danced for Queen Elizabeth II in Braemar, Scotland. Rebecca's titles include highest placed Australian in the Champion of Champions Championship of Australia. She is the current Australian Capital Territory highland dancing champion, the New South Wales State champion, and Newcastle Highland Dancing Association of Australia champion.

Rebecca is the Eastern Australian Champion and, for the past 10 years, Rebecca has won the Scottish Dancing Association of Australia closed championship for New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory dancers. She has previously won the Grand Australasian Championship five times and the International Highland Dancing Championship for three consecutive years. In August she will go to Scotland, where she will represent Australia once again. We wish her luck.

ST GEORGE LIONS CLUB

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [6.15 p.m.]: Last week I attended the change-over dinner of the Lions Club of St George—a Lions Club that I have been a member of for more than 12 years. I acknowledge the great work of the outgoing president, Dawn Carr, and the president before her, John Craig, for their work and leadership of the Lions Club of St George. I welcome John Harrison back to the presidency of the Lions Club, who has served as president over the years. In fact, he was one of the very first members of the St George Lions Club. Over the years the club has raised much-needed funding for Calvary Hospital, the Lions Children's Mobility Foundation, tsunami disaster relief, the Victorian bushfire appeal, the MS Society, Sacred Heart Community, Sydney Eye Hospital and many more projects. On behalf of all of us in this Chamber I wish the St George Lions Club all the very best for the next 12 months.

NSW STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE RESCUE CHALLENGE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.16 p.m.]: I attended the NSW State Emergency Service Disaster Rescue Challenge's welcome function at the Novatel in Wollongong last weekend, along with the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. David Elliott, New South Wales State Emergency Service Commissioner Adam Dent and Acting Deputy Commissioner Greg Newton. The aim of the challenge was to select a team to represent the NSW State Emergency Service at the National Rescue Challenge, with each team being judged on its performance during various field operations.

The Kiama State Emergency Service unit, supported by volunteers from the Illawarra and South region, were named State champions. The team consisted of members Chris Warren, Anna Habeck, Robert McDonald, Daniel Vrckoski, Simon Ross and team leader Warren Turner, who was also awarded best team leader in the competition. They will now represent our great State, and travel to the national competition in Canberra in September. I congratulate them on their success and wish them the very best for the nationals. Well done, Kiama. Well done, the Illawarra.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE MARTIAL ARTS CHAMPIONS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.17 p.m.]: I congratulate two local young athletes, Dane Clark of Tahmoor and Izaak Taylor of Wilton, who recently competed in the 2015 Australian Karate Federation Australian Open at the Whitlam Leisure Centre in Liverpool. The two boys have been training diligently under the guidance of a good friend of mine, sensei Arthur Moulas of Arthur Moulas Martial Arts in Tahmoor. Their dedication was reflected in their impressive performance on the day. Dane Clark achieved bronze in the boys Kumite 10-years category, and Izaak Taylor achieved bronze in the boys Kumite under-10 category. The competition attracted 600 competitors overall, each of the highest standard from each State, and an even larger crowd of spectators. Dane, Izaak, and Mr Moulas should be proud of their achievements. I look forward to seeing the results of the 2016 competition, which no doubt will be just as impressive.

FORBES NETBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.18 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that this week the Forbes Netball Association 17-years team will compete at the Netball New South

Wales State Championships. The event is being hosted by the Illawarra District Netball Association. The Forbes team includes a mix of last year's side and graduates from the 2014 15-years and under squad. The team consists of Sarah Meacham, Courtney Ward, Sarah Simmonds, Sophie Hurford, Jess Zieltjes, Monica Pascoe, Brooke Howarth, Leah Byrnes, Elysse Girot-Serplet and Forbes Netball Association umpire Eliza Woods. The coach is Tamara Hawken, who is in her third year of coaching this group. She said that the girls have overcome obstacles, including being unable to train together week by week. I wish the Forbes 17-years team all the best at the New South Wales State Championships. The community is very proud of its achievements.

GRANDPARENTS AS PARENTS

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [6.19 p.m.]: Today I recognise the enormous contribution made by the Grandparents as Parents group in Raymond Terrace. The group provides a much-needed support network for grandparents who have taken on the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren, often as a result of the most desperate circumstances. The children in their care gain the benefit of a stable household and loving family. Sadly, many of the children come with many issues, often having witnessed events, and experienced things that we would hope children would never see or experience.

I thank all members of the group who have taken on enormous responsibilities, at significant personal, financial and emotional cost, at a time in their lives when people usually pursue their own interests. Unfortunately, the group is facing difficulties from numerous fronts, including the loss of funding for the regional liaison officer, a lack of clarity as to the impact of changes to guardianship laws and complexities around funding sources. I was privileged to witness the care, commitment and heartache of members when I attended a recent meeting of Grandparents as Parents. I am committed to assisting them to ensure that those who care for others receive the care and support they so rightly deserve.

INVERELL HIGH SCHOOL TOUCH FOOTBALL TEAM ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.20 p.m.]: I recognise four Inverell High School students—Chelsea Hindmarsh, Sarah and Kate Lennon, and Gaby Watkins—who have been selected to represent the mighty north-west region in touch football at the Combined High Schools [CHS] championships, which will be held later this month. Inverell High School has long had a tradition of being very strong in touch football. I acknowledge Inverell High School sports coordinator, Denise Bryant, who leads the charges around, getting them to and from various competitions. I acknowledge the whole team, which has been very successful in winning the regional knockout matches and is now in the final 20 teams in the statewide competition. I extend my congratulations to Chelsea, Sarah, Kate and Gaby. I wish them all the best in the upcoming CHS championships.

BICYCLES FOR CHANGE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.21 p.m.]: I was heartened to hear of the recent good work of the organisation called Bicycles for Change which, with the help of the Southern Highlands community, has been able to fill yet another shipping container of recycled bicycles to donate to those in Namibia who desperately need them. Bicycles for Change, formerly known as Bikes for Humanity, is a global volunteer group that provides bicycles to poverty stricken areas. This service is invaluable to such areas, assisting healthcare workers and educators to cover large distances usually travelled by foot and providing equipment to construct bicycle ambulances to transport the sick and injured to medical assistance.

With the assistance of the Wingecarribee Shire Council Resource Recovery Centre, this will be the third full shipping container—420 bicycles, 20 walkers and seven wheelchairs—in four years sent from the Southern Highlands branch of Bicycles for Change. The volume of recycled bicycles donated by Southern Highlands residents is one of the highest in the country, with a total of 1,500 bicycles being donated so far. The generosity of Southern Highlands residents is humbling. I am proud to be their State representative.

Community recognition statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

GOLD TELETHON

Matter of Public Importance

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.22 p.m.]: This Queen's birthday long weekend the Gold Telethon will be held to raise important funds for the Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick. It will be broadcast live on

Channel 9 on Monday 8 June 2015, and will feature many sporting and television personalities. It will encompass live entertainment, popular musicians and comedians, staff and patients, who will share their stories. The hope is that \$5 million will be raised to ensure the best possible care for the thousands of young patients who come through the doors of Sydney Children's Hospital every year. I call on all people in New South Wales to give generously to the hospital. In addition, I ask all those who can volunteer to give of their time to do so because the hospital is looking for volunteers to answer the telephones during the telethon.

Each year the Sydney Children's Hospital cares for more than 85,800 critically ill and injured children. On average, 104 children come through the doors of the emergency department. This hospital is a world-class children's hospital of which we can be proud. I pay tribute to the major presenting partners, particularly Channel 9, the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* for their generosity and support. I also include WFSM 101.7 Pure Gold, KIIS 106.5 and Adshel. Without the generosity of those presenting partners the target of \$5 million would not be possible. I thank also the other major donors to the telethon.

There are many stories surrounding the success of the Sydney Children's Hospital. As a parent I have spent considerable time at this hospital since the birth of my youngest son, who is now 23 years of age. He was born severely anaphylactic to dairy products and since his birth he has been rushed to hospital regularly because of serious allergic reactions. Even now, only a drop of dairy contaminating a food product he ingests necessitates rushing him to hospital. For the first 16 years of his life my wife and I virtually lived at the Sydney Children's Hospital and I can give testament to the outstanding, world-class treatment that my child received, directly from the hospital. I can also give testament to my son receiving that same treatment when, having collapsed at various locations, he has been choppered to the hospital. I have nothing but admiration for the staff of the hospital.

From time to time we should all visit that hospital, which services my electorate, to see how seriously ill some of these children are and to witness the care they receive in the hospital. It is easy to dwell on how difficult things may be for our own children, but one has only to look around the hospital to see terminally ill young children with cancer who, despite the delicate care of hospital staff and family, pass away a week later. I have nothing but the greatest admiration for them. The hospital abounds with tragedy, but it also abounds with success and my youngest son, Matthew, is one of those successes. I say to the people of New South Wales that there is nothing more significant they can do in their lives than to put their hands in their pockets and provide some support for the Gold Telethon on Monday of the Queen's Birthday long weekend.

Ms ELENI PETINOS (Miranda) [6.27 p.m.]: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Government on the significance of the upcoming Gold Telethon 2015. I thank the member for Heffron for sharing his personal experience with the Sydney Children's Hospital. Monday 8 June 2015 will mark the sixth annual Gold Telethon. Every year the telethon does a tremendous job in raising vital funds for the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation, with a back-to-back broadcast appealing for public donations all day on the Nine Network and associated channels WIN and NBN. Last year community members came together and raised an impressive \$4.5 million for the foundation. This year our aim as a community is not only to match but also to exceed that figure—the target is \$5 million.

This is a very worthy cause. The Sydney Children's Hospital cares for more than 45,800 children each year, improving the lives of vulnerable patients and their families from across New South Wales and beyond. At the hospital some of the brightest minds in the State work together every day to lead the way in paediatric research and treatment methodology. Despite the world-class talent and great work being done day to day at the Sydney Children's Hospital, the support of the Government and the community is essential for the hospital to make an impact. Each dollar raised this Monday will be stretched to its utmost potential. Be it lifesaving medical equipment, research funding or the delivery of vital accommodation and care for our most vulnerable children, this major fundraising event will pave the way to new heights of service for the hospital.

It is hard to overemphasise the vulnerability of the young children receiving treatment at this lifesaving institution. At any one time 400 children are being treated for cancer at the hospital. Each day 18 children undergo surgery and half of those operations are an emergency. More than 900 children are admitted to the intensive care unit every year. There is no truer measure of a society than the way in which it comes together to care for its most vulnerable members. That is why it is heartening to see communities dig deep for the sake of this great foundation. It is incumbent on businesses, families and governments alike to donate this weekend.

The New South Wales Government is a proud supporter of the telethon and has donated \$25,000 over the past three years. I know the Premier is looking forward to attending the celebrity phone bank on Monday.

The New South Wales Government has an enduring commitment to the role that our hospitals play, in particular the children's hospital, in the State's health system. They are backed up by Rebuild NSW. This Government's plan will allow billions of dollars to be invested in Health and will build on the record investment in hospitals. In May 2013 the Government allocated \$12.3 million to the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation to help make the Ainsworth Wing a reality, a state-of-the-art facility that incorporates a brain injury rehabilitation unit, an eight-bed child and adolescent mental health unit, a 28-bed short-stay surgical unit, a new lung function testing facility for infants, a family centre for parents and carers, and a new location for the child protection unit.

The Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation and the fundraising initiatives with which it is associated is a prime example of the way in which businesses, communities and government have come together to support our most vulnerable and precious citizens. It has been inspiring to watch schools, workplaces and not-for-profit organisations across New South Wales gearing up for the telethon throughout April and May, with dedicated fundraising and educational events for the benefit of all communities. Government and communities must work together to support worthy initiatives and drive development in the Health sector.

The Baird Government is committed to supercharging health investment and partnering with philanthropic organisations such as the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation. Communities are committed to investing in this dynamic institution for the next generation. On behalf of the Government, I wholeheartedly commend the Gold Telethon initiative and encourage everyone in New South Wales to dig deep and make a donation on behalf of the children of our great State to support this worthy institution.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.32 p.m.]: I support the member for Heffron for bringing the Gold Telethon 2015 to the attention of the House. I attended the Sydney Children's Hospital many times as a child and I have also made the late-night dash to the hospital with all four of my children over the past 20 years. The staff at the Sydney Children's Hospital do great work. One of my nieces, Desiree, was struck down with a debilitating illness when she was only one year old. She received wonderful care from the hospital staff. She is now 10 years old and able to play soccer with my twins.

This weekend the New South Wales community is being asked to donate to the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation through the Gold Telethon. This important event will be broadcast live on Channel Nine. Although governments can achieve quite a lot, those in partnership with the Government can produce the icing on the cake. When we attend children's hospitals we can be proud when we see what is provided for the sick children. They are often entertained by clowns and other characters that brighten their day and make their stay in hospital a more pleasurable experience.

The member for Heffron pointed out there is a touch of sadness when one walks through the wards, but there is also a sense of happiness when we see children walking away from the hospital with their parents. There are many ways to donate money this weekend. We can call 1800-children—that is 1800 244 537—or SMS "gold" to 0477 333 555, or donate online. The New South Wales community must dig deep. We must thank all the nurses, doctors and support staff across the State in various paediatric departments, not only those at the Sydney Children's Hospital. I thank them for their service. I ask all members in the House to dig deep this weekend for this worthy cause.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Miranda and the member for Fairfield for their contributions on this matter of public importance. I stress to the people of New South Wales that it is important to support the Gold Telethon 2015. One of the major difficulties this State has is dealing with the limited funds that are available to the Health sector because greater demands are being placed on the State budget to fund services. This is an important time for the community to dig deep to raise funds to help provide the services and equipment to the Sydney Children's Hospital that is beyond the reach of the Government's resources.

The activities, equipment and facilities that are provided to create a better environment for those who are unfortunate to remain in the Sydney Children's Hospital are remarkable. It is understood by all members of Parliament that the children who need treatment at the Sydney Children's Hospital come from all areas of New South Wales, including regional and rural New South Wales. Often a parent or carer remains with the child at all times. Accommodation is often beyond the resources of those travelling from regional New South Wales and often the parent or carer does not want to leave the sick child. Many of the facilities available at the Sydney Children's Hospital are provided through the Sydney Children's Hospital Foundation and are funded by the generous donations of those in the community.

Television stations often struggle for income and Channel Nine's commitment to host the Gold Telethon will allow a significant contribution to be made to the Sydney Children's Hospital. On behalf of all members of Parliament, I extend our appreciation to Channel Nine and the major donors. Everyone should dig deep on Monday 6 June for such an important cause.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Anna Watson): I congratulate all members who contributed to the matter of public importance tonight. The children of New South Wales are our greatest asset. I urge all members in this House and the other place to donate generously to this cause.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.38 p.m. until
Thursday 4 June 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**
