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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 24 June 2015

The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Deputy-Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Implementing performance audit recommendations: Department of Premier and Cabinet, The Treasury, NSW Ministry of Health, Department of Education and Communities, Transport for NSW, NSW Police Force", dated June 2015, received on 24 June 2015 and authorised to be printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions.]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I add my congratulations to Mr Brian Darby, an old colleague of mine, who has done a lot of work with young people to try to keep them off the streets.

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 3 June 2015.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [10.13 a.m.]: I lead on behalf of the Opposition in the debate on the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill will amend the Adoption Act 2000, the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 and the Ombudsman Act 1974 to implement various reforms relating to the protection of children and young people, including with respect to the suitability of persons to be carers, adoptive parents and guardians of children and young people.

I note from the outset that the Opposition will not oppose this bill but, in fact, is very supportive of toughening legislation with respect to child protection in this State. It is my understanding that this bill has been introduced following concerns raised in the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse with respect to out-of-home care. I thank the Minister and his office for briefing me and my staff in relation to this bill. The Opposition firmly believes that there is no higher duty for the State than to protect and support our vulnerable children and young people, and to ensure that at all times they are kept safe from the risk of harm.

Labor has a distinguished record when it comes to strengthening child protection legislation in our State. For instance, the Working With Children Check was established by the Carr Labor Government in 1998—the first such scheme introduced in Australia. Since then, most Australian jurisdictions have introduced similar working with children checks. In 2009 the Rees Labor Government introduced the Keep them Safe reforms in response to the recommendations made by the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales by Justice Wood. The reforms have placed a new emphasis on building a shared approach between families, non-government groups and government to focus on improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in New South Wales.

Following a 2010 review of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 and an Auditor-General's audit of the performance of Working with Children Checks, the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 was enacted which changed the Working with Children Check process to include: two outcomes, either a clearance or a bar; the same clearance processes for all categories of workers, for example, paid workers, volunteers, self-employed, authorised carers and the adults that share their home; full access to criminal histories instead of a defined subset of records be made available; and the continual monitoring of New South Wales records to manage risks after a person has been cleared to work with children.

This bill will amend the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, the Ombudsman Act 1974 and the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 to better regulate the framework of the Working With Children Check. I will now briefly address certain aspects of the bill in detail. Schedule 2 [6] will insert proposed sections 9A and 9B into the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012. The proposed sections will require the governing body of an organisation to ensure that a person is not appointed on a permanent basis to a key position in that organisation that is involved in child-related work unless the person is the holder of a clearance or has a current application for a clearance. The proposed sections will also require an employer to verify an employee's Working with Children Check status on the register, with the verification to occur before the worker commences child-related work and then again after five years.

Schedule 2 [16] will amend section 16 to reduce the time frame for Working with Children Check applicants to provide further information to the Children's Guardian from six months to three months. Schedule 2 [14] will amend section 13 so that the consent of the Children's Guardian is required for an applicant to withdraw their application for a Working With Children's Check clearance, which is an appropriate amendment. Schedule 5 of the bill will amend the Ombudsman Act to ensure that an adult residing in the same home as an authorised carer is also subject to the Ombudsman's reportable conduct framework. The amendments will also permit information sharing agreements between child protection agencies and victims of reportable allegations. The bill will also make several amendments to the Adoption Act 2000 and Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 with respect to the out-of-home care system in New South Wales.

Schedule 3 [3] will create a new definition of "principal officer" in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 so that a designated person within an agency has the overall supervision of an agency's arrangements for providing voluntary out-of-home care. Schedule 3 [4] will amend section 79 of the Act to prevent the Children's Court from allocating any aspect of parental responsibility to an organisation or to the principal officer of a designated agency. Schedule 1 [7] proposes to amend the Adoption Act to enable the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services or the principal officer of an accredited adoption service to invite an authorised carer of a child who is in out-of-home care to submit an application to adopt a child.

Schedule 1 [8] of the bill will allow any person to provide information to the principal officer of an accredited adoption service provider or the Secretary to better determine the suitability of a person to adopt a child. The Minister quite rightly anticipated in his second reading speech that these reforms would receive bipartisan support. The New South Wales Opposition will undoubtedly continue to support measures that put the safety, wellbeing and interests of vulnerable children and young people first. It is also important to note that the Children's Guardian sought these amendments to the respective bills.

Strengthening child protection measures is a priority of the New South Wales Opposition, especially in ensuring that the Working With Children Check continues to act as the important safeguard to prevent unsuitable individuals from obtaining paid or unpaid child-related work. As it says in section 18 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, the Children's Guardian must not grant a clearance to certain disqualified persons who have committed offences that appear in schedule 2 of the Act. Under section 14 of the Act, a person who has previously committed an offence under schedule 1 of the Act is subject to a risk assessment by the Children's Guardian prior to the determination of their application for a Working With Children's Check clearance.

However, under section 26 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, the only persons who are prevented from appealing to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] against a decision to refuse a clearance for working with children are those persons who have previously been convicted of the murder of a child or those persons whose application for a clearance has been wholly or partly refused on the grounds that the person has been charged with an offence and the proceedings related to that offence have not been fully determined.

According to the 2013-14 annual report of the Office of the Children's Guardian just over 420,000 individuals had made an application for a Working With Children Check, with 203 individuals being refused a clearance in that year. One hundred and forty-three of those individuals were barred due to having committed an automatic disqualifying offence within schedule 2 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act, including for certain serious sexual offences. The annual report stated that a total of 83 barred applicants appealed to NCAT to obtain a clearance. Of the 44 matters that the tribunal heard in 2013-14, 16 clearances were subsequently granted.

These statistics were highlighted recently in a newspaper, which reported several cases in which individuals were able to appeal to NCAT for an administrative review to overturn the Children's Guardian decision to bar their Working With Children Check application. I take this opportunity to put on record three of the cases. A 72-year-old swimming coach and Catholic priest's assistant, currently the vice-president of a swimming club, obtained a clearance on appeal after fondling two 13-year-old boys in a public toilet in 1963. In summary, the NCAT said there had been no subsequent conviction so the risk was no higher than for other men his age, and overturned that decision.

Another example was of a truck driver with previous convictions of assaulting police and resisting arrest and for raping a 22-year-old woman in 1989. The NCAT decision, in summary, was that his conduct was reprehensible but that the victim was not a child, the truck driver had expressed remorse and was unlikely to reoffend. So NCAT overturned the Children's Guardian decision. Another case example is of a 22-year-old man who sexually assaulted a 17-year-old girl in 1996 and who had also previously assaulted a 14-year-old girl. In its decision, NCAT summarised that there had been no other serious offences. NCAT were unable to conclude that he had stopped drinking but he had not come to police attention since 1997. They also overturned that decision.

At the time the cases were brought to the attention of the media, the Leader of the Opposition and I called on the Minister to broaden the list of offences that would preclude certain individuals from requesting a review of the Children's Guardian decision to bar a working with children clearance, especially with regard to individuals who have been convicted of sexual offences against children or convicted of murder or serious sexual offences, irrespective of the victim's age.

I urge the Minister to proceed with caution. I appreciate that we need to expand this section, but in determining which specific category of offences from schedule 2 of the Act will be included, it is critical that a rash decision is not made that may unintentionally preclude certain offenders, but not all offenders, who are unsuitable to seek an appeal. While closing loopholes and strengthening the child protection framework is a notion which is undoubtedly bipartisan in its nature, the Minister should consult closely with the relevant legal and child protection stakeholders to make sure that full and proper consideration is sought in expanding the scope of section 26 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012.

It would be wise to engage the Standing Committee on Law and Justice or the Committee on Children and Young People to seek an urgent review of the disqualifying offences within the Act and to report back to Parliament on which of those offences it would be appropriate to expand in section 26 to deny the rights of appeal to NCAT. Determining which offences should be included within the realm of section 26 of the Act will require due consideration given the necessity of being mindful of protecting inherent legal appeal rights that exist in our judicial system and being mindful that nothing that we change in this section will deny an individual the inherent right to appeal to the Supreme Court.

It is most important that we consider the crucial need to ensure that individuals who seek child-related work, whether it be paid or unpaid, in sectors that directly involve interacting with children—such as at our local schools, surf clubs, soccer clubs, or health services related to children such as speech therapists—are cleared by the Office of the Children's Guardian, and that those decisions are not later overturned on appeal. As a mother of three children, I find it particularly disturbing that an individual who could have been convicted of a disqualifying offence under schedule 2 of the Act, could hire a good team of lawyers to overturn the Children's Guardian's decision to bar them from working with children on appeal, potentially leaving the public none the wiser and risking the safety of children.

Furthermore, I find it extraordinary that despite the rhetoric that we are hearing from this Government on child protection—particularly considering the expanded nature of the Working With Children Checks that

are proposed in this bill and potential changes to section 26, which the Opposition would support—I am hard-pressed to understand how child protection can be improved when it was announced in yesterday's budget that nearly \$2 million has been removed from, and jobs have been carved out of, the Office of the Children's Guardian. The Government clearly does not comprehend the additional requirements that will be placed on the Office of the Children's Guardian with respect to what is proposed in this bill. I thank the Minister and his staff for briefing me, and I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.29 a.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and I congratulate the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing on introducing legislation which significantly improves the systems in New South Wales that protect some of the most vulnerable children in our community. I would like to acknowledge two very important people who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. I welcome Children's Guardian Kerry Boland and Louise Coe, who is the Director of Working With Children Check Operations. I thank them for coming to listen to this debate this morning. I also thank them for their dedication and hard work to protect children in our community. Their cooperation with the Government as well as the strengthened protections contained in this legislation will go a long way towards making our State an even safer place for young people.

In order to protect vulnerable children it is most important to respond to the serious systemic issues highlighted at the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. As members are aware, the royal commission has been asked to look at where systems have failed children in the past and identify what institutions and governments should do to better protect children in the future. Like everyone in the community, I have been shocked and saddened by the disturbing revelations coming out of the commission hearings. The Baird-Grant Government is well aware of the need to carefully consider the issues highlighted by the commission. We are listening to the community and responding to the concerns it has raised in relation to people who can work with our children. That has resulted in the Government making further amendments to strengthen the protections for children in line with community standards. Before I speak about that I will address the issues raised by the royal commission.

In its first hearing the royal commission identified the need for improved regulation and accountability of principal officers of designated out-of-home care agencies. That included proper background screening for those principal officers by the designated agency governing bodies. The need for that was horrifically illustrated by the case of Mr Larkins, a former principal officer of Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service, which is a designated statutory out-of-home care agency. Mr Larkins was arrested on child pornography charges in 2011. At the time, he was caring for a young person in out-of-home-care in his home. He also had parental responsibility for a number of other children and young people who were placed with Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service. At no stage was Mr Larkins subject to any thorough carer assessment despite having parental responsibility for children and young people.

The reforms proposed in the bill directly address those concerns by strengthening the regulation of principal officers. They will cover designated non-government agencies, registered voluntary out-of-home care agencies and non-government adoption service providers. Schedule 3 item [3] to the bill defines "principal officer" of a designated agency or a registered agency in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act as the person who has the overall supervision of the agency's out-of-home care arrangements. Additionally, the bill brings the actions of a principal officer of an adoption service provider or designated or registered agency into line with the actions of the relevant agency. Under the change, a principal officer cannot make decisions about the care of a child independently from the designated agency that has responsibility for the child.

Schedule 3 item [4] to the bill also amends the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act to prevent the Children's Court from making an order allocating any aspect of parental responsibility for a child or young person to a principal officer of a designated agency. Schedule 3 item [17] to the bill also makes it an offence for a principal officer of a designated agency to reside at the same property as a child or young person in out-of-home care who is supervised by the same agency. Principal officers can still be authorised carers of a child or young person in statutory out-of-home care but only if another agency manages the placement.

In New South Wales we have a coordinated approach to the protection of children and young people. Requiring people to have a Working With Children Check clearance to undertake child-related work is one important component of that approach. The new Working With Children Check online system is considered to

be one of the most comprehensive of its kind in Australia. Since its introduction, the new system has provided greater protections for children by applying the same check to people in child-related employment and continuously checking for new relevant criminal records.

The bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 at schedule 2 item [6] to ensure that governing bodies of designated and voluntary out-of-home care agencies do not appoint a person to a key position on a permanent basis without a Working With Children Check clearance. Key positions in an organisation are the chief executive officer, the principal officer and any other positions prescribed by regulation. Until a Working With Children Check clearance is provided a person may only be appointed to act in a temporary capacity or role in those key positions.

The change recognises that people in such positions have access to sensitive child-related information. It is therefore appropriate that those people have their backgrounds properly checked for any related child protection concerns. The reform will improve principal officer screening arrangements and strengthen governance arrangements within agencies. The bill provides them with clarity and certainty in relation to their responsibilities regarding the Working With Children Check.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the important work done by non-government agencies and carers that provide care to children who cannot live safely at home. That care can be invaluable to vulnerable children and young people in New South Wales. The bill has been developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including government and non-government agencies with key responsibilities for the care and protection of children. The overall result further strengthens the child protection systems already in place to protect our most vulnerable children.

We are also ensuring that appropriate checks and balances exist in the out-of-home care system to protect children who are unable to reside with their biological families. It is crucial that people speak up if they have legitimate concerns about a child's out-of-home care living arrangements. As we heard at the royal commission, the Larkins matter demonstrated that a number of people witnessed concerning behaviours and inappropriate care arrangements involving children and young people. Those people felt powerless to act, given the position that Larkins held as head of the care agency that had responsibility for the children's care.

The bill allows persons to come forward and provide relevant information about the living arrangements of vulnerable children and the people who are entrusted with their care. Information can be provided about an adoption applicant, authorised carer, carer applicant, guardian, prospective guardian, or a person residing with any of those people at the same property. The information can be given to the principal officer of an accredited adoption service provider, a designated agency or the Secretary to the Department of Family and Community Services.

Where the information is given in good faith, the provider will have the necessary legal protections. The information may be used to determine an applicant's suitability to care for a child in any of those roles, which I repeat include an adoption applicant, authorised carer, carer applicant, guardian, prospective guardian, or a person residing with any of those people at the same property. The changes will help to ensure that situations such as those highlighted in the Larkins case do not occur again. I welcome the proposed changes. They remove the potential for the type of conflict of interest matters that were raised at the first royal commission hearing and they impose the checks and balances that will provide greater protection for children in out-of-home care.

The bill contains a number of other changes that clarify and improve the scope and application of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act. Since the bill was drafted, further issues that relate to the Working With Children Check have been brought to the Government's attention. The community is concerned that the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] has overturned decisions of the Children's Guardian that would have prevented people who have committed serious offences from working with children. We are talking about offenders who have committed serious offences such as murder and serious sexual offences against children. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Currently, adults convicted of murdering a child or convicted of intention, conspiracy or incitement to murder a child cannot apply to NCAT for an enabling order to allow them to work with children. Under the existing working with children Act, that is the only category of offence with no right of appeal to NCAT. The Government is committed to protecting our children and so it is amending the bill before the House to remove the right of review to NCAT for adults convicted of murder regardless of the age of the victim.

We are also removing the right of review to NCAT for adults convicted of a range of serious sexual offences. These include sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, carnally knowing a girl under 10 years, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent in company where the victim is a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia, and sexual assault by forced self-manipulation.

While we are aware that will mean limiting review rights of some offenders, we are not prepared to compromise the safety of our children by allowing the employment preferences of offenders who have committed heinous crimes to override the safety of our children. This does not at all curtail the right of those offenders to work; rather, it simply means that people convicted of those serious offences will not be permitted to work with children because they have previously abused children. I offer my unqualified support for the bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [10.39 a.m.]: I participate in debate on what I regard as very important amending legislation, the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It behoves all members of Parliament not only to keep the communities they represent safe but also and more importantly to legislate for sufficient checks on people who offend against the most vulnerable members of our community—our children. The Children's Guardian does an excellent job. The legislation before the House deals with a number of issues that recently came to light in media reports. For example, the *Sunday Telegraph* identified 15 shocking cases of individuals, who had been refused a clearance by the Children's Guardian and who were automatically disqualified from working with children, being provided with enabling orders by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] that allowed them to be engaged in roles that involved working with children.

The headquarters of Bravehearts is located in an area near my electorate. Its founder and chief executive officer, Hetty Johnston, is highly respected and works with a dedicated staff as well as a large number of volunteers. She would be horrified to hear that 15 disqualified individuals obtained enabling orders. I compliment the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing and his staff for introducing this legislation, which will ensure that the Government does everything in its power to keep children safe. The bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to remove the right of review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] of working with children applications made by adults convicted of murder, regardless of the age of the victim, and adults convicted of certain serious sexual offences.

The bill responds to issues raised in the media regarding the review of working with children clearances by NCAT. The concerns are based on perceptions that NCAT had overturned decisions of the Children's Guardian that would have prevented people who have committed serious offences from working with children. The bill removes the right of review of NCAT in relation to adults convicted of murder, regardless of the age of the victim, and for adults convicted of a range of serious sexual offences including sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, carnal knowledge of a girl under 10 years, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent in company when the victim is a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child and persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia, and sexual assault by forced self-manipulation.

This legislation is yet another example of the Government addressing community concerns about the perceived risks to children posed by people that the Civil and Administrative Tribunal of New South Wales has enabled to work with children, despite being refused a working with children clearance because of the serious nature of their offences. There is no doubt that this represents a tiny proportion of NCAT's overall decisions, but we will not compromise on the safety of our children. I proudly state that all members of this House would support that view. The Government also is taking decisive action to limit the circumstances in which people convicted of serious offences can make applications for review to NCAT but, most importantly, we are removing the right of review for an adult who has been convicted of murder, or convicted of intention, or attempting to commit conspiracy or incitement of murder. The bill also removes the right of appeal for a large number of serious sexual offences.

The bill also provides the Children's Guardian with power to make guidelines regarding the matters that are to be considered by employers when employing people, including people who have worked overseas. In addition, the bill ensures that offences listed in schedule 2 to the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, which automatically disqualifies a person from working with children, include all offences under the Child Protection Offenders Registration Act 2000, which is referred to as the CPOR Act. Moreover, the bill will

ensure that compatible offences under foreign laws are captured in schedule 2. It has come to light that a large number of serial offenders try to manipulate the system in their favour. It appears to many people in our community, including me, that unfortunately the law is at times manipulated to protect an offender. In contrast to that, this legislation reflects the right way to proceed. It concentrates directly on the victim and reflects that the Government is doing all in its power to protect children from becoming victims.

The protection of people is of paramount concern because victims of child sexual offences are scarred for life. Effectively, they are given a life sentence by those monsters—people that the community does not want. The community wants the Government to do all in its power to keep our children safe. After all, children are our future and we should do all in our power to protect them. This legislation does not mark the end of the Government's efforts to address these issues; other legislation will introduce further measures. A number of people in my electorate have suffered the types of offences addressed by this legislation and a number of them recently gave evidence to the royal commission. I know a number of them personally and I know how deeply they have been affected. Child sexual offences are virtually a life sentence for younger people. The bill reflects a common sense approach. I compliment all those involved in its preparation and I commend it to the House.

Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE (Epping) [10.48 a.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. At the outset I refer to the statement of the member for Bankstown that 43 applicants automatically had been barred from working with children since 2013-14 whereas I am advised that the number is 143. I also acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the Children's Guardian, which indicates that the issues addressed by this legislation are front and centre of her attention and should be front and centre of the work of the Parliament thus ensuring proper protection of children. The bill strengthens and clarifies protections for the most vulnerable children in our community by implementing a range of miscellaneous reforms. The reforms arise from issues highlighted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, strategies to improve efficiencies identified in the first 18 months of operation of the new working with children legislation, and reforms that will strengthen the out-of-home care system and support the Government's Safe Home for Life reforms.

I congratulate the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing on introducing this bill which will, through its combined effect, provide additional improvements to the safety and protection of children in a range of settings. We always must be vigilant of the risks that our children face, particularly those children who have been removed from their homes. Every member of the community has a role in keeping children safe. This Government is doing everything it can to improve the checks and balances in the out-of-home-care system and to complement individual responsibilities. The bill directly addresses issues highlighted by the first hearing of the royal commission in relation to the lack of regulation of people in important child protection roles within designated non-government agencies that provide out-of-home care.

Schedule 3 item [17] to the bill will amend the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to prohibit the principal officer of a designated out-of-home care agency from residing with a child or young person whose care is supervised by that agency and will introduce penalties in relation to any contravention of this provision. Schedule 3 item [4] prevents the Children's Court from allocating parental responsibility to an organisation or to the principal officer of a designated agency.

These changes are a direct response to the terrible situation which was highlighted by the royal commission in the matter of Steven Larkins. It singled out that case as a case study for the reforms that were needed. Earlier the member for Mulgoa mentioned the horrific nature of the offences of Mr Larkins. This man had children in his care under out-of-home care arrangements. I was working for the Attorney General at that time and I recall that we were very concerned about the manner in which Mr Larkins was both receiving funding and able to continue to care for children in circumstances where he had been convicted of serious child sex offences.

The bill also includes a number of provisions to strengthen the implementation of the Carers Register—an important new initiative to support agencies, including non-government designated agencies, that are currently implementing the New South Wales Government's Safe Home for Life reforms. The register is a centralised, limited-access portal to allow agencies to share important information about the authorisation and suitability of carers. The register aims to assist agencies to identify and prevent unsuitable persons from being able to have children placed with them.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the cooperation of and the hard work done by the interagency working party responsible for developing the register requirements. The implementation of the register will

foster greater collaboration and more information sharing and assist agencies to work collaboratively to protect children. The bill will also improve the monitoring capacity of out-of-home care agencies by amending the Adoption Act 2000.

The change places reporting obligations directly on carers to inform their agency of the details of other adults residing within the adoptive or prospective adoptive applicant's home for more than three weeks—an important initiative. The system improvements contained in this bill are truly reflective of the fact that child protection is a responsibility we all share and we all need to account for. This bill provides clarity to governance bodies and boards of designated agencies in relation to their obligations as employers with regard to principal officers and Working With Children Checks.

The bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to ensure that boards and governance bodies will be required to verify the Working With Children Check clearances of their key office holders, including principal officers and chief executive officers. This will mean that they will be notified of any new offences that may be committed by that person through the continuous checking of their Working With Children Check clearance. The New South Wales Working With Children Check is the only completely online system in Australia, and it has a continuous monitoring feature—a system we are proud of. Since the new system commenced in June 2013, the Office of the Children's Guardian has processed over 720,000 Working With Children Checks—and my wife has one—and continued to improve its efficacy and to clarify the requirements on employers and others.

Schedule 2 item [16] to the bill will further improve the timeliness of the processing of applications by reducing the time frame for applicants to provide information to the Office of the Children's Guardian from six to three months. Once the period of three months has lapsed, if the applicant has not provided further information without reasonable excuse, the Children's Guardian may terminate the application. Schedule 2 item [14] will permit applicants to withdraw their application at any stage of the process only with the consent of the Children's Guardian.

Since drafting this bill, we have been alerted to community concerns about whether certain convicted offenders should be allowed to have their matters reviewed by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. The member for Bankstown drew our attention to three cases which were highlighted by the *Daily Telegraph*. I think these were amongst 15 cases which were identified. We are talking about offenders who have committed serious offences, such as murder and sexual offences against children.

The protection of children is our paramount consideration. We are making further amendments to the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to ensure we deliver on this commitment. To this end, the Government is proposing to prevent rights of review by NCAT for adult murderers and adults who have committed particularly serious sexual offences against children. These offences are listed in the amendments to this bill and include offences involving sexual penetration of children by adults. At this stage we have limited these non-reviewable offences to the most serious child-related sexual offences. A working party will be convened to determine whether other offences should be included in this list. We are also proposing that the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act be consistent in the types of offences that are covered under each Act.

At present, while most of the offences in the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act are included in the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012, there are still some offences that are not. Including these offences in the working with children Act will ensure that such offenders will automatically be barred from working with children. Schedule 5 to the bill will extend the Ombudsman's reportable conduct framework to adult household members of authorised carers. The amendment extends the Ombudsman's oversight functions to monitor investigations relating to allegations of child-related sexual misconduct and serious physical assault against adult household members. The bill also provides other information-sharing arrangements in relation to protecting children. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This includes the ability for any person to share information with bodies that assess a person's suitability to be an adoptive parent, guardian or authorised carer. It also enables the sharing of information between child protection agencies in other jurisdictions. Further, the Children's Guardian and the Secretary to the Department of Family and Community Services may share information relevant to the secretary's functions

under part 4 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. When it comes to improving the lives of children and young people, this Government has taken a considered and overarching view of the measures needed.

This bill will achieve improvements to the governance of people in key positions of power and responsibility while allowing them to share critical information to help provide safe homes and effective services to vulnerable children in our community. It further improves the efficiency of the Working With Children Check, which plays an important role in ensuring known offenders are not in direct child-related roles. This Government is committed to keeping every child in a permanent and stable home for life, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children is taken seriously. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.58 a.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This is important legislation and I congratulate the Minister for Family and Community Services on its introduction. It is a central and binding commitment by this Government to strengthen and tighten the legislative framework to ensure the protection of children and young people in care. This legislation has been drafted in response to serious issues that were highlighted in the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We have all been sickened by the stories coming out of that royal commission.

This bill also builds on the Government's Safe Home for Life reforms, which aim to give every child a permanent and stable home life. The provisions in this bill will improve the way that carers of children living in out-of-home care are assessed, authorised and monitored. We are talking about some of the most vulnerable children in the State. The reforms in the bill will amend the Adoption Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

The bill 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. Key groups were consulted prior to the drafting of this legislation. The consultation involved both government and non-government agencies, and the amendments were supported across the board. The bill gives a clear definition of "principal officer" in the care Act so that a designated person in each non-government agency has overall supervision of the agency's statutory or supported care arrangements. It further prevents the Children's Court from granting parental responsibility to principal officers and prohibits principal officers from caring for children from their own agency in their own home.

Under the proposed legislation, all carers, regardless of their type or status, will 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 at the property for three weeks or more. Importantly, the bill 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 bill provides that this information can be given to the principal officer of an accredited adoption provider, a designated agency or the Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services. This information will 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 in the homes where they have been placed. It is up to governments to frame laws that protect children in every way and safeguard their wellbeing. In lieu of that, amendments in this bill are in direct response to the first hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. At that hearing the actions of a principal officer at the Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service Corporation, Mr Steven Larkins, came into question. It was revealed that at the time of Mr Larkins' arrest on child pornography charges in 2011 he was caring for a young person in out-of-home care at his own home. In addition, he had responsibility for a number of other children and young people.

This man had not been the subject of any carer assessment. Mr Larkins had been granted parental responsibility by the Children's Court and this was in keeping with the granting of care for Aboriginal children at the time. Under this bill, the definition of the principal officer role of a designated or registered agency has been made consistent with the Adoption Act 2000. The bill prohibits principal officers of designated non-government agencies from caring for children from their own agency in their own home. The Children's Court is similarly prevented from granting parental responsibility to an organisation or to principal officers of non-government designated agencies.

These amendments aim to protect the rights of children so that persons in authority are not able to abuse their power. Supporting out-of-home care agencies to recruit appropriate carers is a priority for this Government. The NSW Children's Guardian is establishing a register of people who are authorised or who have applied to be authorised as carers of children in out-of-home care. The purpose of the register is to be positive that people who want to care for children do so because of the motivation to do good, not evil. For that reason they must be subject to rigorous screening and assessments checks. The register will allow for the sharing of information between different agencies to help prevent unsuitable carers from gaining entry.

Cross-State information may also be exchanged to reduce the likelihood of unsuitable carers simply moving across State borders. The bill will allow agencies to provide information and advice to the child victims, parents or carers on the progress of investigations. These proposed amendments override New South Wales and Commonwealth privacy issues. For the past 18 months the online Working With Children Check has been in operation. An initiative of the Government, the service has been successful with more than 720,000 applications processed for a Working With Children Check either as a paid worker or volunteer. So far, nearly 600 applicants have been banned from working with children in New South Wales, approximately 100 have a current status of interim ban from working with children in New South Wales, and 100 more have a current status of interim ban pending further investigation.

The bill further tightens the protection of children by amending the Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 with regards to requirements for employers. They will be required to not only ensure that 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. If employers fail to register they run the risk of employing someone who cannot work in a child-related role. They will further risk being audited by the Office of the Children's Guardian as part of its ongoing Working With Children Check compliance program. A further amendment reduces the amount of time for applicants to provide information to the Office of the Children's Guardian from six months to three months.

The bill further clarifies that interim bans are enforceable against adult household members or authorised carers or home-based education and care services, or where a family day care service is provided. This is a further safeguard in protecting children from people who interact with them. It is essential that we provide laws that protect the most vulnerable in our society. I believe that this legislation goes a step further in protecting children. Therefore I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY (Oxley) [11.06 a.m.]: I too support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It is important legislation for the operations of child protection across New South Wales. The date of 15 June 2015 marks the first two years of the operation of the new Working With Children Check. More than three-quarters of a million applications have been processed and completed. Since the new check commenced the Government has sought to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. In June the Minister for Family and Community Services placed a bill before the Parliament to make important changes that will strengthen the governance of bodies that exercise critical functions in respect of vulnerable children and young people. This includes principal officers whose ability to fraudulently conceal Working With Children Check information was brought to public attention by the royal commission in the Larkins case.

Once again the Government has decided to address community concerns about the perceived risk to children posed by people who the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] has enabled to work with children, despite being refused a Working With Children Check clearance because of the serious nature of the offences they had committed. The *Sunday Telegraph* identified 15 shocking cases in which individuals had been refused a clearance by the Children's Guardian or automatically disqualified from working with children. These people were subsequently provided with enabling orders by NCAT, allowing them to work in child-related roles. No doubt this represents a tiny proportion of overall decisions, but we will not compromise on the safety of children.

The Government is taking decisive action to limit the circumstances in which people convicted of serious offences can make an application for review to NCAT. Most importantly, we are removing the right of review for an adult convicted of murder, or of intention, or attempting to commit conspiracy or incitement of murder. We are also removing the right of appeal for a range of serious sexual offences, including sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, carnally knowing a girl under 10 years, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse with consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent in company where the victim is a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child and persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia, and sexual assault by forced self-manipulation.

This is a common-sense approach to protecting children. I congratulate the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, on the incisive way in which he has dealt with the issues with which he was confronted. I also congratulate the *Sunday Telegraph*. The fourth estate plays an important role in ensuring that community expectations and standards are maintained and upheld. Both the Government and the fourth estate have worked to highlight the amending legislation before the House which, most importantly, further protects the most vulnerable, that is, young children. I congratulate the Minister and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.10 a.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the second reading debate on the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill has been introduced as a result of lessons learnt from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in relation to out-of-home care. It supports the Government's Safe Home for Life reforms through a number of incremental adjustments to the system to close gaps that have appeared in the network of protection measures that was provided by the original legislation. One of those gaps related to principal officers of non-government agencies who are not necessarily subject to a Working With Children Check but, it has emerged, should be because of the responsibility they carry and their capacity to assign the care of children to others and, at times, to assume the direct care of children. This bill amends the Act to ensure that those principal officers are subject to a Working With Children Check.

Another gap relates to other adults living in the same premises as a person authorised to have out-of-home care of a child. That issue needs to be addressed to ensure that any person who comes into contact with a child or who is responsible for the care of a child outside their home is an appropriate person for that role and, further, that a child is not placed in a home or in an institutional setting where a person who is a risk to children can have access to the child. Other proposed changes relate to the provision and exchange of information between relevant persons so that children in care are appropriately placed and are safe from any known risk.

Previous speakers have referred to foreshadowed amendments that relate to issues raised in the media about the oversight of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] and its capacity to review Working With Children prohibitions in order to ensure that those who have been declared not fit to work with children do not work with children. The community would understand that NCAT plays a necessary role in reviewing cases where, for example, a person had been found to have done something, albeit tangential or inconsequential, that prohibited them from working with children but as it was a long time and of a minor nature a case could be made to overturn that decision. We understand the principle of a tribunal carrying out a review in such cases.

However, we all would agree that for serious offences it is inappropriate for a person to appeal on the grounds that the offence was committed a long time ago and it will not happen again. In the interests of the protection of children, we must take a stand and set the bar at a point where those who have committed serious offences are not allowed to work with children. The foreshadowed amendments will do that. I congratulate the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, on bringing forward the amendments to ensure that this simple message is understood.

Over time, following proper consultation on the role of NCAT and the range of offences that are subject to its review, further offences may be added to the list and removed from NCAT's jurisdiction. We should not rush to add too many offences and circumstances because NCAT has a role to review decisions in the interests of fairness and to ensure that people are not listed forever as unable to work with children without serious cause. However, the offences that are listed in the foreshadowed amendments to the legislation are most certainly serious and provide solid grounds for reaching that conclusion.

The bill before us and the foreshadowed amendments improve the network of protection for young people that has been developed in New South Wales over a couple of decades. As the community has learnt more about the threat posed by child abuse and the insidious way in which child abusers get into positions where they have access to children, governments of the day have responded by providing a network of protections, including screening provisions that are more thorough, more effective and more targeted to achieve the aim of protecting children. I welcome the continued focus on improving the safety net for young children that is provided by this legislation and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [11.16 a.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 because it shows that the Government is listening to concerns raised by the community and is responding accordingly. This Government will take firm action on issues that are important to the

community when it is needed. That time is now. The bill responds to issues regarding the review of Working With Children Check [WWCC] clearances by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. These concerns are based on perceptions that NCAT had overturned decisions of the Children's Guardian that would have prevented people who had committed serious offences from working with children.

Currently, an adult convicted of murdering a child cannot apply to NCAT for an enabling order to allow them to work with children. Adults convicted of intention, conspiracy or incitement to murder a child are also prevented from appealing to NCAT. Under the existing Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012, this is the only category of offence with no right of appeal to NCAT. The Act also contains a list of disqualifying offences in schedule 2. Adults convicted of any of these disqualifying offences are automatically barred from working with children although they can apply to NCAT for an enabling order to allow them to work with children.

The date of 15 June 2015 marked the first two years of the operation of the new Working With Children Check, and over 720,000 applications have been processed and completed. Since the new check commenced, this Government has sought to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. This shows that the Government is listening to the community and taking action to address serious concerns about protecting those most vulnerable in our community, the children who rely on us to look after them. In June the Minister for Family and Community Services brought a bill before the Parliament to make important changes that will strengthen the governance of bodies that exercise critical functions in respect of vulnerable children and young people. We are addressing those concerns in this bill.

This bill removes the right of review to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] for adults convicted of murder regardless of the age of the victim and for adults convicted of a range of sexual offences, including sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, carnally knowing a girl under 10 years, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent where the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent in company where the victim is a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia, and sexual assault by forced self-manipulation.

The bill also provides the Children's Guardian with the power to make guidelines regarding the matters that are to be considered by employers when employing people, including people who have worked overseas. The bill ensures that offences listed in schedule 2 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act that automatically disqualify a person from working with children include all offences under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000. It also ensures that compatible offences under foreign laws are captured under schedule 2. We must protect our children and we must let them know that there are laws that will protect them. We must prevent predators from preying on the most vulnerable, and this Government is taking the necessary action to do just that. This is a common-sense approach to protecting children and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [11.21 a.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As the new chair of the Committee on Children and Young People and having served as deputy chair for the past four years, I am well aware of the issues facing our most vulnerable citizens. I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, for introducing this legislation. The committee has been discussing this legislation for a long time and it has met with the Children's Guardian and the former commissioner to discuss how Working With Children Checks are carried out and assessed. I know that the Children's Guardian and her staff are spending a great deal of time ensuring that we get it right and that the system is appropriate, and they are now looking at fine-tuning it to ensure that they have the support they need. I am pleased to be in this place strengthening the legislation and ensuring that the Office of the Children's Guardian has the support it needs to do its job effectively.

This bill amends the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 to remove the right of review of a Working With Children Check application by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] for adults convicted of murder. Furthermore, this change will be enforced regardless of the age of the victim, and it also applies to adults convicted of certain serious sexual offences. This legislation is the next step in strengthening our already strong approach to protecting children and young people from harm.

I will revisit the amendments to the Working With Children Check program that have made the system far more accountable and reliable when clearance is granted to those wishing to work with children. I am pleased that the online process for obtaining a Working With Children Check is streamlined and easy to use for

applicants and employers alike. I know that some members have applied for a Working With Children Check and have found the process to be easy and streamlined. It is regarded as one of the best systems in operation. It is now paperless, which has resulted in cost savings and has reduced red tape.

In its first year of operation more than 382,000 verified Working With Children Checks were undertaken. One of the aspects that I particularly like is the fact that it can be moved from place to place and, as a result, volunteers will have greater opportunity to have checks undertaken. These checks can be useful when seeking employment because a potential employer will know that the check already has been undertaken. That will make it easier to secure employment and to get people back into the workforce. I love the fact that it is portable because it will be extremely useful.

The 382,000 Working With Children Checks undertaken are far more than was originally forecast. The reasons for that are various, but it is substantially because the transition program now includes Working With Children Checks for foster carers and household members. One of the issues with the former process was that once a clearance had been obtained it was not monitored so that it could be revoked if people had subsequently committed offences that would pose a threat to children and young people. The beauty of the new Working With Children Check is that it is continuously monitored to check an applicant's clearance status. Ongoing monitoring allows the commission to respond quickly when a relevant offence has occurred and to remove an offender from the workplace. That is an extremely important issue.

The new Working With Children Check system is the result of a collaborative approach between a number of agencies charged with creating a responsive online system that scans existing databases to ensure that relevant, accurate and up-to-date information is captured and transmitted instantly. This information is then used to assess a person's suitability to work with children. Previous amendments that introduced portability for clearances mean there is just one check for all classes of child-related work, including volunteer work, and the clearance is made available across organisations and groups. This has helped to untangle what was a messy process for those working and/or volunteering at multiple places that required a Working With Children Check.

The most notable change is that under the new Working With Children Check system there are only two results possible: a worker will be cleared to work with children or barred from working with children. A person who is barred obviously cannot work with children. This bill takes that a step further by providing safeguards to prevent convicted murderers and those convicted of certain serious sexual offences having their eligibility reviewed. This is in response to issues raised in the media regarding reviews by the NCAT of Working With Children Check clearances of individuals who should never have been given such an option. Currently, only those convicted of murdering a child cannot request a review. This bill proposes to broaden the definition to include anyone convicted of murder, regardless of the age of their victim.

The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act contains a list of disqualifying offences in schedule 2. Adults convicted of any of these disqualifying offences are automatically barred from working with children, although they can apply to NCAT for an enabling order to allow them to work with children. The bill also provides the Children's Guardian with the power to make guidelines regarding the matters that are to be considered by employers when employing people, including people who have worked overseas. I am pleased to see that protections also have been included to ensure that even those who have committed offences overseas or who have been convicted under foreign laws are included in any checks that involve working with children.

One of the other important aspects of this bill is the improvements to the way that carers of children living in out-of-home care are assessed, authorised and monitored. The bill allows for all carers, regardless of their type or status, to be subject to the same rigorous probity checks. It also permits any person to provide information about prospective adoptive parents, authorised carers, carer applicants, guardians or any person residing at the same property.

I am pleased to support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 and welcome further provisions that ultimately work to protect our most vulnerable in society from harm. I also compliment the work done by the Children's Guardian, Kerryn Boland. I am pleased to see her in the Chamber today for such an important piece of legislation that will support the organisation. She has been the Children's Guardian since 2005, so she understands the purpose of this bill. Someone with a background in the Department of Community Services and in human rights understands how important children are and how we need to protect them. I am pleased to see her in that role. I also have been pleased to work with her in her position as the Acting NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People.

I thank Kerry Boland for all the work she does in her role as Children's Guardian, and I thank all her staff who work with her, both at the Children's Guardian and the Commission for Children and Young People. They do amazing work supporting people who do not yet have a voice in our society and making sure that they are protected and looked after. The Children's Guardian is an independent statutory authority that works to improve the protection of children in New South Wales. How important is that, giving children a voice and making sure that they are protected and looked after?

I also thank all the members of the Committee on Children and Young People for their work during the past four years. We did a great deal of work considering the way working with children checks would be introduced and what they would involve. I am pleased to see that they have been shored up. One of the purposes of the committee was to review Working With Children Checks to shore them up and to make them stronger. These checks are certainly one way in which young children can be protected. I am pleased to see them go from the start to a review to make them stronger. I commend the bill to the House.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Before calling the member for Camden, I welcome secondary school leaders, the majority of whom are from regional New South Wales, to the public gallery today. It is great to have you here. We are discussing a bill titled the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill will go into Consideration in Detail shortly, but a number of speakers are making contributions to the second reading debate on the legislation. Once they have finished, the bill will be read a second time. It will then go into Consideration in Detail, during which time the Government will move some amendments to its own bill. I welcome all of you to the oldest Parliament in Australia. I hope you enjoy your time here. I congratulate the Parliamentary Education Unit on the great job it does do in relation to school leadership programs. I call the member for Camden.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [11.32 a.m.]: I too welcome the young leaders who are in the public gallery today. The Assistant-Speaker made a very good point: They are here as leaders; they are currently leaders of their school community, and we look forward to them being leaders in the wider community when they finish school. I thank them for taking the time to come into Parliament and visit today. I speak on the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I cannot stress enough to everyone in the House today and those on all sides of politics that we have no bigger responsibility than to protect our children. As a Government, as an Opposition, as Independents and as Greens, we speak in unison: We are here today to ensure that we do everything we possibly can to look after the most vulnerable within our community.

Some of the most heinous and abhorrent crimes committed are committed against our children and the most vulnerable. We must play our part in this House to ensure that we do everything we can in a bipartisan way to protect them. I note the Minister for Family and Community Services has entered the Chamber. I thank him for bringing forward this legislation. I listened to him speak in the party room yesterday and it is clear how passionate the Minister is—as were the Ministers before him—about ensuring that we do everything we possibly can to protect our young people. I quote the first couple of paragraphs from the Minister's second reading speech:

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.

That paragraph is a very good introduction to what we are trying to achieve today. We must do everything we can to ensure that everyone who is assessed under the Working With Children Check is assessed in a timely manner, but is also assessed in a manner that ensures the wellbeing of the children with whom they are working. The date of 15 June 2015 marked the first two years of the operation of the new Working With Children Check [WWCC]. In that time more than 720,000 applications have been completed. Since the new check commenced, the Government has sought continuously to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the system to enable the checks to occur and to ensure the welfare of the children.

In June this year the Minister for Family and Community Services introduced the bill into this House, and I quoted the first paragraph of his second reading speech. The bill strengthens governance of principal officers whose ability to fraudulently conceal WWCC information was brought to public attention by the royal commission in the Larkins case. Hence the Minister saw the need to introduce this legislation to amend the Act. The Government has decided to address community concerns about the perceived risk to children posed by people who the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] has approved to work with children, despite

being refused a Working With Children Check clearance because of the serious nature of offences they had committed. Recently the *Sunday Telegraph* identified 15 shocking examples in which individuals had been refused a clearance by the Children's Guardian or automatically disqualified from working with children. These people were subsequently provided enabling orders by NCAT, which allowed them to work in child-related roles. As a direct result of that, it is clear that the legislation needed to be tightened up.

One of the main things that will be brought about by this amendment legislation, and I think this needs to be put on the record, is the removal of the right of review for an adult convicted of murder, or of intending, or attempting to commit conspiracy or incitement of murder. We also are removing the right of appeal for a range of serious sexual offences—and these are the most heinous acts one could imagine—including sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, carnally knowing a girl under 10 years, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent in company when the victim is a child, persistent sexual abuse of a child and persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia, and sexual assault by forced self-manipulation.

It is absolutely paramount that everybody in this House supports this legislation—and everybody in this House does support this legislation. They support what the Minister is trying to achieve. We are charged with a responsibility to do everything we possibly can to ensure the protection of our children. The member for Holsworthy mentioned Kerryn Boland, the Children's Guardian. I also acknowledge her outstanding work. Each member of Parliament has said it, and I will say it to the young student leaders in the gallery today: The Government can change laws but the community as a whole must enforce those laws, as do Ms Boland and her organisation. I implore the student leaders in the gallery, particularly the men, to ensure that these laws are upheld so that no offence against children will be tolerated in their communities. As a society we must ensure we do everything we possibly can to protect our children. I commend the bill to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! I extend a welcome on behalf of the Legislative Assembly to all student leaders in the gallery, particularly those from the Northern Tablelands electorate, from the Armidale High School, Duval High School, Glen Innes High School, Guyra Central School, Inverell High School, Met School Armidale and MacIntyre High School. You are witnessing an important debate in the Legislative Assembly on the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I hope you enjoy your time in the Legislative Assembly and the rest of the day in Parliament.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [11.41 a.m.]: As a father to 1½-year-old James, a member of Parliament and former Chair of the Committee on Children and Young People, I acknowledge the great work of the Children's Guardian and the Minister for Family and Community Services on this review. It was needed and has resulted in the amendments to the child protection legislation that are before the House today. I find it impossible to comprehend that people with a violent criminal history are being allowed to work with children. One person is one too many.

Since the Working With Children Check commenced two years ago on 15 June 2015, more than 750,000 applications have been processed. This Government has sought to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of that system. In June, the Minister for Family and Community Services introduced a bill into this House to make important changes that will strengthen the governance of bodies that exercise critical functions in respect of vulnerable children and young people. This includes principal officers whose ability to fraudulently conceal Working With Children Check information was recently brought to the attention of the public by the royal commission.

Both sides of Parliament support the amendments. This Government has once again decided to address community concern about the perceived risk to children posed by people who the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] has enabled to work with children, despite being refused a Working With Children Check clearance because of the serious nature of offences they have committed. I remember reading a *Sunday Telegraph* article a couple of months ago that identified 10 to 15 shocking cases in which individuals had been refused a clearance by the Children's Guardian or who were automatically disqualified from working with children. These people were subsequently provided enabling orders by NCAT, which allows them to work in children-related roles. Many of us find those stories concerning, which is why the Children's Guardian and the Minister for Family and Community Services are putting forward amendments.

Previous speakers mentioned that the amendments include removing the right of appeal for a range of serious sexual offences. These offences include sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years, homosexual

intercourse with a male under 10 years, sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual intercourse without consent when the victim is a child, aggravated sexual assault without consent in company when the victim is a child, and the list goes on. This is a common-sense approach to protecting children. People who were initially denied a Working With Children Check clearance have had that decision overturned in court, and it needs to stop.

The Government is taking decisive action to limit the circumstances in which people convicted of serious offences can make an application to NCAT to review their case. Importantly, this amendment removes the right of review for an adult convicted of murder, or of intention to murder, or attempting to commit conspiracy or incitement to murder, along with removing the right of appeal for a range of offences that I have mentioned. There is no doubt that represents a tiny proportion of overall decisions, but this Government will not compromise on the safety of children. As a father, a member of Parliament and former Chair of the Committee on Children and Young People, I support this legislation because it provides an extra step in strengthening Working With Children Checks from this day forward.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [11.45 a.m.], in reply: I thank members on both sides of the House who took part in debate on the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I particularly thank the shadow Minister for Family and Community Services, but also the member for Mulgoa, the member for Tweed, the member for Epping, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Oxley, the member for Tamworth, the member for Holsworthy, the member for Riverstone, the member for Camden, and the member for Oatley. I also thank the staff of the Office of the Children's Guardian for their hard work and dedication in producing the bill and the amendments that I will address shortly, which shows their commitment to ensuring that children are kept safe.

I particularly thank Children's Guardian Kerry Boland, who is in the Chamber today; Geetha Varughese, executive officer; Sharminie Niles, manager of legal; Louise Coe, Director of Child Safe Organisations; and Valerie Griswold, Director of Legal. All of the contributors to this debate value the great importance that our community places on being able to protect our children, in particular, our most vulnerable children. By building on the Government's Safe Home for Life reforms, which aim to keep every child in a permanent and stable home for life, the bill achieves the high level of protection expected by the community.

The bill before the House does not have amendments to section 26 (1), which I will talk about shortly. I note that the member for Bankstown has entered the Chamber. I thank her for her contributions as shadow Minister for Family and Community Services. In her contribution to the second reading debate she spoke as if the bill already included amendments. At the moment the House is debating the bill introduced by the Government, not the amendments that it is intending to deal with in the Consideration in Detail stage. It is a little unusual for the Government to move amendments to its own legislation, but recent publicity has highlighted shortcomings in the current legislation. I thank the member for Bankstown and Opposition members for their indication that they support the amendments. I will address the bill and then I will address the amendments.

As various members have acknowledged, the bill improves the way in which carers are assessed and managed. Through important checks and balances within the out-of-home care system and the non-government organisations that care for vulnerable children in New South Wales we are ensuring that there are rigorous probity checks, and that they are passed by all carers. The bill permits any person to provide information about carers of children or persons residing on the same property so that information may be used to update the knowledge and analysis of the suitability of carers. The information provided is protected from liability if the information was given in good faith.

The bill also makes it compulsory for all current and prospective carers 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. This ensures that the authorising bodies can make up-to-date decisions around the care and protection of children in out-of-home care and adoptive homes. The bill builds on the Safe Home for Life reforms through amendments to the Adoption Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to improve the timeliness for adopting children.

It is clear that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has taught everybody in the community and the Government some very hard lessons. It has also taught many of the non-government providers some very hard lessons. Through this bill the Government is committing to ensure

that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. This relates specifically to the Steven Larkins matter, which has been referred to throughout this debate. The bill amends governance problems of principal officers providing out-of-home care, by prohibiting principal officers from non-government designated agencies from caring for children from their own agencies in their own homes. It further extends transparency by preventing the Children's Court from allocating parental responsibility to an organisation or to the principal officer of a designated agency. In my second reading speech I referred to problems that that created.

The New South Wales Working With Children Check is the most comprehensive system in the country. In New South Wales we aim to keep young people and children safe. This bill strengthens that system even further by providing clarity around obligations of employers with regard to Working With Children Check verifications—an integral and unique component of the New South Wales Working With Children Check. It also reduces the time frame for applicants to provide information to the Office of the Children's Guardian. By permitting an applicant to withdraw his or her application only with the consent of the Children's Guardian, the system is further strengthened. Importantly, the bill also extends the Ombudsman's reportable conduct framework to adult household members of authorised carers so that monitoring is extended to those living in a household in which a child is cared for.

As foreshadowed by my colleagues—the shadow Minister mentioned it in her contribution—the additional changes to the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which will be introduced in the consideration in detail stage, address community concerns about the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT] having overturned decisions of the Children's Guardian that would have prevented people who have committed serious offences from working with children. I am sure members have seen various articles that have been written and appeared in one of our major newspapers. Those articles highlighted some of the decisions of the Children's Guardian that have been overturned.

Under the existing legislation the Children's Guardian has an obligation to assess people who fall within the ambit of the legislation and to determine whether it is acceptable that they work with children. It has been highlighted in the public arena that some people had been identified by the Children's Guardian as being not appropriate to work with children, either through the automatic provisions of the Act or the assessment provisions of the Children's Guardian. Some of those people, having been determined to be not suitable to work with children, appealed to NCAT, which, in a number of cases, overturned the decisions of the Children's Guardian. In a number of those cases it was quite clear that, on a common sense test, the community would wonder why those decisions were overturned. It is incumbent on the Government to respond, because the Government should protect the community and should respond to the community's concerns.

At the conclusion of the second reading debate the Government will move amendments to its own bill to reflect some of the changes that we think are appropriate. The Government is taking this swift action to address the risks to children from unsuitable people having access to them and to restore community confidence in the work of the Children's Guardian as a safeguard for our children. In the two or three weeks since these issues were highlighted, the Government has taken on board a lot of views and considered a range of options to address these concerns. As the member for Bankstown said in her contribution to the second reading debate, it is incumbent on the Parliament to get this right, and to get the balance right. There was a temptation to include all offenders who ended up on the Child Protection Register. But we decided that we needed to take a deep breath because if we were to include all of them there may be unintended consequences, particularly for young people, who might be involved in such things as sexting—a fairly modern phenomenon. There might also be unintended consequences, for example, for a 17-year-old who had sexual relations with a 15-year-old.

Those are fairly complex issues, which the community would want us to take our time over to make sure that we get those aspects right. The Government intends to do that and Government members thank the Opposition for its support in that regard. I also thank the shadow Minister opposite for her suggestions about how we might look at the broader review. I have taken on board her suggestions about the Standing Committee on Law and Justice and other possibilities. We will consider those suggestions and make some announcements in due course. We will certainly consult with the Opposition on those suggestions.

The Government has determined that there is a category of crimes that is so heinous, horrible and despicable that the Government will not wait for a review. We are moving on those. As the member for Bankstown indicated, the Opposition is supporting the Government in the introduction of those changes, which will be introduced during the consideration in detail stage, but it is appropriate that I raise those issues now. The Government intends to remove the right of appeal to NCAT for various offences. At the moment, under section 26 (1), a murderer of a child cannot appeal to NCAT. A person facing charges that are yet to be determined

cannot appeal to NCAT. But, going back to the common-sense test that I talked about a little earlier, it is exceedingly obvious that most of us would not want somebody who has been found guilty of, for example, murder to have any rights to work with children.

The legislation will not prevent people from working; people in the categories that are the subject of this legislation will be able to work somewhere, but just not with children or where the New South Wales community would not want them to be. The Government does not want to expose our children to any risks whatsoever and will not allow convicted murderers and people convicted of serious child sexual offences to work with children.

At the consideration in detail stage the Government will move amendments to ensure that an adult person who is convicted of murder, or of intention, or of attempting to commit conspiracy or incitement of murder regardless of the age of the victim, will not be able to appeal to NCAT. The Government also will open this legislation to a much broader range of offences—the details of which are stated in the amendments that have been circulated—that will be much more acceptable to all of us. People who commit those offences will not have any entitlement to appeal to NCAT.

The offences include sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years pursuant to section 66A of the Crimes Act, carnally knowing a girl under 10 years pursuant to section 67 of the Crimes Act, homosexual intercourse with a male under 10 years pursuant to section 78H of the Crimes Act, sexual intercourse with a child without consent pursuant to section 61L of the Crimes Act, aggravated sexual intercourse with a child without consent pursuant to section 61J of the Crimes Act, and aggravated sexual intercourse with a child without consent in company under section 61JA of the Crimes Act.

The offences also will include the persistent sexual abuse of a child under section 66EA of the Crimes Act, sexual intercourse with a child outside Australia, a child with mental impairment or under care, supervision or authority of the defendant pursuant to section 272.10 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, persistent sexual abuse of a child outside Australia pursuant to section 272.11 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, and benefiting from an offence under section 272.18 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, which captures a range of sexual offences outside Australia. The offences also will include the offence of encouraging an offence against section 272 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code, preparing for or planning an offence against section 272 related to child sexual offences outside Australia, if the offence relates to another class 1 offence.

The legislation also will include an offence of sexual assault by forced self-manipulation pursuant to section 80A of the Crimes Act. Through this amending legislation, the Government makes the very clear statement that members on both sides of the House will not sustain having their children put at any risk at all. If a person commits a serious offence in one of the categories I have mentioned, that person will be unable to work with children and will not have a right of appeal to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal of New South Wales.

The Government's reasoning is pretty clear. This Government is committed to the view that murderers should not be able to work with our children. The Government also is committed to the concept that if a person has been convicted of adult sexual offences against children, that person should not be able to apply for an order from NCAT that will enable him or her to work with children. However, some very difficult and challenging areas must be worked through temperately and reasonably. As the member for Bankstown mentioned during her speech, earlier today the Chamber was full of school leavers.

I do not think any member of this Parliament or the community would want to see young people, who in the formative stages of their lives might make a decision that is perhaps not appropriate from the broad perspective of the law, having their lives confined or possibly decimated by government legislative enactments. The Government will strike the correct balance by working through possibly broader legislative amendments related to a person's first notification on the child offences register. The Government will work with the community to determine precisely the appropriate outcome and what constitutes a reasonable balance.

The bill before the House is aimed at improving the lives of children and young people, ensuring they are protected, and ensuring that the problems highlighted by the royal commission are addressed. The bill certainly reinforces the need for transparency, accountability and ongoing management of our child protection system. Through improvements to information sharing and the Working With Children system as well as governance applying to out-of-home care organisations, the Government and the Parliament are committed to keeping every child in a permanent and stable home for life and to ensuring that children's safety and wellbeing

are taken seriously. This bill gives material effect to the Government's commitments. The amendments that will be addressed at the consideration in detail stage provide further confirmation that the Government is committed on behalf of the community to keeping our children safe.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Brad Hazzard.

Consideration in Detail

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! By leave, I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [12.07 p.m.], by leave: I move Government amendments Nos 1 to 5 in globo:

No. 1 Prohibition on appeals against disqualification

Page 15, schedule 2. Insert after line 25:

[29] Section 26

Omit the section. Insert instead:

26 Persons not entitled to apply for review or enabling order

- (1) The following persons are not entitled to make an application under this Part:
 - (a) a person who has been convicted of any of the following offences, if the offence was committed as an adult:
 - (i) murder,
 - (ii) an offence against section 61I, 61J, 61JA or 80A of the *Crimes Act 1900*, if the person against whom the offence was committed was a child,
 - (iii) an offence against section 66A or 66EA of the *Crimes Act 1900*,
 - (iv) an offence against section 67 of the *Crimes Act 1900*,
 - (v) an offence against section 78H of the *Crimes Act 1900*,
 - (vi) an offence against section 272.10 (if it relates to an underlying offence against section 272.8) or 272.11 of the *Criminal Code* of the Commonwealth,
 - (vii) an offence against section 272.18, 272.19 or 272.20 of the *Criminal Code* of the Commonwealth, if it relates to a Class 1 offence within the meaning of the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*,
 - (viii) an offence an element of which is an intention to commit an offence listed in subparagraphs (i)–(vii),
 - (ix) an offence of attempting, or of conspiracy or incitement, to commit an offence listed in subparagraphs (i)–(vii),
 - (b) a person who has been convicted of an offence committed as an adult under a law of another State or a Territory, the Commonwealth or a foreign jurisdiction that, if committed in New South Wales, would constitute an offence referred to in paragraph (a),

- (c) a person whose application for a working with children check clearance has been refused wholly or partly on the grounds that proceedings have been commenced against the person for an offence specified in schedule 2 and the proceedings have not been finally determined.
- (2) This section applies to convictions for offences whether occurring before, on or after the commencement of this Act.

No. 2 **Advice functions**

Page 15, schedule 2. Insert after line 44:

[32] Section 38 Children's Guardian's public awareness and advice functions

Insert at the end of the section:

- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the Children's Guardian may make information available to employers and other persons about matters to consider in relation to employing persons to work with children.

No. 3 **Disqualifying offences**

Page 16, schedule 2. Insert after line 30:

[37] Schedule 2 Disqualifying offences

Omit clause 1 (1) (z). Insert instead:

- (z) an offence under a law of another State or a Territory, the Commonwealth or a foreign jurisdiction that, if committed in New South Wales, would constitute an offence listed in this clause,

[38] Schedule 2, clause 1 (1) (ac)

Insert after clause 1 (1) (ab):

- (ac) any other offence that is a registrable offence within the meaning of the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*, if the offence was committed as an adult.

No. 4 **Savings and transitional provisions**

Page 18, schedule 2. Insert after line 4:

18 Review and enabling order applications

- (1) Section 26, as in force before its substitution by the amending Act, continues to apply to a person who had made an application for a working with children check clearance which had not been withdrawn or finally determined before the commencement of the amending Act, but only in connection with matters arising out of that application.
- (2) Nothing in the amending Act affects any application made under Part 4 of this Act before the substitution of section 26 by the amending Act.

No. 5 **Savings and transitional provisions**

Page 18, schedule 2. Insert after line 10:

20 Disqualifying offences

- (1) Schedule 2 as amended by the amending Act, and section 18 in its application to that schedule as so amended, does not apply to or in respect of the following:
 - (a) an application for a clearance made by a person before the commencement of the amending Act or an application for a further clearance made by that person on or after that commencement,
 - (b) an application for a further clearance made on or after that commencement by a person who held a clearance immediately before that commencement.
- (2) A person who was the holder of a clearance immediately before the amendment of schedule 2 by the amending Act is not, merely because of those amendments, a disqualified person for the purposes of this Act.
- (3) This clause does not affect the operation of this Act in relation to any offence committed on or after the commencement of the amending Act by a person referred to in subclause (1) or (2).

Earlier I indicated the reason for these amendments. The amendments address the issues I raised during the course of my reply and will ensure that children in New South Wales are as safe as they can be. The amendments make very clear the range of offences. A person who is found guilty of any of those offences will be precluded from lodging an appeal or seeking a review by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. Some of the offences are so horrendous that the community, as represented by the Government in this case, feels strongly that those offenders should not have a right of review. On that basis and on the basis of all other comments made by the member for Bankstown, other members and me during my reply, the Government seeks support for the amendments.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.09 p.m.]: At the outset I indicate that the Opposition will support these amendments. During my contribution to the second reading debate I flagged concern about a number of reported cases in which individuals who had committed serious offences had appealed the decisions of the Office of the Children's Guardian with respect to being barred from working with children. Although the number of cases is small, nevertheless we are working in a bipartisan way to protect the children in our State.

Therefore it is important to take this opportunity to strengthen the legislation, in particular expanding the breadth of section 26 of the Act, which precludes unsuitable individuals who have not been cleared to work directly with children, from appealing the decision of the Children's Guardian. That puts the Children's Guardian in a difficult position in regard to having the necessary resources to fight appeals. I imagine that at some stage the Children's Guardian will no longer attempt to overrule the decision of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in relation to the appeals process.

In the past couple of weeks the Opposition has tried to compile a list of offences that should be included in this section. I flag for the Minister's attention some offences that should be included. Today may not be the ideal time to amend this bill and I am not proposing to do so. I understand that the bill will now proceed to the other place for further consideration. We should be considering, for example, section 66B, which is attempting or assaulting with intent to have sexual intercourse with a child under 10 years; section 66D, attempting or assaulting with intent to have sexual intercourse with a child between 10 and 16 years; and section 73, sexual intercourse with a child between 16 and 18 years under special care.

Forgive me if those offences are included in the amendments, although I do not believe that they are. Special consideration needs to be given to those serious offences if an individual is convicted of them and is able to appeal the decision of the Children's Guardian. As I highlighted in my earlier contribution, perhaps certain sexual offences against adults should be included in this section: section 61J, aggravated sexual assault, and section 61JA, aggravated sexual assault in company.

I note that several cases highlighted in the annual report and in recent media reports related to individuals who were convicted of those types of crimes. They were able to appeal the decision of the Children's Guardian and to have the decision overturned, effectively giving them clearance to work with children. I highlight those two offences in particular. As a mother of three children I would be mortified to hear that an individual who had been convicted of a crime under section 61J or section 61JA—that is, aggravated sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault in company against an adult—was able to appeal what would ordinarily be a disqualifying offence for him or her and ordinarily the Children's Guardian would automatically disqualify the individual from being able to obtain a clearance.

I would be mortified if such an individual was able to appeal that decision and have it overturned and I subsequently saw him or her volunteering on a soccer field or on a netball court, or working in a school. That would be a matter for concern because the public would not be wise to that fact and we would not be aware that an individual was able to have the decision overturned. I appreciate that today may not be the ideal opportunity to make such amendments. However, when the bill goes to the other place consideration must be given to expanding section 26 to include those offences.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [12.14 p.m.]: I thank the member for Bankstown for her comments. As she indicated at the conclusion of her contribution to the second reading debate, yesterday she received a briefing on these changes from me and my staff. I indicated to the member—I indicated this to the House earlier—that we will seeking to have a much broader review of the circumstances. If the review is properly conducted it will probably take six to 12 months. I also indicated to the member yesterday—perhaps I was remiss in not addressing this matter earlier—that after the bill is hopefully approved in the Chamber today, we will have an opportunity to consider it a little more temperately and cautiously over the next month to six weeks. The bill will progress from here to the Legislative Council and the Legislative Council will have an opportunity to make further amendments.

The Government is more than happy to enable further consideration to occur in that time. As this is the final sitting week of Parliament before the winter break, and as these matters have been raised in the media, we determined that it was appropriate to move as quickly as possible—to at least implement these changes and to move forward. I will not address at this time the specific suggestions that were made by the member for Bankstown. However, I understand that one of the sections to which she referred—section 66B—is definitely included in the amendments. I am not disagreeing with the member about some of the issues that we need to look at, but we will have an opportunity to do that over the next month to six weeks. The winter break is an opportune time to consider those matters.

As I told the member yesterday, this is not the end of the matter. We will have a careful look at the legislation during the winter break. Indeed, we are happy to consider further suggestions from not only the member for Bankstown but also the community more broadly over that time as they have an opportunity to absorb the changes we are making today. The member raised the issue of funding and resources, which I did not address in reply. In regard to the budget papers, one could agree with what the member said about a reduction in funding, but it is not true.

Treasury's policy is to ensure that all agencies draw down first on taxpayers' funds that are sitting in their accounts before they request additional funding. That is the issue. If the member looks closely at the budget papers she will see that funding is currently available in the account of the Children's Guardian. That is not to say that it may not be appropriate to look at funding for the Children's Guardian at some point because she is doing a great job and she has a much larger number of Working With Children Checks than anyone could have imagined only a couple of years ago, so more work has been generated than we expected.

There are some arguments about funding. I am sure all members would say that taxpayers' money should not be wasted but that the right amount of taxpayers' money must be provided. If extra funding is necessary I, as the Minister, will look at that and gladly take those arguments to Treasury to see whether we need additional funds. I thank the member for Bankstown and the Opposition for their support for these amendments and I thank the member for her additional insights into the possibility of further changes. I assure her that we will look at that matter during the winter break. I am happy to look at any other suggestions that she or any other member, or indeed any member of the community, has with regard to appropriate changes. Then we will have a much broader review—as I said, I estimate over six to 12 months possibly—of what other changes we might need to make. I will make some announcements in due course on how that review will take place.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.19 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services for providing this opportunity for further developing the offences to be covered in section 26 of the legislation that will preclude an individual from appealing to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. That should give the stakeholders and community representatives the opportunity to voice their opinions. I note that this will mean far more work for the Children's Guardian, so that might require the Government looking at allocated resources.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Tell her she's doing a great job.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: She is doing a good job, but it is important to note that there will be more work as a result of what is being proposed and it is important that the Children's Guardian be appropriately resourced.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing) [12.20 p.m.]: I do not argue with that except to say that if automatic disqualifications are going to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], hopefully the Children's Guardian will have less work. However, that does not mean we will not look at required resources. The task in hand is protecting our children, and I am sure all members would like this bill to pass through the Chamber.

Question—That Government amendments Nos 1 to 5 be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendments Nos 1 to 5 agreed to.

Schedule 2 as amended agreed to.

Schedules 3 to 5 agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard 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.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Fifth Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 27 May 2015.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.22 p.m.]: In his address to Parliament on 5 May this year, the Governor reminded the Parliament that New South Wales is not only the oldest State in Australia but also the State with the largest and strongest economy. However, having a strong economy is not the only thing that is needed. In his Speech the Governor raised some important points, one being that only one thing unites us all in this Parliament—that is, the desire to make a real and meaningful difference to people's lives. He also said that the men and women gathered in the Chamber have the authority and the opportunity to implement lasting and meaningful change, and that is certainly correct. We have been chosen by our communities to represent them and to act in their interests. There can be no greater honour or trust.

The Government was re-elected in March 2015 to keep doing what it has been doing—that is, to create more infrastructure and jobs. To do this, the people of New South Wales gave the Government a mandate to deliver a clear plan that would be fully funded from the leasing of the electricity poles and wires. As the Governor reminded members of this House, the program is being built around five key elements: strengthening the economy to secure and create more jobs; building new infrastructure such as roads and railways, which will mean people can spend more time with their families and less time commuting; delivering better services such as providing better schools to educate our children and hospitals to look after the sick; a safer and stronger community and environment with lower crime rates and less litter; and, finally, protecting the vulnerable and delivering greater assistance for those in our community who need it the most.

It is clear that the people of New South Wales shared the Government's vision, as evidenced in its resounding win on 28 March. I was pleased to inform the Parliament that in my electorate of Drummoyne I was re-elected with an increased majority. I believe my victory was because the Government delivered for the people of Drummoyne during its first four years in office. We now have a better health system, including massive spending at Concord Hospital with \$150 million promised prior to the election to be delivered in 2015-19. My electorate has been provided with a number of new schools, after the Government listened to the people's request. We also have new road infrastructure, more ferry services and upgrades at key wharfs and railway stations.

A lot more work must be done to bring Drummoyne into the twenty-first century. From 1962 to 2011 the City of Drummoyne was represented by a Labor member and during that time it was sadly neglected. There was very little investment in infrastructure to address population growth and we are now playing catch-up. We urgently need better transport in the suburbs of Concord, Breakfast Point and Five Dock. I will be speaking about this to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure and I have faith that this Government will deliver for the people of Drummoyne.

Ms Jodi McKay: What about Concord Hospital?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: The reason is simple: since coming to office in 2011, this Government has worked tirelessly for the people of New South Wales and everybody, including the people of Drummoyne, is benefiting. I welcome the interjection from the member for Strathfield, who referred to a great institution in my electorate, Concord Repatriation General Hospital. Staff at that hospital do a remarkable job. Looking back at the achievements over the four years—

Ms Jodi McKay: Where's the funding?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: There will be funding of \$150 million in 2015-19. One only has to talk to Theresa Anderson, chief executive officer at Concord hospital, to hear that I have not been a Johnny-come-lately; I have been arguing this point for the 4½ years that I have been a member of Parliament. Long before the member for Strathfield came on the scene, the hospital benefited from record funding achieved because of this Government's dedication to introducing fiscal responsibility.

Ms Jodi McKay: Let's bring the funding forward.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I know the member for Strathfield has not been in Parliament for long, so I will list some of the Government's achievements from spending in 2011-12. The Concord Hospital Asbestos Disease Research Institute received \$1.2 million from this Government and prior to my election in 2011 the Government delivered a new \$1.6 million dialysis unit at Concord hospital. There was also the \$3.2 million upgrade of the AIDS Dementia Clinic at Dame Eadith Walker Estate financed through the Health budget. The Concord Foreshore Trail, an election commitment, received \$500,000 in 2011 also through the Health budget. The Anzac Research Institute unit for the diagnosis and treatment of blood cancer received \$3,470,000. The program to assist people with asbestos-related illnesses received \$3.5 million. A hydrotherapy pool at Lucas Gardens received \$300,000, financed through the Education budget. Since then there have been numerous other grants, including the Asbestos Disease Research Institute at Concord hospital being allocated \$7 million from the Health budget.

I strongly advocate that the member for Strathfield use Community Building Partnership grants to support local clubs, such as the Concord RSL and the Rotary clubs, as I did, to fund the purchasing and upgrading of vital pieces of equipment for Concord hospital. I am happy to act in a bipartisan manner and to join the member for Strathfield in directing some of our Community Building Partnership funding to Concord Repatriation General Hospital. When she asks me where is the money for Concord hospital, I will take that as a genuine question as opposed to her being hypocritical and talking the talk but not walking the walk. I will be watching to see where she directs her funding. I hope that she directs some of it to Concord hospital. The hospital services people from outside my electorate; in fact, 50 per cent of its patients come from other areas.

Ms Jodi McKay: We both need to lobby the Federal Government.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall): Order! The member for Drummoyne does not need any help, despite appearances to the contrary.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: The Governor's Speech touched on a number of issues apart from the Government's economic success and fiscal responsibility; it also touched on the responsibilities of governments in general. Only by displaying fiscal responsibility and restraining spending can a government provide everything required for the most vulnerable in our communities. The Governor also said that the Government had made it clear that strong economic growth was the hallmark of a successful State. As I said, that is pointless unless it results in the provision of services to our most vulnerable. The Government has achieved that in a number of ways that I have already mentioned. The economy is now \$40 billion larger than it was four years ago, and New South Wales now leads the nation on key economic indicators. In fact, it is rated as the number one State in the CommSec State of the States report.

Members opposite continually ridiculed the Government leading up to the election for harping about New South Wales being number one again. Of course, as a result of good governance this State is number one again, and we hope to retain that position for a long time. A healthy, strong and broad economy has a positive impact on the community, and we have seen the benefits that flow from such an economy. More than 175,000 jobs have been created over the past four years, which builds a stronger, more stable and prosperous State. That is extremely important. Many of our gains have been underpinned by residential construction, and we reached a 10 year construction high in 2014.

I was taking my daily walk across the Gladesville Bridge in 2011 after the Coalition came to power and I looked across to the CBD and could not see a crane in the sky. I am telling a fib; there was one in the distance, but I think it was broken down. If members were to look at the city skyline now they would see a large number of cranes. Those cranes represent unprecedented development and construction. While construction is underway people have money in their pockets, there are jobs, people are spending money in restaurants and they are paying tax. The wheel continues to turn. As I said, we are experiencing a record rate of construction across the State, including in rural and regional areas, infill areas, greenfield areas and the city.

The Government has committed to creating an additional 150,000 jobs during the term of the Fifty-sixth Parliament. Earlier today I had the pleasure of representing the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure in addressing a delegation of surveyors organised by the Minister for Early Childhood Education. The Government is keeping them up to date with the many construction and industry projects happening which will create jobs across the State. Members opposite announced projects when they were in office, but the difference now is that the projects this Government is announcing have financial backbone. This Government is cutting costs and putting its money into infrastructure projects. Of course, the Coalition was elected having made a commitment to deliver more than \$20 billion to the State as a result of leasing 49 per cent of the poles and wires. We will have the resources to back these wonderful projects that will change people's lives. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Government has committed unprecedented funds above and beyond those promised in the budget to accelerate projects that will make a difference to our lives. The Governor also mentioned hospitals and the Government's commitment to provide thousands more healthcare workers for new and upgraded hospitals across the State—in Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Blacktown, Concord, and at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Hospitals across the State are being renovated and being brought into the twenty-first century. This Government is creating jobs and valuing our healthcare workers—nurses, doctors and volunteers. We want them to work in a great environment so that they can produce the results we all expect.

The Governor also pointed out that students in New South Wales will be learning in 1,000 new and upgraded public school classrooms with about 1,500 additional schoolteachers, counsellors and student support officers. That is crucial. When I was elected in 2011, after 49 years of Labor holding the seat of Drummoyne, the first thing the Labor mayor and councillors told me was that the electorate needed more schools and classrooms. They were at breaking point. That was fantastic coming from supporters of a government that did nothing to address the shortage. I found that a bit hypocritical. Like all good governments, this Government put that aside and I am working in partnership with my local council to deliver a \$35 million school in Concord West, which is now in the electorate of Strathfield. I am glad I have delivered a school to the member's electorate as a result of an electoral boundary redistribution.

Ms Jodi McKay: It is still in your electorate.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: No, it is not; it is in North Strathfield, which is in the member's electorate. I should not have to tell the member the location of the electoral boundary. The member has also inherited McDonald College, which is another great school. Two new Catholic schools will also be built, one next door to McDonald College and the other in Mortlake, which is in my electorate. That is fantastic news. A school at Wentworth Point will be opened for the first term of 2017. That is a great part of the world and it is the site of extensive development; Rhodes is probably one of the fastest growing areas in Sydney.

In 10 years, Sydney and the rest of the State will be very different because, like the Government, the people of New South Wales have embraced an opportunity. Only by strengthening the economy to secure and create jobs and building new infrastructure, whether it be schools, roads or hospitals, and delivering better services, particularly transport services, can we realise the benefits that should come to New South Wales. I will be a little selfish and talk more about my own electorate because I am proud of the achievements that have been gained in such a short period. All members benefit from Community Building Partnership funding because it gives us great joy and pride to deliver vital funds to many not-for-profit organisations in our electorates.

The City of Canada Bay has been the recipient of many grants, too many to mention. I often reluctantly do not mention those grants because it is politically convenient to state that they are partnerships. Many of them the Government funds three to one, but that is beside the point. Governments, whether at State, Federal or local level, have to work together, either voluntarily or reluctantly, to deliver. Although we have differences of opinion, I have always believed that overwhelmingly our electorates are the beneficiaries of our hard work. It is important to put politics and personality differences aside and to think about our communities.

The grants enjoyed by the City of Canada Bay have been as small as \$500 for the Live Well program and as large as \$50,000 for the erection of a Community Building Partnership fence at Mortlake Public School. Funding was matched dollar for dollar by the Minister for Education up to the value of \$100,000. These projects protect the safety of our children and add to and enhance their learning environment. They are life-changing projects. Another great program is the Better Boating Program, under which the City of Canada Bay was the recipient of \$20,000 for dinghy storage. That is appropriate considering the 35 kilometre stretch of foreshore in my electorate.

An environmental garden award was presented to Mortlake Public School, which had been the recipient of a grant of \$2,500. Community building partnerships have been instrumental in delivering for St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Concord Public School, Five Dock RSL soccer club, the Canada Bay State Emergency Service [SES], Briars at Greenlees, St Bede's hall, St Andrew's Anglican Church, Handytown NSW, Pathways On the Right Track program, the Rhodes boat ramp and Five Dock Leisure Centre. A wheelchair accessible pontoon was funded for Sailability via a Sport and Recreation grant. A great many projects have been the beneficiaries of grants that have been made available by this Government. I again refer to the Governor's Speech in which he said that that can only be done on the back of smart fiscal responsibility and good economic management. Good economic management provides the benefits for our vulnerable residents and those who are unable to provide for themselves.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.42 p.m.]: I am very pleased to speak in reply to the address from His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley on the occasion of the opening of the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales. Our Governor had a career in the military spanning 42 years, including service in Somalia in 1993. He commanded various forces, culminating in his appointment as Chief of the Defence Force in July 2011, succeeding Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston. The Hon. David Hurley then retired—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Davidson has the call.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: As I said, he succeeded Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston and then retired from the Defence Force in June 2014 to succeed the very well-respected Dame Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales on 2 October 2014. I have had the pleasure of meeting the Governor on a number of occasions, including at a ceremony for recipients of the Order of Australia at Government House. I have also met his wife on a number of occasions. From my experience and from my objective observations, I can say that they are eminently suited to the roles they now play and they are delightful people. We are blessed and very lucky to have them serving the people of New South Wales and representing our monarch in this State.

It is important to reflect on some of the comments the Governor made on the occasion of the opening of this Parliament. In doing so I might highlight aspects that are of particular relevance to my electorate and to areas of interest that I have in this Parliament. The Governor acknowledged, appropriately, that New South Wales has embraced its role as a leader in our nation and set a benchmark for strong economic growth. Certainly this Government has made it clear that while strong economic growth is an absolutely essential criterion of being a successful State, economic achievement is of limited value if it does not then support the most vulnerable in society and enable us to help protect our environment and to provide opportunity for all people in our State. Indeed, they are objectives that this Government is thoroughly cognisant of, is striving to achieve and, I believe, is achieving.

Certainly the Government's four-year program across this term of government is about delivering excellent outcomes for all people in New South Wales. The Government clearly has a positive vision that focuses on infrastructure and services, making a genuine difference to people's lives and improving the lives of all people in New South Wales. The Government's program is built around five key elements, which the Governor acknowledged. Those five elements are, firstly, strengthen the economy to secure and create jobs.

Secondly, build new infrastructure—the roads, railways and other infrastructure that will enable people to spend more time with their families rather than be stuck in cars or on public transport and will make their lives more meaningful. Thirdly, deliver better services, including providing better education through schools for our children and better health care through hospitals for those who suffer illness. Fourthly, create a safer and stronger community and environment, with lower crime rates and less environmental damage or pollution. Fifthly, protect those who are vulnerable, thereby helping to deliver greater assistance or support for those in our society who need it the most.

I will go through a number of those areas in particular, starting with strengthening our economy. The Governor acknowledged that not only is our economy now \$40 billion larger than it was four years ago, New South Wales is now the leader in Australia, ranked number one on a range of criteria and overall, as acknowledged by the CommSec State of the States report. Importantly, in moving to that position of economic strength, the Government has kept expenses within the budget every year, not only over the past four years. This week Treasurer Berejiklian delivered a budget that again clearly showed discipline in financial management. While it has been highlighted that there has been a revenue windfall from stamp duty, it is just as

important to note that the budget achieved strong expense control, which is fundamental to competent economic management of our State. Unfortunately, that was something we did not see in the previous 16 years of Labor administration.

State debt has been reduced and continues to be lowered. Fortunately, that results in the lowering of interest costs for government which means there is more money to reinvest in services and important infrastructure that legitimately requires government support. To get the economy moving, the Government has lowered the unemployment rate, created new jobs and encouraged spending and investment in the private sector. Over the past four years approximately 175,000 jobs were created. For this term of government it is wonderful to see the target of an additional 150,000 new jobs for people in our State. The Government has already implemented a number of measures to achieve that target, such as the extension of the \$5,000 payroll tax rebate for companies. Legislation for the \$2,000 small business employment incentive to reward small businesses for employing additional employees was introduced in Parliament this week.

People are under increasing pressure as they juggle their work and family commitments. As our aspirations and expectations have become higher and society has become more complex those pressures have increased. The Government is investing a huge amount of money to allow 45,000 more children access to quality before and after school care in government and non-government schools. The Government has indicated that in this term students in New South Wales will receive 1,000 upgraded and new public school classrooms and approximately 1,500 additional teachers, counsellors and student support officers will be employed.

I am delighted that the Government has committed to delivering a new education precinct at the University of Technology Sydney site at Lindfield. That site will be the subject of a \$40 million investment to create an educational precinct for students for education excellence and for a range of other educational activities. Money has been allocated in this year's budget within the broad planning allocation of the education department to progress some of the plans for that site. I anticipate that in next year's budget a significant amount will be invested in preparing that site so that school students can actively use it from 2019 and, hopefully, from 2018 through a staged release. That is great news for me and my electorate and comes on the back of significant investment during the last term of government in schools such as Killara High School and Cromehurst School.

A similar commitment and investment has been made in roads and rail, which will significantly reduce congestion across the State. The NorthConnex project is a relevant investment for my region, as is the second Sydney Harbour crossing, which will be part of the broader metropolitan line extending from the north-west to Bankstown. That infrastructure will come to fruition as a result of the milestone legislation associated with the long-term lease of 49 per cent of the New South Wales electricity network. It is a welcome element of the Rebuilding NSW fund and will turbocharge what is already a solid economy. Those initiatives should be welcomed by all members in this place.

Other new infrastructure is being built across New South Wales. On the back of the South West Rail Link being delivered ahead of schedule and \$3 million under budget, work is progressing on the North West Rail Link, the WestConnex project, the NorthConnex project and the Barangaroo precinct. There is now a commitment to build a commuter station at Barangaroo. Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith) will see the benefit of that new transport infrastructure in his electorate, and I am delighted that it has been appropriately delivered. We are also seeing a \$7 billion investment from the poles and wires transaction to build a second Sydney Harbour crossing and related rail lines at each end of the harbour, which will allow increased capacity on other rail lines across Sydney, including the North Shore rail line. Importantly, it will provide an opportunity for more services to existing rail stations in my electorate.

Regional investment is equally important to metropolitan investment. I acknowledge the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education, the member for Port Macquarie, at the table. A \$300 million regional environment and tourism program is being invested in regional tourism assets. As Parliamentary Secretary for Major Events and Tourism, I have a particular interest in tourism and I am delighted to see investment in many rural and regional programs. I particularly acknowledge the support of the Government for many of the State's regional centres and their events, such as the Toyota Country Music Festival at Tamworth, the Orange F.O.O.D. Week and the Deni Ute Muster at Deniliquin, which I will have the privilege to experience later this year. I rejoice in the wealth and life of regional New South Wales. The Government is committed to projects that sustain growth in those regional communities, which are an integral part of New South Wales. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I will now talk about expanding services. This Government has a passion for making lives better for all people in New South Wales. The Government is continuing to roll out Service NSW. I congratulate the Minister

for Finance Services and Property and his predecessors on this excellent initiative. Service NSW provides a single point where people can undertake up to approximately 800 transactions online, via a 24/7 phone service or at a service centre. I am delighted that there are service centres on the North Shore at Hornsby and Chatswood and a range of other Service NSW offices are under construction in areas such as Grafton, Armidale, Bondi Junction, Broken Hill and Albury. A number of them are in regional and rural areas.

Protecting communities is crucial. In addition to ensuring that children and young people receive a good education, health care and services, we must ensure that our communities are safe and secure. It is fantastic to see the Health budget at record levels and some 6,000 additional front-line staff, such as doctors, nurses and paramedics. It is fantastic to see the amount of money being invested in projects to redevelop, rebuild and upgrade hospitals and health centres and that includes, close to home, the Northern Beaches Hospital, which is now taking shape and will be delivered in this term of Parliament. We have had improvements in waiting times in emergency departments and for elective surgery and in other relevant clinical time frames and key performance indicators. Importantly, targeted funding for mental health services has also increased significantly.

We continue to see an expansion of educational facilities. That was reflected in New South Wales being the first State in Australia to sign up to the Gonski reforms, which we are now seeing the early benefits of. The Gonski agreement has meant that we have had 16 per cent more funding for New South Wales school students. That is welcome because we need smart young people to take this State forward. One of the challenges—in terms of both education and health—which I will not detail today, is Federation reform. I want to acknowledge that this week we have seen the early release—I will not call them leaks—of discussion papers on health and education. I cannot stress enough the importance of our State playing a constructive role in meaningful reform of the Federation. We recently celebrated the birth, some 200 years ago, of Sir Henry Parkes. The Federation has been the same, in essence, for some 114 years and is desperately in need of reform. The key areas of education and health will be the subject of important discussions for the remainder of this year and into next year.

In terms of strengthening and protecting the State's communities, I acknowledge the Government's appointment of the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault because there is no doubt that few people are more vulnerable than victims of domestic violence. We need to counter domestic violence and sexual assault. Community safety is enhanced by having more police. The Government is also protecting our environment by investing in a number of measures, including the establishment of new national parks. In conclusion, we are seeing improved infrastructure, better services, protection of our environment and communities, and the restoring of accountability across government. I was delighted to hear the Governor's Speech, which I have reflected on today. Over the next four years I am very much looking forward to being part of a government that delivers on its vision.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Holsworthy) [1.02 p.m.]: I start by thanking the Governor and Mrs Hurley for their time when they came to Parliament House for the opening of Parliament. They were very gracious in the amount of time that they gave to members, particularly at the very busy lunch that was held to celebrate the opening. It was a particularly special day for members and staff because of the history of this place and this being the Fifty-sixth Parliament. The Governor acknowledged that this is the oldest Parliament in Australia and he showed his appreciation of this building and the history that has taken place within its walls. Since the Governor gave his address in Parliament in May, I have come to know more about him. He had huge shoes to fill because Dame Marie Bashir did such a wonderful job as Governor. Dame Marie Bashir is a woman of class and grace and is greatly respected by the community. Governor Hurley has done a fabulous job but with a different style and has been very generous with his time. I have been very pleased to watch him in that role.

Recently I had the pleasure of spending some time with the Governor, when Technical Aids for the Disabled [TAD], or Disability Services as it is now known, celebrated its fortieth anniversary. I used to work at TAD as its fundraising manager and had the honour of being invited back to share a special anniversary function. The Governor invited everyone present to look around Government House—something not many people have the opportunity to do. That was a particularly special experience. While I was there, I saw Governor King's shoe buckles. As he is one of my ancestors, for me to see those buckles on display was very special.

I also had the pleasure of seeing the Governor at a White Ribbon event. The Governor was incredibly short of time and did not think he would be able to make the event but he did attend, dressed in his tuxedo on his way to another event. He spent some time with people in our community who put so much effort into trying to

rid our community of domestic violence. His presence was appreciated by all those in attendance. I have also had the opportunity of joining him at two very special lunches, one for the New Zealand Governor General and one attended by King Harald and Queen Sonja of Norway. The Governor's role is to promote New South Wales and our trade and friendship between countries. It was very evident that he loves New South Wales and has a passion for seeing the State move forward.

Mrs Hurley grew up in an area neighbouring my electorate, in the electorate of the member for Heathcote. She understands our areas of interest and some of the concerns we hold locally. I know she will be on our side when we need her to look at the best interests of our communities. The Governor's family carry out their role beautifully. In his speech the Governor spoke about his desire to make a real and meaningful difference to people's lives. Every one of us in this place has that desire. We have the authority and opportunity to implement lasting and meaningful change. Indeed, we need to keep that in the forefront of our minds as we undertake our roles.

The Governor mentioned that New South Wales now has the nation's largest and strongest economy. That is something that members on our side of politics hold very dear. We have been able to make New South Wales number one again. We have also been keeping at the forefront of our minds that we need to support our most vulnerable, to protect the environment and to provide opportunities for all our citizens. That was also something the Governor put a great deal of thought into. He mentioned the positive vision that we are focused on with respect to infrastructure and services and how that vision will make a genuine difference to people's everyday lives. He spoke about how we are seeking to fix the economy to secure and create jobs but that our program is also about building new infrastructure—the roads and the railways—and delivering better services and schools.

We all want a safer and stronger community and environment. The Government is looking to protect the vulnerable and provide greater assistance to those in the community who need it most by increasing funding for our schools and hospitals, lowering crime rates and enabling people to spend more time with their families and less time commuting. The Governor also spoke about rebuilding the New South Wales economy. As I said, that was the centrepiece of our Fifty-fifth Parliament. The catchcry of making New South Wales number one again has been voiced many times in this House but it is a goal to which we attach a great deal of importance.

As the Governor noted in his address, the State's economy is \$40 billion larger than it was four years ago and, importantly, we have kept our triple-A rating. Each year for the past four years government expenses have been kept within the budget and \$9.7 billion in savings have been delivered. The Governor referred to the reduction in State debt and the lowering of interest costs which, in turn, will deliver more funding for the provision of services that people need. That is exactly what this Government is striving to do.

The Governor also mentioned the 175,000 new jobs that have been created over the past four years. Those new jobs will help to build a stronger and more prosperous State. I note that the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport is in the Chamber. I joined him, when he was the Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney, and the then Treasurer to announce with great excitement that 3,000 government jobs would be relocated to Western Sydney. The people of Liverpool are looking forward to the relocation of the Department of Families and Communities and Multicultural NSW to the Liverpool area. What a perfect place for Multicultural NSW to be relocated—a place where people speak 150 different languages and where 160 different nationalities are represented. Liverpool is an ideal location for Multicultural NSW.

The Governor also referred to the residential construction that is occurring. One only has to look around the Holsworthy electorate to see that New South Wales reached a 10-year high in 2014. In the past four years approval was given for the construction of more than 160,000 new homes. That has led to the need for increased infrastructure and the Government's expenditure on infrastructure is at record highs. The Government has committed to the creation of an additional 150,000 jobs in the term of the Fifty-sixth Parliament. One way of achieving that will be through the \$5,000 payroll tax rebate. I am pleased that the Government has decided to extend the rebate. To date, in Liverpool alone 2,000 jobs have been created as a result of that rebate. People most often visit my electorate office to talk to me about the need for jobs creation and 2,000 new jobs in the Liverpool area is most welcomed.

I note that 9,000 applications have been received for the rebate, which is making a huge difference to small business. The Government has announced a new \$2,000 small business employment incentive grant to reward small businesses for each additional employee employed. This will ameliorate some of the costs

involved in employing a new staff member. The Governor also referred to funding of \$20 million to allow 45,000 more children to access quality before and after school care in both government and non-government schools. Recently I visited the William Carey Christian School, one of the new schools in my electorate, to look at its before and after school care facility.

Mr Jai Rowell: Hear, hear!

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: I acknowledge the member for Wollondilly. It is a great school. I was very impressed that the school caters for children from preparatory school through to year 12. The school's before and after school care facility provides to parents the opportunity of a better a work-life balance in the knowledge that their children are being looked after in an appropriate and fun manner. The Governor also mentioned that hospitals are being constructed or upgraded. I am a regular visitor to Liverpool Hospital. I attend opening ceremonies of assets for which the Government has provided funding. I am very grateful to the management and staff of Liverpool Hospital and am pleased with the relationship we have built over the past four years.

The Governor mentioned the 1,000 new and upgraded public school classrooms the Government is providing. I met with staff and students of Amity College, another of the new schools in my electorate, to open new classrooms and inspect the new library. The college has undertaken an amazing building program and this will make a huge difference to the school's young students. Indeed, State government funding has allowed the college to bring this building program to fruition. The students are enjoying their new classrooms, and there will be more to come.

In the past four years funding for a new kitchen, from start to finish, for Holsworthy High School was provided by the Government. At one stage it appeared that the high school would not be able to offer its vocational education and training [VET] classes for much longer because of its old-style laminate kitchen tabletops. To conduct VET courses, a stainless steel tabletop is required. Happily, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, acceded to our request when we explained how much this facility was needed. In conjunction with the Minister for Education, I was also pleased to announce that Moorebank High School will be provided with a new frontage. The front of a school should reflect the vibrancy of school life. Presently, the front of the school is drab and the students tell us that the school frontage does not reflect what happens inside the school walls. I was pleased to announce the provision of \$1 million for school's frontage to be spruced up, which I know will make a great difference.

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

Pursuant to sessional order community recognition statements proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [1.15 p.m.]: We congratulate our Matildas on their spectacular performance in the FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada. Former Jets success stories—co-captain and striker Lisa de Vanna, central midfielder Emily Van Egmond, goalkeeper Melissa Barbieri, and central defender Alana Kennedy—have done the Newcastle community proud. We send our best wishes for Sunday's quarter final against either Japan or the Netherlands—whichever of those team wins the game that is being played as I speak. We are very proud of our girls. We recognise that this is one of the best-ever Matildas performances in our history.

WINGHAM BRUSH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.16 p.m.]: I inform the House that six students representing the Wingham Brush Public School recently won the Science and Engineering Challenge against five schools from across the Manning Valley, Gloucester and Great Lakes regions. Wingham Brush Public School, which also won the event in 2013, won the 2015 champions trophy. The students who were involved are Alex Butler, class 5/6B, Morgan Saxby, class 6M, Lachlan Oliver, class 6M, Lincoln Harrell, class 6M, Connor Debono, class 6M, Amelia Hansen, class 5/6B and Isobel Butler-Kwa, class 5/6B. The annual Science and

Engineering Challenge is run by the University of Newcastle and lately has been sponsored by Rotary clubs and MidCoast Water. The challenge aims to encourage students to study mathematics, engineering and technology subjects for their Higher School Certificate.

HOLROYD ROTARY CLUB

Dr HUGH McDERMOTT (Prospect) [1.17 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House and congratulate the Rotary Club of Holroyd, which is one of the great community organisations in the electorate of Prospect. On 20 June the club held its changeover ceremony when former president Jerry Duma retired and new president John Heslop took over. The ceremony included presentation of a number of Paul Harris Fellow awards. I congratulate Maria Feil, John Melbourne, Helen Whitford and Frank Williams. I also congratulate Rod O'Donoghue and Rob Feil on presentation of their fifth and third Sapphire Pins respectively. Club members should be congratulated on their outstanding support of Rotary ideas and for service above self that they have demonstrated during the Rotary year. The club made a donation of \$10,000 to support Holroyd Community Aid. Special mention should be made of the community chest and Christmas trove raffles, which have enabled some 40 community organisations to raise more than \$158,000 and funding of \$6,000 for Rotary. I congratulate the Rotary Club of Holroyd.

RHIANNA JAMIESON, JUNIOR SHEEP JUDGE

EVA DUNSTAN 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Rhianna Jamieson, a year 12 student at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, who will be heading to the Sydney Royal Easter Show next year as a junior sheep judge. Rhianna successfully took out first place in the local and regional sheep-judging competitions. The local competition forms part of the Holbrook Sheep and Wool Fair, which was held from 10 June to 12 June. Junior judges are scored for their handling and placement of the sheep and their explanation for those decisions.

I also congratulate Eva Dunstan of Albury who turned 100 years of age this month. Eva has travelled widely across Australia but for the past 50 years she has made Albury her home. Her life illustrates the adaptability we now expect in our young people. She worked on a farm milking cows, in a café, in a hotel and also as matron of a grammar school. There were only 10 students in her class at a small country school; it is a tribute to her generation that four of that robust group are still with us.

MATILDAS PLAYER EMILY VAN EGMOND

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [1.19 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of members to a great Novocastrian who also happens to be the Matildas' vice-captain, Emily van Egmond. The Matildas are on a winning streak. They made history in the early hours of Monday morning when they won the game against Brazil 1-0 to take them to the first knockout stage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup. Miss van Egmond is not only a Matilda but also a midfielder playing for Newcastle Jets, the reigning W-League Player of the Year and has been on the field for every moment of Australia's four games so far at the World Cup.

Although Miss van Egmond is an international player and could live anywhere in the world, she still chooses to stay in Newcastle after growing up in the Hunter. And when it comes to Newcastle-based role models, we could not be more proud or happier to have her to look up to. In a world where reality and pop stars rule, I am glad that my children have an ambitious and healthy role model to look up to. I am also happy to boast that we have an international soccer superstar in my electorate.

CRONULLA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB AWARDS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning) [1.20 p.m.]: On 20 June I had the pleasure of presenting the major winners with their awards at the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club Annual Presentation Night for the 2014-15 season. I congratulate the winners: Chris Barber on winning the prestigious Luke and Jack Gibson Memorial Trophy for Most Inspirational Member; Ngaire Hadfield and Carla Papac on winning the Tony Purcell Memorial Trophy for their contribution at the Australian surf championships; Alanna Street on winning the Gibson Howlin Lawyers Award for her efforts in enhancing the reputation and standing of the club; Michael Roye on winning the Gibson Howlin Lawyers Award for his efforts in the instruction and/or training of club members; Australian

champions Chloe Mannix-Power, under 14 female beach sprint, and Ngaire Hadfield, under 17 female beach flags; and the Australian Champions, 170 years male beach relay team comprising John Adamson, David Brukmann, Anthony Lyon, Tim Tardent and John Adamson.

MARRICKVILLE WELCOME DINNER

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [1.21 p.m.]: I draw the attention of members to the incredible work and contributions that went into the Marrickville Welcome Dinner last Saturday night at Marrickville Town Hall. I had the pleasure of joining the welcome dinner and meeting Penny Elsley, founder of the Welcome Dinner Project, supported by many wonderful volunteers. Hundreds of members of our local community, including recently and not-so-recently arrived refugees, my dinner dates Greens Councillor Sylvie Ellsmore and Ben Spies Butcher, along with many other mums, dads, kids and long-term refugee advocates and community leaders, all came together to share a meal.

The hall was buzzing with a community that clearly wanted to show that it welcomes refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants with open arms. Aunty Jenny welcomed the guests and joined in the celebration. The welcome dinner project is a simple yet powerful concept. Everyone brings a plate, shares a meal and connects with others, creating a way for people of diverse cultures who are living in close proximity to one another to connect. I encourage all members of this place to consider supporting this inspiring project in their own communities.

WARRAGAMBA SKATE PARK

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.21 p.m.]: I commend the young people of Warragamba who transformed the Warragamba Skate Park with artistic flair during the April school holidays. Guided by Jessica Gauci, local artistic visionary and teacher at Picton High School, 12- to 19-year-olds with a passion for creativity were given the opportunity to participate in the StreetART project, supported by Wollondilly Shire Council, Adopt An Environment and the Warragamba Silverdale Neighbourhood Centre. The young artists created a striking water-themed mural on an old building in the skate park to reflect the town's historical ties to Warragamba Dam and highlight the importance of sustainability and the environment. I note that the Minister for the Environment was in the Chamber a moment ago. The project also aims to combat graffiti and vandalism in the area. The finished result looks fantastic, and I look forward to seeing the emergence of more StreetART projects throughout Wollondilly. Jessica has been involved in many projects and visions for our community, including the idea of IlluminARTE, and is a treasure of our community.

TOMAREE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Ms KATE WASHINGTON (Port Stephens) [1.22 p.m.]: Today I recognise the hardworking and dedicated volunteers at the Tomaree State Emergency Service [SES] unit. The volunteers are not great in number, but they are great in terms of their effort and output. Following the April super storm, the volunteers operated under extreme conditions to support the community on the Tomaree and Tilligerry peninsulas. The enormity of their effort is best expressed by the sheer number of jobs they undertook. Annually, the unit usually undertakes on average 165 jobs. In the period following the storm the unit undertook in excess of 630 jobs. This work was undertaken despite having a tree fall on their own back shed and effluent running in their back yard due to a power outage. Like the rest of the community, they were operating without power and without communication.

In order to undertake their volunteer duties, many of the volunteers took a significant amount of time off from their paid jobs. Most volunteers utilised long service leave or annual leave, or took leave without pay. I recognise the commitment of the volunteers to their community, helping to keep it safe whilst operating in extreme conditions and doing so at their own personal expense. On behalf of my community I say thank you to the Tomaree SES unit.

HILLS SHIRE NEW ARRIVALS MADDISON AND ALEXIS BYRNE-FUENTES

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Corrections, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) [1.23 p.m.]: The Hills shire is one of Australia's fastest growing regions, and I am pleased to see two more youngsters arrive in our community—also known as nappy valley. I am delighted to announce to the House the arrival of Maddison and Alexis Byrne-Fuentes, born at 1.35 p.m. last Sunday. Maddison and Alexis are the daughters of Matt Fuentes and the Hills Deputy Mayor, Adjunct Professor

Michelle Byrne, who I note ran the campaign for the member for Seven Hills with great success. On behalf of the House I extend to Michelle and Matt my hearty congratulations, and I look forward to meeting my new twin constituents very soon.

FAIRFIELD RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.24 p.m.]: On Saturday 23 May 2015 Fairfield Relay for Life held the annual Australia's Biggest Morning Tea at Fairfield Community Hall. The event was very well attended with a large turnout from members of our local Spanish-speaking community. The main guest of honour, Dr Fuentes, provided valuable information to members of our community about cancer-related issues. The event also marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Cancer Council. Sinilia Radivojevic and her committee organised tea, coffee and cakes as an entry point for the event. Further delicacies were also on offer, which were kindly cooked by the hardworking volunteers. A monster raffle was also held, which contributed to raising many dollars on the day. Congratulations to Fairfield Relay for Life on organising this wonderful event. I acknowledge Sinilia and her committee for their ongoing hard work and advocacy. They give up their time generously and when it comes to raising much-needed funds towards cancer research they do a great job.

TRIBUTE TO SHAEN FRASER AND KATH SEVIL

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [1.25 p.m.]: I congratulate Shaen Fraser and Kath Sevil of Quirindi, who successfully completed a car rally from Canberra to Townsville via the Birdsville Track and raised a staggering \$10,000 for the Cancer Council. Shaen and Kath drove their car Louie, worth \$1,000, across some of Australia's most arduous roads, all in the name of charity. This amazing achievement by these two women would have been very challenging and rewarding. I congratulate them on their courage and perseverance to raise this phenomenal amount of money for the Cancer Council.

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS DONOVAN

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.26 p.m.]: It is with a great deal of sadness that I report the passing on Saturday 13 June, at the age of 87 years, of former councillor and mayor of Fairfield city, Mr Dennis Donovan. Dennis was born in 1927, and migrated from Ireland to Australia in 1958. He served 24 years on council; he was first elected in 1971 and served on many council committees. Dennis was elected deputy mayor on two occasions: 1975 and 1987. He was elected mayor in 1991-92. His last term on council was from 1991 to 1995. Councillor Donovan was a great mentor and support to me in my early days on council, assisting and advising me on the workings of council. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to Dennis's family: Kay, Michael, Kathy and Brendan. His funeral service was held on 23 June at the North Chapel, Pinegrove Memorial Park, Minchinbury. To my councillor colleague and friend, Dennis: may you rest in peace.

IRFAN ISLAMIC COLLEGE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.27 p.m.]: Irfan College of Cecil Park is a newly established Islamic school with approximately 130 proactive students who truly care about the environment and people around the world. Due to the college's leadership and encouragement of the young students to consider their broader involvement in their wider community, before the holy month of Ramadan began, four young ladies of Irfan College, who are all aged under 10 years, began a fundraising campaign. Their aim was to raise funds to provide as many food packages as they could to feed children in India, Indonesia, Myanmar and different parts of the world who are not as fortunate as they are.

The students established stalls to sell their friends' homemade food. They visited their relatives and knocked on the doors in the neighbourhood, and they managed to collect more than \$14,000. This sum of money meant that one month of food was supplied to 200 families. They donated the money to the International HASENE Aid Organisation, which operates in 44 countries around the world. I commend the community spirit and hard work of the young students of Irfan College who have made a difference to families around the world.

MOUNT DRUITT PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT

Mr EDMOND ATALLA (Mount Druitt) [1.28 p.m.]: I commend the Mount Druitt Palliative Care Unit for providing a world-class service to the region and for being named the best of the 177 palliative care units in Australia. This is a great testament to the work of the unit's doctors, nurses and administrative staff, who

deliver quality and compassionate care to patients who are dying whilst at the same time supporting their families and carers. They are truly an inspirational group of people and I congratulate them on this well-deserved achievement.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE EARLY YEARS SUPPORT SERVICE

Ms ELENi PETINOS (Miranda) [1.28 p.m.]: I recognise the fantastic Sutherland Shire Early Years Support Service, which relaunched under the auspices of the 3Bridges Community, in premises at Menai on 13 April 2015. This is an essential service assisting mothers with their newborn babies and infants, household organisation and parenting wisdom in difficult or isolated situations. More than 25,000 mothers receive help each year across the Sutherland shire, and indeed the Miranda electorate, with 31 referrals for assistance received since relaunch. I acknowledge the following people whose contributions have been vital to the success and continuation of this indispensable service to families in our shire: coordinators Lina Willmott and Anne Van Vuuren, chair Martin Iffland, deputy chair Matthew Wallis, and Rotary representatives Malcolm Kerr, Stan Nurthen and Phil Whyte, who have been assisting with fundraising efforts and advisory roles from the service's inception. Finally, I commend and thank the unsung heroes of the organisation, the invaluable volunteers who dedicate their time to helping a family struggling with newborn children.

SYDNEY ELECTORATE CONSTITUENTS

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [1.29 p.m.]: I acknowledge the admirable work of three constituents who contribute a great deal to Sydney. King Fong is well known in the Chinese community for his business skills and his community involvement and work as an historian, including producing a publication that records 197 years of Chinese migrants and their descendants in Sydney. I appreciate King Fong's long-term contribution. Janine Barrett has been a leader at the Ultimo Public School parents and citizens association at an important time in the school's history as it negotiates a new school. She has been a strong defender of the Powerhouse Museum and accessible play equipment. I have worked with Janine and am grateful for her energy and commitment to the local community. I also acknowledge Dan Stubbs for his leadership of the Inner City Legal Centre for six years. I value Dan's work to prevent discrimination and ensure access to justice especially for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE OLYMPIAD PARTICIPANT ZOE THOMPSON

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.30 p.m.]: I acknowledge 16-year-old Zoe Thompson of Castle Cove in my electorate of Davidson. A year 11 science student at the Redlands School in Cremorne, Zoe is one of 17 Australian students who have been selected to participate in the UNESCO sanctioned International Science Olympiad in Brazil during September. There are separate biology, chemistry, Earth sciences and physics Olympiads. Zoe is competing in the Earth science category. Zoe won her place on the team after competing against 3,914 students in qualifying exams and a shortlist of 86 students at a summer school camp. While her selection is a brilliant achievement, it is not surprising to those who know her record. For example, some years ago Zoe conducted an analysis of a school water system that was of such a high standard it was immediately referred to the school's property committee. In Canberra earlier this month the Prime Minister presented the Australian Special Olympiad Team with their official blazers. I wish them and especially Zoe Thompson great success in Brazil.

SURF LIFE SAVING CENTRAL COAST AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Mr ADAM CROUCH (Terrigal) [1.31 p.m.]: I congratulate McMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club on receiving top honours as the Club of the Year. On Saturday 13 June at the Surf Life Saving Central Coast Awards of Excellence held at Mingara Recreation Club the President, Alan Blackman, was presented with the award on behalf of the club and its members. At the event the Athlete of the Year award was presented to Tim Schofield of Terrigal surf club, the Patrol of the Year award was presented to Killcare surf club, the Trainer of the Year award was presented to Toni Jones of Terrigal surf club and the Junior Lifesaver of the Year award was presented to Matthew Douglas.

In addition, the Rescue Water Craft Operator of the Year award was presented to David Sneddon of Killcare surf club, the Coach of the Year award was presented to Damien Benson, the Team of the Year award was presented to the under-19 surfboat crew the "Scum Dogs" of Avoca Beach surf club, the Masters Athlete of the Year award was presented to Paul Lemmon of Terrigal surf club, the Open Athlete of the Year award was presented to Tim Schofield of Terrigal surf club and the Patrol Competition award was presented to Killcare surf club. These awards highlight the important role played by surf clubs in the Terrigal Electorate.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE ATHLETES JOSHUA FENELEY AND EDWARD PARKER

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.32 p.m.]: While the Minister for Sport is in the Chamber I acknowledge two outstanding young achievers from my community. The two athletes have overcome the hardships that life has dealt them and have blossomed into track stars. Joshua Feneley of Hornsby Heights and Edward Parker of Berowra are two incredibly talented primary schoolers who were both recently selected to represent New South Wales in their respective events. Edward competed in track, long jump, the para-medley relay and the long jump relay while Joshua competed in the two-kilometre cross country event and the para-athletes 800-metre event.

Both Joshua and Edward have worked hard to achieve success. They dared to dream of what was possible and set about making it happen. They never let anyone tell them what could not be done and they set about achieving their goals regardless of any obstacles. Today I congratulate them on and thank them for inspiring all of us through their actions. I also acknowledge the incredible love and support they have received from their families, who I know are very proud of their achievements. I will be sure to follow both athletes as their stars continue to rise.

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

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome everybody in the gallery, in particular former member for Castle Hill Mr Michael Richardson and an exchange student from Sweden. I also welcome Lisa Tisdell and Terry Sara, guests of the Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education, and member for Port Macquarie. I acknowledge Ms Liz North, a director of Wyong Bendigo Bank accompanying Chloe, Shannon and Jordan, three student junior directors participating in the Wyong Bendigo Bank Junior Directorships Program and guests of the shadow Minister for Central Coast, Regional Development, Small Business, and Skills and the member for Wyong.

I acknowledge in the gallery 10 program trainees and their teacher from Nova Transition, guests of the member for Summer Hill. I acknowledge Susan and Russell Pearson of Gerringong, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama. I extend a very warm welcome to former member for Blue Mountains Roza Sage; welcome back to the Chamber. I also welcome Mr Robin and Mrs Heather Snow, guests of the Assistant-Speaker, and member for Coffs Harbour.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's gallery Ms Ruby Garnean, Procedure Officer, and Ms Stephanie Kimisi, Committee Research Officer, from the Bougainville House of Representatives. They are here on secondment until Friday 3 July 2015 as part of the twinning program between the Bougainville House of Representatives and the New South Wales Parliament.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I advise members that the Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Skills, and Minister for Small Business will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, and the Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation will answer questions today in the absence of the Minister for Finance, Services and Property.

[During the giving of notices of motions sought to be accorded priority]

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I seek leave to give a third notice of motion.

Leave not granted.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.22 p.m.]

STATE BUDGET

Mr LUKE FOLEY: I direct my question to the Premier. Given that the Treasurer has said the Treasury advice concerning the loss of dividends of about \$1.5 billion a year did not go to Cabinet, will he now publicly release that advice?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I get it—it is budget week and members opposite are trying to come up with a strategy. They are relying on the member for Maroubra to put together a budget strategy, and the member for Cessnock is also trying. I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to the words of the member for Keira. He said that if we have a problem we must look for "serious documents". That is how members opposite formulate policy. I am not sure whether they have caught on yet, but yesterday we released a "serious document", and it is called the budget. Has any member opposite read the budget? It would appear that not every member opposite has read it.

Ms Kathy Smith: What about the budget?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Gosford for that interjection. The budget is released to the world and it reveals what happens to the dividends. Where do they get to for these businesses? They go from just over \$400 million to \$200 million over the forward estimates period. There is no secret; it is in the budget.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. If there is no secret, why will the Premier not release the advice?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I know it is embarrassing that the shadow Treasurer has not read the budget. Members opposite can continue the fight, but a few weeks ago on 28 March the people of New South Wales backed this Government's plan.

Mr Ryan Park: What about Roza?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member should not worry about Roza; she will be back. The people of this State chose hope over fear because they had waited 16 years for members opposite to deliver anything. They have waited for infrastructure from one end of the State—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Treasurer said the advice did not go to Cabinet.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As I said yesterday, it is in the executive summary.

Ms Linda Burney: Being a smart alec does not suit you.

The SPEAKER: Order! I could answer that, but I will not.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her contribution. I do not know why she is so upset, and I do not know why she does not like the member for Strathfield. Why does she not like her? Soon it will be like the member for Wollongong versus the member for Shellharbour. I know that members opposite do not want to build infrastructure; that is in their DNA. They have not seen an infrastructure project they have not wanted to cancel. They cancel projects with the best of them; they are the best project cancellers in the world. The great news for the people of New South Wales is that this Government has got the State moving and it is starting to build the projects that members opposite only spoke about.

This Government is delivering projects on the Princes Highway and the Pacific Highway, the second harbour rail crossing, the M4 and the M5. We are building infrastructure for the people of this State because they deserve nothing less. Members opposite may want to get in the way, and they have tried to do so, but the good news is that the people of New South Wales have given this Government their trust. We will get on with the job of looking after them and members opposite can continue to play whatever games they want. This Government will look after the people of this State. The great budget brought down by our great Treasurer shows that surpluses are going up, debt is going down, and infrastructure is being built. This Government will continue to do exactly that for the people of New South Wales.

STATE BUDGET

Mr JAI ROWELL: I address my question to a great mate of Wollondilly, the Premier. What has been the reaction to the New South Wales budget?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. If they do not they will be placed on calls to order and removed from the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question and his great interest in the State budget. He achieved a great win at the recent election. Members opposite thought they would knock him off, but the good news is that he is here representing his electorate and doing a great job.

Yesterday this Government was proud to bring down a budget that has been very well received across the community. I will share some of the reactions, and I am sure members will be interested to hear them. That is not surprising given what the Treasurer did. I know that members opposite are asking themselves how she did it. How has this State gone from having the worst economy to having the best economy in the country, improved services, built more infrastructure, and turned deficits into surpluses? How did the Government do it? They are sitting around trying to work it out and, Madam Speaker, as you can see, they have no idea. But the good news for the people of this State is that that is exactly what we are delivering.

We are delivering more infrastructure and more services, debt is coming down, the bottom line is getting better and we are putting it to work for the people of this State. We are proud to be doing it. If they get down to the detail of the economic forecast, they will see that New South Wales is expected to lead the nation in economic growth over the next few years. That is what they should be proud of, because we are certainly proud of it. I only know there is a group of people over there who seem to want to cheer every time there is any form of bad news in the New South Wales economy. We are actually backing in the economy and the people of New South Wales. I will read some of the responses to the budget. The *Sydney Morning Herald* said:

Voters can feel pleased about having returned the finance-savvy Coalition to power three months ago.

I think that is a good endorsement.

As far as what is within their control, the Premier and Ms Berejiklian have done much of the hard work of budget repair.

The *Daily Telegraph* said:

Yesterday's NSW Budget provided the strongest proof yet that the Coalition government's strategies are correct. By prudently dealing with debt and budget blowouts at the same time as looking for growth opportunities, the ... government has delivered a bottom line above expectations and ahead of schedule.

Ms Kate Washington: Who saw the Tele supporting you?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Wait for it, member for Port Stephens—you will love this bit:

And the great news is that the best is yet to come.

That is fantastic. David Uren, a respected commentator, said:

Australians everywhere can draw hope from the NSW budget.

Australians across the nation can draw hope from the New South Wales budget. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia said:

NSW shows other jurisdictions what a good infrastructure government looks like. It provides the case study for other states wanting better infrastructure and economic growth.

I think that everyone across New South Wales yesterday when the Treasurer, Gladys Berejiklian, rose to her feet to deliver that budget would have been very proud to see a simple message delivered to the rest of the country: New South Wales is back. It is back because we are leading the nation economically, we are seeking jobs across the country, we have the highest business confidence—they are employing and investing—and the infrastructure program that we have outlined is once in a generation. We remember the plans of those opposite, whether in Newcastle or in Wollongong. There were two key projects they did not want. They were very happy not to revitalise the city. In Wollongong, they did not want the Albion Park Rail bypass—

Mr Gareth Ward: It was Shellharbour.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Shellharbour did not want it. Well, we are very proud to deliver it, as we are proud to deliver every piece of infrastructure across this State. It will be very different in the next four years on the back of this plan. We are proud to deliver it. We are proud of what the Treasurer outlined yesterday. Even though the Opposition will not admit it, they are proud as well. We are determined to continue to do everything we can to make this State great.

INFRASTRUCTURE NSW

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. In yesterday's budget speech, the Treasurer confirmed that windfall revenues will only be released to spend on new projects approved by Infrastructure NSW. If Infrastructure NSW has such an important role in approving and monitoring projects, why has the Government cut their budget by 40 per cent?

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask Opposition members not to interject. The Minister has not even started his answer and the member for Londonderry continues to interject. I ask members to cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is incredible to think that the Labor Party of all people would be asking questions about infrastructure, considering that they spent on average \$6 billion in their final four years of government. We are spending over \$10 billion per annum on average. We have a program that is going to deliver \$68.6 billion of infrastructure over the next four years. That does not incorporate the work that is being undertaken as a result of the asset recycling program to do with electricity distribution assets which will generate another \$20 billion for infrastructure.

The bottom line is this Government is incredibly well supported by Infrastructure NSW [INSW] in preparation for the State Infrastructure Strategy. The work that they have done is absolutely incredible. One of the key things in yesterday's budget that excites the community is that this is a Government that is now going to accelerate infrastructure. With many of these projects already advised on by INSW, we are going to get on with the job. It is worth bringing to the House's attention those vital infrastructure projects which are now going to be accelerated—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: We can read the budget to see about the projects. What we want to know is: Why is INSW's budget being cut by 40 per cent?

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Minister is getting around to that.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: As I was saying, if you look at what is being accelerated, of \$590 million of expenditure, \$186 million is in the public transport area including in vital projects such as the Sydney Metro and the like. The one observation I would make for those opposite is that the key project—

Dr Hugh McDermott: It's no wonder they sacked you.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Doesn't the member for Prospect have such a big mouth, Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Indeed he does.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: He is a rude individual who has been here five minutes.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prospect will cease interjecting. I have asked several times.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: There is a great deal of activity over there, but the simple fact of the question was: Why the 40 per cent cut? If everything is so fine and dandy—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member for Canterbury have a point of order? There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is somewhat ironic that Labor is expressing concern about INSW given the fantastic work that they—

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I will highlight a key point in relation to what NSW have been doing. One of the key things that they have been doing is project managing the new Darling Harbour Live Sydney convention centre. I do not know if those opposite have bothered to find out what is going on just to the west of the city, but there are a hell of a lot of cranes on that site. I took the opportunity to go down there and have a look at what is going on at Darling Harbour Live. That project is going to absolutely transform the convention scene in this country. A project managed by NSW is well and truly underway.

NSW will continue to serve the needs of this Government as they have done over the past four years, not only in terms of the independent board advice that has been provided in the development of the State Infrastructure Strategy or the fantastic project management that they have provided with a world-class convention centre. I find it truly remarkable that those opposite would go anywhere near infrastructure, given that they had 16 years in office during which they did not build a thing.

STATE BUDGET AND HEALTH

Dr GEOFF LEE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. How will the record health funding announced in yesterday's budget deliver better health care for the people of New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Parramatta for his question. He and other local members—particularly the member for Mulgoa and the member for Seven Hills—joined me regularly on visits to the hospital to witness the progress of work that was transforming Westmead Hospital. The Westmead campus is indicative of this Government's investment and the power that investment can have in transforming how health care is delivered and how improvements for patients occur.

Yesterday's budget delivered \$72.1 million towards the Westmead Hospital redevelopment, including stage 1B of the car park. It includes \$12.5 million to enhance the paediatric research facility at the Westmead children's hospital, including \$6 million for the paediatric clinical trial centre at the Kids Research Institute, which is the centrepiece of the \$25 million in this year's budget for paediatric research. I will inform members about what people have been saying. Cancer Researcher of the Year, Professor Michelle Haber, said:

This valuable investment into the state's paediatric research capability will enable the Institute to establish its exciting new Personalised Medicine Program.

That is groundbreaking front-line health care that is fantastic for New South Wales patients. It is also welcomed by Professor Chris Cowell from the Kids Research Institute. He said:

The funding announced by the NSW Government is game changer for medical research focused on improving health for children and adolescents in NSW.

These are major steps in a \$900 million plus investment by the Baird Government as it starts the redevelopment of the Westmead Hospital campus. I stress the words "start the redevelopment". It will include \$750 million to upgrade Westmead Hospital, including a new acute services building. It will include \$95 million to expand a number of facilities at the Westmead children's hospital, such as the emergency department, operating theatres and so on. It will include \$72 million to construct a new hospital car park with more than 2,000 spaces.

As I have said previously, if the Government continues to plan the total campus redevelopment over many years, which will involve billions of dollars, it will be the Harvard of the south because it will marry private, public, adult and children's hospitals, two research institutes and three universities. Many clinicians and the local community are working on this project. The work that has started at Westmead is the first major redevelopment since 1974. I know the investment in this year's budget—capital and current—will help local clinicians to improve patient care. It has also been welcomed by Professor Stephen Leeder, the board chairman of Western Sydney Local Health District. He said:

It is wonderful, just brilliant to see money in this Budget for the Westmead Hospital redevelopment, as well as Blacktown Mount Druitt. It has given a huge boost of enthusiasm to the staff and will ultimately be of great benefit to our patients.

In this year's budget the Government has allocated \$30 million to start stage 2 of Blacktown Hospital's major upgrade, which is expected to total more than \$400 million. That is on top of the \$300 million spent on stage 1.

Mr John Robertson: 2021—seven years.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am glad the member for Blacktown has spoken at last. After five years of absolute silence, he said, "I welcome this funding commitment to improve Blacktown Hospital". The member for Blacktown has been silent for a long time. Well done.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The funding is part of the \$1.4 billion investment on infrastructure for this term. Many others have complimented the Government on its investment. The member for Kiama has been outspoken in favour of the Bulli Hospital in the Illawarra, which was also mentioned by Professor Denis King, the board chairman of the Kids Research Institute, who said:

... the significant expansion of Bulli Hospital, which has been a political football for 25 years will do a great deal for the age and community care in the region.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It was also welcomed by the member for Keira, who said:

I'm very pleased that finally after many years we're seeing funding allocated to Bulli Hospital.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am pleased to mention the member for Keira's comment because when Labor was in Government it did nothing for Bulli Hospital and it kept people guessing for many years.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This investment is on top of the \$19.6 billion in recurrent spending, which enable our hospitals to employ an extra 980 clinical staff—nurses, doctors, allied health professionals and others. It will provide extra patient care such as 90,000 emergency department attendances, 40,000 emergency admissions, and an extra 3,100 surgeries. This investment has been welcomed by many groups, including the Australian Medical Association [AMA], which has said that the improvements reflect the hard work of the clinicians and the investment that the New South Wales Government has made in the whole-of-hospital program. But not everyone likes the AMA. Yesterday the ABC reported the Leader of the Opposition as saying the AMA is Australia's most militant union. I will let the AMA know what he thinks of them. Even the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association has welcomed this investment for extra staff and the capital investment in our hospitals.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will talk about the false claims Labor continues to make that \$3 billion has been cut from the Health budget over the past four years. The untruth has been confirmed after a review by ABC Fact Check, which stated, "Mr Foley's claim is incorrect". End of story.

STATE BUDGET AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ms JODIE HARRISON: My question is directed to the Minister for Early Childhood Education. The budget papers show her Government has underspent the early childhood education budget by more than \$310 million over the past three years. Will she give an assurance to this House and parents across New South Wales that the 2015-16 allocation will be spent in full, delivering the maximum number of preschool places possible for the community?

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I congratulate the shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education on her promotion to the front bench. I note she has distributed a media release following the budget. One can assume that she has read the budget, which is a start.

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

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I am sorry that when the shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education distributed her media release she had not been provided with all the information. I am pleased that I am now able to put the facts on the table. I will refer to the media release distributed by the shadow Minister for Early Childhood Education because it provides some interesting information. I refer to her figures. She says that in 2013-14 the actual spend on early childhood education was \$236.8 million.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is directly answering the question. Opposition members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Wollongong to order for the first time. The Minister has the call.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: According to the shadow Minister's media release, in 2014-15 the actual spend by the Coalition on early childhood education was \$262.9 million. That is an increase. What she did not mention in the media release, which I am sure members will be interested to hear, is what was spent in 2010-11. The Coalition was not in Government then.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has been entirely relevant. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The member should resume her seat. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the third time. I have asked her three times to resume her seat.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I am concerned that I am going to run out of time. I have just been advised that the Minister responsible for early childhood education in 2010-11 was the member for Canterbury.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Minister. I will wait until the House comes to order. Government members will come to order.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was not about the 2010-11 period.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I think the member for Maroubra was the Minister for Finance at the time. In 2010-11, the spend on early childhood education was \$210 million. In 2014-15 the spend was \$262.9 million. They were the figures in the member's media release. I am glad the Opposition has asked me this question, because over the past three years the spend on early childhood education services by this Government increased by 15.4 per cent. In fact, every spend on early childhood education under the Coalition Government has been higher than Labor's last budget. As the first early childhood education Minister in this State, I am pleased that we have seen a budget that is \$85 million higher than last year's expenditure. [*Time expired.*]

STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development. How is the budget building infrastructure and supporting regional economies?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I thank the member for Cootamundra for her fantastic question. Her question highlights that yesterday the Treasurer handed down a fantastic budget for New South Wales. The member for Cootamundra is also the Parliamentary Secretary for Southern New South Wales, and this budget delivers in spades for roads, health and education in southern New South Wales, which are the cornerstone infrastructure builds required for strong regional communities. We could not have a stronger advocate for regional communities than the member for Cootamundra. She was born and bred in the region and has run a business in that region. In this place she still represents regional communities.

When one looks across the different portfolios and Ministries of this Government one sees that the budget provided significant investment and infrastructure throughout regional New South Wales. The budget delivered a continuing \$77 million to the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital redevelopment. The budget delivered \$3.3 million to finalise the relocation of the Eurobodalla renal dialysis and oncology clinics and more than \$137 million on southern roads including—in my own patch of Queanbeyan—\$9 million towards the commencement and construction of the Ellerton Drive extension to provide the people of Queanbeyan with

traffic relief via a bypass of the CBD as Queanbeyan continues to grow. A number of funding and infrastructure announcements have been made about schools across the south of New South Wales, including Jindabyne Central School and Bombala Public School in my electorate.

Some significant announcements have also been made with respect to TAFE. Yesterday's budget delivered for regional New South Wales, with refurbishments to the electrotechnology, automotive, metal fabrication, health and aged care, hair and beauty, and children services training facilities at the Young campus of the Riverina Institute in the electorate of the member for Cootamundra. The New South Wales budget delivers exactly what this Government is all about—providing jobs of the future, building infrastructure and delivering services across regional New South Wales. The outstanding effort by our Treasurer to deliver this budget for all the people of New South Wales has been recognised by many stakeholders in key industry groups. I have in front of me a copy of the comments made by the New South Wales Business Chamber, which read:

More than \$40 million has been set aside to grow regional tourism, which is welcome news as regional towns rely heavily on visitors to keep their towns thriving.

New South Wales Farmers said:

NSW Farmers welcomed the state budget today which commits to delivering significant funding for the regions as part of a record spend on infrastructure across the state.

The Australian Industry Group said:

AI Group commends the Government's commitment to a strong infrastructure program which is critical to improving productivity and enhancing the competitiveness of the NSW economy.

The good news for regional New South Wales keeps on coming. Last week I joined the member for Port Macquarie, the Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, at Port Macquarie airport to announce the next stage of the \$110 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund. For the benefit of the Sydney Labor Party, I remind them that they can fly into regional New South Wales, not just over it. The announcement of the \$110 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund was about ensuring that regional airports had the capacity and infrastructure to attract air services and because we know how important transport connectivity is for regional tourism and, most importantly, for businesses. Transport is also important for connecting communities with Sydney and metropolitan areas.

A regular air service can mean a lot of things to a regional community. It provides a vital transport service for residents and businesses, and easier access to medical specialists. It attracts business investment, which is key to enabling regional communities to thrive and survive: Regional communities need private investment through small businesses and the private sector. Regular air services provide a safe and easy option for families to travel in and out of their regions. Within the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, \$95 million has now been reserved for regional airport upgrades. Members on this side of the Chamber know how important that is. Members on the other side may not realise how important it is because they never fly to regional areas. Government members compare it to Labor's dismal investment in regional New South Wales. Labor does not understand the importance of regional development.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Tourism in New South Wales is performing extremely well under the leadership of this Government—Premier Mike Baird and Deputy Premier Troy Grant—because there has been an injection of \$9 billion into our regional economies each year. While more than half of the international tourists visiting Australia arrive at Sydney Airport, only 20 per cent travel to regional New South Wales. By improving capacity at our airports in the regions, and by improving and investing in infrastructure we believe that those projects will bring untapped potential to regional New South Wales.

The projects that were submitted and short-listed include airports in Lismore, Broken Hill, Merimbula, Parkes and Narrandera. Because the Government recognises the importance of the tourism product diversity we also have reserved \$5 million for a pilot program of rail trails in the Albury electorate between Tumbarumba and Rosewood. The Government is searching for opportunities to invest in rail tourism products, and rail trails are part of that plan. The Government's small business package includes the jobs incentives plan, which provides grants worth \$2,000 to small businesses. This is an investment in the private sector that is important to regional communities not just surviving, but thriving. That is why this Government is committed to regional

New South Wales and why regional communities are front and centre in the focus of this Government. Regional New South Wales is represented by many Government members, including Ministers in the New South Wales Cabinet.

STATE BUDGET AND SWANSEA ELECTORATE PROJECTS

Ms YASMIN CATLEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. There are 21,800 people who are out of work in the Hunter and on the Central Coast. How does she justify Swansea receiving absolutely nothing—not a cent—for new projects in her budget?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has the call and will be heard in silence. Other members will cease interjecting. The member for Swansea has asked the question and I am sure she will be interested in the answer. Members will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Swansea for her question and appreciate that she asked the question on behalf of her community, but I emphasise that this budget delivers more than previously provided for health care, education and infrastructure, including in the Swansea electorate.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that this is not an argument.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: But what happened, before the member for Swansea was elected to Parliament, when Labor members occupied the Government benches and sat on their hands? In the past 40 out of 48 months of the previous Labor Government, the unemployment rate was higher than the national average.

The SPEAKER: Order! The comments made by the member for Keira are inappropriate. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. He will address members by their correct titles.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Since the election, for 18 out of 19 months New South Wales has had more employment than any other State. If the member for Swansea wants to ask this Government about jobs, I say to her and to the shadow Treasurer: Why did they oppose the Government's Jobs Action Plan when it came before the Parliament? Why did they oppose the Government's legislation to create more jobs? I point out to the member for Swansea and every other new Labor member that Labor claimed to have spent \$6 billion on infrastructure. Does the member for Swansea want to hear the answer?

Ms Linda Burney: No.

The SPEAKER: Opposition members never do.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear the answer. Labor claims to have spent \$6 billion on infrastructure across New South Wales.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Swansea can take her point of order from where she is seated.

Ms Yasmin Catley: I prefer to take it at the centre table.

The SPEAKER: I am sure you do. Of course you do.

Ms Yasmin Catley: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I asked specifically about the electorate of Swansea that I represent.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is remaining relevant to the question. I cannot require the Minister to be specific. Opposition members will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When Labor was in government, Labor members claimed to have spent billions every year on infrastructure, but they have nothing to show for it. Because of our policies and our infrastructure agenda, we are building things in the Hunter and in Swansea to create jobs.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Opposition members should be hanging their heads in shame. If it were not for our Government, this year's budget would not have delivered an extra 26 per cent increase for Health since Labor was in government. Is the member for Swansea suggesting that no-one in her electorate uses a hospital?

Ms Yasmin Catley: I am asking you about jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease shouting. This is not a debate.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate the member for Swansea asked that question, but she assumes that nobody in her electorate uses a hospital or sends their children to public schools.

Mr David Harris: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I point out to the member for Wyong that I have ruled on the point of order related to relevance. I do not intend to rule on that point again. Is the member for Wyong taking a different point of order?

Mr David Harris: I am.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister remains relevant.

Mr David Harris: The Minister is misleading the House because the people of Swansea use both.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Wyong knows that.

Mr David Harris: I do know that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong has been here long enough to know that—or he did before he left and came back. The member for Wyong will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Swansea assumes that nobody in her electorate uses a hospital and nobody in her electorate sends their child to a public school.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will be ejected from the Chamber if they continue to shout at the Minister. I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Apparently no-one in the member for Swansea's electorate drives on roads in the Hunter.

Ms Yasmin Catley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I asked a question about new projects in Swansea.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The member for Swansea will resume her seat and will cease shouting. I call the member for Swansea to order for the first time. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The reality is that the constituents of the member for Swansea have a much better future because of the Liberal-Nationals Government. If it were not for this Government's investment in health, hospitals and roads, her constituents would not be as well off as they are. Because of this Government's efforts, the constituents of the member for Swansea are much better off.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask Opposition members, particularly the member for Prospect, not to use those words in Parliament. He can direct those types of words to me, as he did a couple of weeks ago, but not to the Minister. I would appreciate that.

Dr Hugh McDermott: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: It is a pleasure, as always.

STATE BUDGET AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Social Housing.

Ms Linda Burney: Oh goody.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is already on three calls to order. The next time she interjects, she will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms Linda Burney: I was being nice to him.

The SPEAKER: Order! In that case, the member for Canterbury will revert to two calls to order for being nice, which is a rarity.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: How is the budget providing support to the most vulnerable members in our community?

[Interruption]

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It does not surprise me to hear that sigh from members of the Labor Party, who did absolutely nothing. I want our audience to know that for 16 years of Labor government there was insufficient funding for homeless people, housing, children in out-of-home care, affordable housing and Aboriginal housing.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I used to think I had approximately 99 problems with the former Labor Government.

Mr David Harris: It was called being the Attorney General.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I missed what the member for Wyong said, and I missed him when he was away—when he disappeared for a few years.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time and direct him not to respond. The member for Rockdale and the member for Kogarah will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: When Labor was in government, I really did think I had 99 problems, but I have to say, in the words of Jay-Z, that while I have 99 problems, a budget "ain't one".

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Does the member for Keira wish to take a point of order?

Mr Ryan Park: No. They in the corner know what I am talking about.

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member for Keira wish to take a point order?

Mr Ryan Park: No, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! Why did he stand up? I was looking forward to hearing from the member for Keira. He is usually so pleasant.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I should thank the member for Mulgoa because, for the information of people in the gallery, the member for Mulgoa is the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth Affairs and Homelessness. She

is working with me to ensure that we reverse many of the shortcomings of 16 years of the former Labor Government. We have been working very hard. The member for Mulgoa has visited with me on a number of occasions.

Mr David Harris: Sorry about that, Tanya.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Opposition is a noisy lot. I wish it had been as active when it was in government as it is today because they might have had a chance of still being in government. The member for Mulgoa and I have been talking to the community. We have visited many different areas. In the few weeks that I have been the Minister I have visited Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Coniston, Moree, St Marys, and the Tweed. We have been travelling around the State, which the former Labor Government never did. Out of that has come the clear message that much more work is still to be done. This budget delivers money. Have we delivered in this budget for Family and Community Services [FACS]? Have we delivered the same as last year?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Have we delivered perhaps the consumer price index increase?

Government members: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: This time we have delivered three times the amount of the consumer price index increase. We have delivered a 7 per cent increase in the FACS budget—\$6.1 billion.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Members opposite should spend some time on the frontline with community services and FACS workers and find out what they think about how Labor failed them for 16 years.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Members opposite have no interest in social housing, the homeless and people in out-of-home care. They simply want to make a racket because they know that the Baird Government is delivering, and is continuing to deliver, for the most vulnerable people in the community.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Some \$6.1 billion is allocated in the budget for FACS. Of that, \$1 billion is for social housing services and homelessness. A few weeks ago I was talking to various people on the street. Many of them are looking forward to new opportunities.

[Interruption]

Members opposite are noisy. They have no interest.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Prospect will come to order. Opposition members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time. I call the member for Prospect to order for the third time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: While I am talking about helping the vulnerable, unfortunately Labor members, who claim to represent the vulnerable, are rabbiting on.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Of the \$1 billion allocated for social housing, \$182 million will be dedicated to funding specialist homelessness services.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It is a measure of this Government that we are prepared to achieve much more for the homeless of this State.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: People are homeless for a variety of reasons. They can be homeless because of mental health issues, disability issues or addiction. They need an entire response. They do not need a single offer of housing; they need a complete package. The Government is committed to ensuring that it provides a wraparound service to help the homeless and provide an opportunity for each homeless person to receive the services that are needed. There are many opportunities—

Ms Tania Mihailuk: How much has been allocated for housing and homelessness?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The shadow Minister asked how much has been allocated for housing and homelessness. I said \$1 billion and \$182 million for homelessness.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We are spending 45 per cent more than the lousy, noisy Labor members opposite. We are spending 45 per cent more than Labor ever spent. Yesterday's budget also delivers funding for children in out-of-home care. That is another \$200 million over the next four years. We will make a difference. The Shelter organisation recognised that the Government is spending more to support new housing supply. Andrew McCallum of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies said that it is encouraging to see the safety and wellbeing of children and young people placed high on the Baird Government's agenda. We are doing what Labor failed to do. We will make a difference for the vulnerable in our community.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REPORT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is directed to the Attorney General. The Human Rights Commission report on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex rights identified a number of areas that New South Wales can fix. How will the Government respond to that report?

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I thank the member for Sydney for his question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: Everyone in this House will agree that our community's diversity makes us stronger. We need to open our hearts and minds to our neighbours. Today the member for Sydney is reminding us to do that. Earlier this month the Human Rights Commission released its report on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Intersex, which made it clear that people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex [LGBTI] face significant challenges not only in New South Wales but also in Australia and across the world—challenges such as bullying, harassment, isolation and being marginalised in our communities. It was disarming that 91 per cent of respondents to the survey written up in the report said that they knew someone who had experienced things—harassment, intimidation or violence—on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

Last year, as Minister for Family and Community Services, I visited Twenty10, an organisation in the inner city with which the member for Sydney is probably familiar. The New South Wales Government funds that service to deliver specialist services to help vulnerable LGBTI youth. When I was there I heard firsthand from young people about the issues of bullying and harassment, their vulnerability and how that leads to mental health issues, and the serious impact it has on their general wellbeing. That was a disarming time; it exposed to me the hard edge of harassment and intimidation and the impacts of that on young people in our local community.

But we can take heart. The report makes it clear that change is happening because of events such as rugby's Bingham Cup, which I was proud to support as the then Minister for Sport and Recreation and as the local member for Vacluse. It was more than a great sporting event because as a result of that all the major sporting codes came together to sign a protocol around inclusion. What a great outcome from that event. The member for Sydney and the member for Coogee were part of that. Such events will leave a legacy and help us work together to assist the people I know the member for Sydney is most concerned about.

Indeed, stories like that of Catherine or Cate McGregor should remind us all that while challenges remain for the LGBTI community they are not insurmountable. Her journey from Malcolm McGregor, working in that tough world of the military, to Cate is one of extraordinary inspiration for all of us. This House has done some good work. Last year we took action and we righted past wrongs by passing legislation to extinguish the historical criminal records for those who were found guilty of consensual same-sex activity. I acknowledge the efforts of the member for Coogee and the member for Sydney to bring justice to those who had been denied it for a long time. I strive to treat people in my life on the basis of the content of their character, not their race, gender, religion or sex. I bring those views, those principles, to my role as Attorney General.

I strongly support the principle that justice should be blind. Under the leadership of Premier Baird, the Government is compassionate, tolerant and inclusive, and our budget demonstrates that amply. We are committed to ensuring that everyone in New South Wales is treated equally and fairly under the law. We are determined to help people in need. As the Premier said last year in this Chamber, "Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community can continue to have the Government as a great supporter." The member for Sydney has that commitment. I welcome the fact that the Human Rights Commission report again puts a clear focus on the challenges faced by people. The Government will closely review this report, and I as Attorney General will work to ensure that all members of our community, especially the ones that the member for Sydney has identified, will have justice that is fair and equal.

STATE BUDGET AND EDUCATION

Mrs MELINDA PAVEY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the budget delivering better education services and infrastructure for communities across New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering better education services and infrastructure through a record budget for Education in New South Wales. The centrepiece of the Education budget is our commitment to Gonski. New South Wales was the first State to sign up for the Gonski reforms and in yesterday's budget the Treasurer reaffirmed the \$500 million of additional funding through Gonski funding next year. That is a great commitment that will make a big difference to the classrooms of all schools in New South Wales, not just public schools, and particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. I was disappointed to read on the front page of the *Australian* today the headline "Shorten backs off Gonski funding." It is disappointing that Bill Shorten, the temporary leader of the Federal Opposition, is backing away from this funding.

Mr Clayton Barr: Why don't you call your mates in Canberra?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I note the interjection of the member for Cessnock. I know that a lot has been said about the budget but I want to tell members a funny story about it. The receptionist in the Treasurer's office told me that the member for Cessnock, the shadow Minister for Finance, requested another copy of the budget because the copy the member for Cessnock had was upside down.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: On top of the Gonski funding is our capital works contribution. I was pleased to be in the electorate of Camden last week to announce that this Government will make a commitment of \$50 million over four years to low-fee non-government schools to assist with capital requirements. Whilst private schools are under substantial enrolment pressures and therefore have to call on their capital budgets, the same applies to non-government schools. I note comments from the shadow Minister for Education when that announcement was made but I cannot find the relevant newspaper clipping. The shadow Minister said that we need at least \$50 million in funding for non-government schools. I say no to at least the same funding: This Government has put in substantially more than \$50 million. I know things were complicated prior to the election, but those opposite might have heard about the leasing of electricity poles and wires.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: It was more, not the same.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have found the newspaper clipping, although there is so much material that it makes it hard to find what one is looking for. I need a big folder for all the silly things said by those opposite over the years. This Government will contribute \$1 billion from the poles and wires transaction to public schools to fund capital requirements. On the ABC news the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Linda Burney,

said the funding was welcome but there should be a similar boost to public school capital works programs. I am happy to table this clipping. We will spend substantially more just from the poles and wires transaction and that is not yet in the budget. On top of that is the \$450 million of capital provided to government schools.

I was in the Camden electorate this morning to announce that this Government is spending more than \$10 million rebuilding the former Hope Christian School. The school went into administration and we bought it. We are redeveloping the school as a facility for children with specific needs. We were at the King Park Public School a week or so ago, where we have committed \$30 million to build a new primary school.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have a long list of schools benefiting from our commitment to education, including Bella Vista Public School and Arthur Phillip High School. We are committed to building an inner city high school and there are projects in Tamworth and in other electorates. An earlier question was about what is being spent in the Hunter. The Hunter Sports High School has been allocated about \$30 million, whereas Labor ignored this school and others in the Hunter for 16 years and took this area for granted. Other schools in the Hunter to benefit are the Hunter School of the Performing Arts and Bolwarra Public School. There is about \$15 million for Rutherford High School.

Ms Kate Washington: What about Medowie High School, Minister?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong and the member for Port Stephens will come to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I know that the member for Port Stephens is concerned about the number of projects in her electorate but let me tell her why she has not been successful. She is not a very good local member; it is as simple as that. If the member for Port Stephens were more effective—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Wagga Wagga got a brand new hospital because he is an effective local member. The member for Dubbo is now the Deputy Premier and look at what has been built in his electorate.

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

Ms Jodie Harrison: Point of order: The Minister referred directly to a member of the House and he is supposed to address all members appropriately.

The SPEAKER: Order! Did anybody take offence? Do you want that comment withdrawn? There is no point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Port Stephens is not an effective local member. [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.27 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing Orders: Order of Business

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [3.27 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended:

(1) At this sitting to:

- (a) Permit the consideration, in order given, of both notices of motions accorded priority at this sitting with the following speaking times:
 - (i) mover—5 minutes;
 - (ii) member next speaking—5 minutes;
 - (iii) two other members—3 minutes each; and
 - (iv) reply—3 minutes.

- (b) Provide for the following routine of business after the conclusion of the motions accorded priority:
 - (i) government business;
 - (ii) private members' statements;
 - (iii) matter of public importance; and
 - (iv) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.
- (2) On Thursday 25 June 2015 to permit:
 - (a) General business to take precedence of the Address-in-Reply until 1.00 p.m.
 - (b) Following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, the passage through all remaining stages, with the question "That these bills be now read a second time" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail on the bills.
 - (c) A member, immediately following the passage of the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, to move the motion "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2015-2016".
 - (d) After the member has moved "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and Related Papers for 2015-2016":
 - (i) the debate is to be adjourned without motion moved;
 - (ii) the resumption of the debate is to be set down as an order of the day for a later time; and
 - (iii) the mover may speak to the motion at a later time prior to their right of reply.

This is a sensible motion to suspend standing orders. Members are about to debate two motions, one of which asks the House to support the budget, which drives investment in regional New South Wales. I am sure the member for Cessnock will support that motion. The second motion, which has been proposed by the member for Sydney, deals with same-sex marriage. I would be surprised if members opposite felt the need to amend that motion because it is sensible. Debate on the motion has been delayed for a number of weeks, and I thank the member for Sydney for his patience. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we allow the motion to be debated this afternoon. I reiterate that the convention of suspending standing orders to deal with the passage of the budget bills has been observed for many years. Of course, members opposite were in government for 16 long years and they are well aware of that. I hope they see fit to support this sensible motion.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [3.31 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (1) (a) with a view to inserting instead:

- "(a) Permit the consideration of three notices of motions accorded priority given already by the members for Orange and Sydney, as well as a motion to be moved by the member for Wyong in respect of cuts to TAFE, at this sitting with the following speaking times:
 - (i) mover—5 minutes;
 - (ii) member next speaking—5 minutes;
 - (iii) two other members—3 minutes each; and
 - (iv) reply—3 minutes."

I acknowledge that the motions dealing with the budget driving regional investment and same-sex marriage address important topics. However, today is National TAFE Day. It is important that TAFE is recognised across the State because it plays a vital role in all our communities. It is sad that this Government does not want to allow the House to debate the impact that the budget will have on TAFE. New statistics reveal the true impact of the Government's damaging TAFE cuts. The proportion of young school leavers studying or in a job is declining and we have the lowest level of apprenticeships completed since 2010.

The latest Department of Education and Communities annual report reveals that the percentage of school leavers aged 15 to 19 years participating in education, training or employment has reached a three-year low of 69.4 per cent, which is well short of the Government's 90 per cent target. We now have more young people not in school, not studying and not working. The Baird Government is gutting TAFE and providing no alternatives for school leavers. We are in the midst of a youth unemployment crisis, particularly in regional

areas, but the Liberals are doing nothing to help young people to get a job. Instead, this Government has locked them out and continues to lock them out of getting a TAFE qualification. The number of young people completing apprenticeships and traineeships has dropped to its lowest level since 2010.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: It is clear that the member is debating his motion. He should be speaking to the motion to suspend standing orders. He is making untrue claims when he should be sticking to the matter before the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Wyong will address the motion moved by the Minister to suspend standing and sessional orders.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I am addressing my amendment and pointing out why the House should support it. The budget indicates that enrolments in TAFE are down by more than 43,000 since the introduction of Smart and Skilled this year, and more than 80,000 fewer students are enrolled in TAFE now than there were in 2012. In addition, there are 11,500 fewer students with disabilities studying than there were in 2012.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: It is clear that the member is now flouting your ruling, Madam Speaker. He is moving well and truly beyond the reasons members should support his amendment to my motion. He is now debating his proposed motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I must agree with the Minister. The member for Wyong said that he was referring to his amendment. However, his amendment proposes to delete words from the Minister's motion. I uphold the point of order and ask the member to return to the leave of the Minister's motion, which calls on the House to suspend standing and sessional orders.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: I need to be able to explain my motion to do that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand, and I am trying to allow a little latitude.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: It is disappointing that on National TAFE Day, which is being recognised across the State, the Government does not want to talk about what it is doing to the TAFE sector across the State and the impact that its policies are having on people with disabilities, Aboriginal students and older people trying to retrain.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [3.36 p.m.]: The Government will not accept the amendment because funding for the vocational education and training sector was increased by 8 per cent in yesterday's budget. The vocational education and training budget is now \$2.3 billion. This Government is dedicated to TAFE and to the vocational education and training sector. It is ensuring that we drive the State economy so that it retains its number one national ranking. I remind the House that this State's economy was ranked eighth when members opposite were in government.

The Government will not support the amendment because we already have two sensible motions before the House. Members opposite want to play games and they are not prepared to allow the House to debate motions about marriage equality and the importance of the State budget to regional New South Wales. It is obvious that they are not interested in ensuring that this House operates efficiently and effectively. If members opposite do not like the motion they can vote against it. They can vote against investment in regional New South Wales and against the very sensible motion that has been proposed by the member for Sydney. We know that the Leader of the Opposition is confused about this topic, and I would hate members opposite to send a confusing message from this place. I know that they are tired because they stayed up last night to watch *The Killing Season*.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama will come to order or he will find himself removed from the Chamber.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76. The Minister argued that the member for Wyong was straying from the leave of the motion. *The Killing Season* has nothing to do with the motion, nor has his ridiculous diatribe.

The SPEAKER: Order! The point of order is upheld. The Minister will return to the motion.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: As I said, *The Killing Season* last night related to the final week before the winter recess. I know that the member for Maroubra would love to see the killing season take place here before the winter recess. I urge members opposite to consider the motion that they are seeking to amend. They are seeking to amend a very important motion which relates to marriage equality. On behalf of the Government, I am not prepared to allow the Opposition to amend a sensible motion to suspend standing and sessional orders.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 49

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

Noes, 34

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Mr Dib
Dr Lee	Ms Doyle
Mr Perrottet	Mr Foley
Mr Roberts	Mr Mehan

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the motion of the member for Bega be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I welcome to the public gallery this afternoon Declan O'Connor. Declan, a guest of the member for Hornsby, is a great Rabbitohs supporter.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING**Chair and Deputy Chair**

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2), I advise the House that on 24 June 2015 Glenn Edward Brookes was elected Chair and Mark Joseph Coure was elected Deputy Chair of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning.

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**.

WestConnex

Petition requesting the Government to halt the tender and construction processes for WestConnex, initiate a parliamentary inquiry into the project and release its full business case, received from **Ms Jenny Leong**.

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**.

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

Fox Control

Petition requesting the introduction of a fox bounty to protect the ecology and environment of New South Wales, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Reordering of General Business**

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.50 p.m.]: I move:

That general business notice of motion (general notice) No. 100 have precedence on Thursday 25 June 2015.

This motion relates to a dear friend of Australia, New South Wales, the New South Wales Parliament and many parliamentarians who serve here. I refer to Dr William Chiu, JP, life senior honorary chairman and founding

chairman of the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China. Dr Chiu is also an honorary life member of the New South Wales Parliament Asia Pacific Friendship Group. Many members on both sides of this House who are members of the New South Wales Parliament Asia Pacific Friendship Group wish to have the opportunity to make some remarks on the passing of a wonderful humanitarian and philanthropist.

Dr Chiu received an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Western Sydney, which was an honour given to him because of his tireless work to promote education through peaceful means and, importantly, through funds that he raised to provide scholarships and support universities. He supported a number of universities and raised funds for many charities. Members on both sides of the House have been the beneficiaries of his friendship. He was a wonderful friend. He was short in stature but a giant of a man on the international stage.

Dr Chiu worked tirelessly for the peaceful reunification of China. Along his journey he gathered many friends, who attended a memorial service at Town Hall last Sunday. I attended the service with many other members of Parliament. Not many members had an opportunity to speak, but I was able to make some remarks. I ask members to support the reordering of this important motion so that it takes precedence tomorrow to enable all members who remember Dr Chiu with fondness to record in *Hansard* their remarks, condolences and respect for a man who gave his life to humanitarian causes in New South Wales and extended his friendship to parliamentarians. I commend this motion to the House and again ask members to support the reordering of this important motion so that we can pay our respects before the winter recess.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATE BUDGET

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.54 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports a budget that drives investment in regional New South Wales by providing better front-line services and critical infrastructure for the regions.

I move this motion because we have a wonderful story to tell of growth and investment across regional New South Wales, which, as the dashing young member for Northern Tablelands knows, is being driven by the State budget. The story must be told about new hospitals, new schools, new roads, water security projects, better transport links and new police stations across country New South Wales. The centrepiece of this budget is a record \$68.6 billion investment in infrastructure across the State with spending in regional New South Wales at an all-time high. This is a record budget for New South Wales and the regions. Regional New South Wales is finally back after being in the wilderness for 16 years under Labor. Its resurgence is being seen in road and transport infrastructure. The State is about to enter a golden age of road building and transport initiatives. Over the next four years, the infrastructure program will allocate \$38 billion to roads and transport.

Ms Noreen Hay: You did nothing in the last four.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The members on the other side are all very negative, which is unfortunate. You are all strong on endorsing racist union campaigns during the election but you are weak on supporting regional New South Wales.

Ms Noreen Hay: No-one cares what you think. Trust you to raise that.

Ms Jenny Aitchison: How do you make zero infrastructure—

Mr ANDREW GEE: You endorsed a racist campaign, all right.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Wollongong that she is on two calls to order. The member for Orange will direct his comments through the Chair.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The member for Orange referred to me as a racist. I ask that he withdraw that statement. This Parliament is not a place where he is excused from doing the wrong thing.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I did not hear the comment.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I made no personal comment about the member for Wollongong. I was referring generally to members on that side of the House. I withdraw nothing, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

Ms Noreen Hay: You are a disgrace. You are worse than I thought you were.

Mr ANDREW GEE: You people will wear that racist campaign like a millstone around your necks for years. It is a stain on your party.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The member should not impugn the reputation of members on this side of the House by calling them racists. No matter which side of politics, it is not acceptable for a member to use this Chamber for that purpose. The member should withdraw his comment or move a substantive motion so that we can debate racism in this State. I am offended by his remark. He should not be allowed to get away with it just because he is a member of the Government.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I asked the member for Orange to withdraw his comment. The member said he had made a general comment and would not withdraw it. The member for Orange has the call.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. The 2015—

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.57 p.m.]: I move:

That the member for Orange be not further heard.

Question put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 30

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Daley
Ms Finn
Mr Harris
Ms Harrison

Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper
Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Dr McDermott
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns
Mr Parker
Mr Robertson

Ms K. Smith
Ms T. F. Smith
Mr Warren
Ms Washington
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari

Tellers,
Ms Hay
Mr Lalich

Noes, 45

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Brookes
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mr Dominello
Mr Elliott
Mr Evans
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward

Mr Greenwich
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hazzard
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Johnsen
Mr Kean
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mrs Pavey
Ms Petinos
Mr Piccoli
Mr Piper

Mr Provest
Mr Rowell
Mrs Skinner
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Pairs

Mr Dib	Mr Baird
Ms Doyle	Mr Barilaro
Mr Foley	Mr Grant
Mr Mehan	Mr Roberts

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Member for Orange Speaking Time**

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [4.06 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to restore the speaking time of the member for Orange.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.07 p.m.]: This is a repeat of the unedifying spectacle that members suffered through in the last couple of days of a previous sitting week when some members chose to use unedifying, unparliamentary, unwise and obtuse comments.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The motion for the suspension of standing and sessional orders relates to the restoration of speaking time to allow a member to complete his speech, having been gagged by those opposite. It has nothing to do with previous sittings of this House. I ask, Mr Deputy-Speaker, that you make a ruling—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has moved a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders.

Mr Andrew Constance: I have taken a point of order which relates to the suspension of standing and sessional orders. My point of order is that the member for Maroubra is not speaking to the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. The motion relates to restoring the speaking time of the member for Orange so that he can complete his speech.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I ask the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to resume his seat until the House comes to order. Now that the House has come to order, I invite to the lectern the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to state his case.

Mr Andrew Constance: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. My point of order is that we moved for the suspension of standing orders to enable the member for Orange to complete his address to the House in light of an attempt to gag his address.

Ms Linda Burney: Hurry up. Thank God you are not here all the time.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order. I have heard enough of the point of order taken by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure. I will put the question on the motion to suspend standing orders to reinstate the time for the address by the member for Orange.

Mr Michael Daley: I am entitled to speak for five minutes.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra has the call.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: It was a gag motion. You betcha it was a gag motion, Mr Deputy-Speaker. The Opposition does not agree with the member for Orange having his time reinstated, because he was behaving in an unparliamentary fashion. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I put it to you and to every other member of this House that it is never okay to come into this Chamber and accuse another member of being racist. It is never okay to do that, so the Opposition does not accept that his time should be reinstated.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The member for Maroubra is now casting aspersions—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I ask the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to resume his seat. I ask the member for Maroubra also to resume his seat.

Ms Linda Burney: For God's sake be quiet. Can Government members be quiet?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! We will take all day, if we have to.

Mr Michael Daley: Can we stop the clock, Mr Deputy-Speaker?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure wishes to take a point of order.

Ms Noreen Hay: No, he didn't.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! He did. I asked him to resume his seat. I now call the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure to speak to his point of order.

Mr Andrew Constance: My point of order relates to the fact that the member for Maroubra is speaking well and truly beyond the leave of the issues related to my motion for suspension of standing orders, which is before the House.

Mr Michael Daley: Time has expired, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I thank the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for that. That was terrific.

Mr Andrew Constance: Okay. Now I will make my reply.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [4.12 p.m.]: I move:

That the allocation of time for the speech by Mr Michael Daley be restarted because it was scurrilously interfered with by interjections, and members deliberately continued to be noisy to ensure that his time was used up.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: There is already a motion before the House.

Mr Andrew Constance: There is already a motion before the House.

Mr Nick Lalich: Racism is alive and well here today. That's terrific.

Mr Andrew Constance: Put the motion and let's get on with it.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I notice the member for Cabramatta is leading by example. The member for Wollongong must seek the leave of the House to move her motion.

Mr Andrew Fraser: There is already a motion before the House.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I seek leave to move a motion.

Mr Andrew Constance: Leave is not granted.

Leave not granted.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Leave is not granted. I will now put the motion that was moved by the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure.

Question—That the motion be agreed—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

Mr Anderson	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Rowell
Mr Aplin	Mr Hazzard	Mr Sidoti
Mr Ayres	Mr Henskens	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barilaro	Ms Hodgkinson	Ms T. F. Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Mr Johnsen	Mr Stokes
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Taylor
Mr Constance	Ms Leong	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Maguire	Mr Tudehope
Mr Crouch	Mr Marshall	Ms Upton
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Ward
Mr Dominello	Mr O'Dea	Mr Williams
Mr Evans	Mr Parker	Mrs Williams
Mr Fraser	Mrs Pavey	
Mr Gee	Ms Petinos	
Ms Gibbons	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Goward	Mr Piper	Mr Bromhead
Mr Greenwich	Mr Provest	Mr Patterson

Noes, 30

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

Pairs

Mr Baird	Mr Dib
Mr Elliott	Ms Doyle
Mr Grant	Mr Foley
Mr Roberts	Mr Mehan

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.21 p.m.]: Glass jaws. The truth hurts. As the member for Kiama rightly pointed out—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The member for Orange began his contribution with the words "glass jaws". He should be on notice. If he calls us racist we will do everything permitted in the standing orders to shut him up.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREW GEE: As the member for Kiama rightly pointed out, this budget brings home the bacon. Disregard all the noise from the glass jaws opposite, the budget brings home the bacon for regional New South Wales. I seek an extension of time.

Mr Michael Daley: Leave is not granted.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no provision for an extension of time.

Mr Michael Daley: That was a highly productive passage.

Mr ANDREW GEE: You brought it on. [*Time expired.*]

Ms JENNY AITCHISON (Maitland) [4.23 p.m.]: I move:

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

"this House notes that despite a budget surplus, the budget fails to drive investment in regional New South Wales and fails to provide better front-line services and critical infrastructure for the regions."

I have moved that amendment because the budget does not drive investment in regional New South Wales. Yesterday I spoke in this place about the need for a strategic and comprehensive plan to fix the deepening jobs crisis in the Hunter region. What do we see in the Government's budget? It is simply more of the same—lack of action and investment in the regions—that the Coalition displayed during its first term in office. In this budget the Government has still not fully acquitted its commitments to the Maitland electorate from the 2011 election. For more than five years we have been promised the famous lower Hunter regional hospital, but it is still lying on the table. The Maitland railway roundabout project is \$5 million over budget and has not been completed on time. The Government failed to complete promises worth approximately \$100 million during its first term while unemployment doubled in that time. The Government has been sitting on its hands for five years.

I have read the budget papers. The \$47 million worth of promises made in my electorate during the 2015 election campaign—the move to strip money out of the regions—have continued at a glacial pace of change. Of the \$47 million promised in 2015, the Government has committed to spend only \$100,000—a tiny proportion—in my electorate. That is not surprising, given that the Parliamentary Secretary has already threatened not to meet any of the Government's commitments in the Maitland electorate in a classic and disgusting display of taking the bat and ball and going home. Assets from our region will be recycled into the Sydney budget to build infrastructure in Sydney. Where is the money from the sale of the Port of Newcastle? Where is that going?

Talking of ports, ships and things like that, 150 workers at Forgacs in Tomago are going home tonight knowing that they have lost their jobs. The member for Port Stephens has done much to draw attention to the plight of this great company, which builds domestic ships and Sydney ferries. Indeed, the New South Wales Government and Premier Baird have structured the ferry contracts to exclude the local industry. It is a disgrace that a company that has been operating for more than 100 years must sack 150 workers because of a lack of government support. The Government talks about getting things done cheaply. It gets things built overseas; it will not get them built here. Government members have ignored the financial impacts of spending government money in local regions. It has forgotten the multiplier effect of money being spent in their communities. These workers spend money at local shops, they use local services, and they build up the diversity and strength of our regional economy.

We have seen no investment from this Government in clean energy infrastructure in the Hunter. That is a tragedy, given that the Hunter has a fantastic and proud record of commercialising innovation in manufacturing in our community. I draw attention to the Treasurer's inability to answer the question of the member for Swansea today regarding a lack of budget infrastructure projects in her region. The Government has delivered a conservative, do-nothing budget. The Government should read Ross Gittens' report, which referred to the lack of stimulation of our regional economies in the budget. It is a lazy budget. It is a lack of action on infrastructure and investment in the face of a surplus.

Promises totalling \$47 million were made in my electorate during the 2015 election campaign. It is shameful that only \$100,000 will be spent this year. It is a snail's pace. A budget is not a tortoise and a hare scenario. The Government should start spending money in the regions to stimulate the economy. There are 47 million reasons why members opposite must hang their heads in shame. In terms of Maitland, the Government needs to spend the money, and spend it now, and stop moving at such a glacial pace. It is Liberal ideology. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.28 p.m.]: It will come as no surprise to members that I vehemently oppose the amendment moved by the member for Maitland and support the original motion

put eruditely by my colleague the member for Orange. The budget for regional New South Wales is an absolute windfall. We will see development, activity and jobs on an unprecedented scale, and this is just the beginning.

Thanks to the legislation passed through this Parliament only a few weeks ago, we will see in future budgets up to an extra \$6 billion coming into regional New South Wales on top of the millions of dollars of record spending on roads, hospitals, police stations, fire stations, ambulance stations and schools in rural and regional New South Wales. I note that the member for Maitland has left the Chamber. I thought she was passionate about regional New South Wales, but obviously she is not.

This budget provides a record investment of \$4.1 billion in rural and regional roads, an investment of which those opposite could only dream. When they were in government they neglected rural and regional New South Wales. They neglected our road network in rural New South Wales that transports the produce that those in metropolitan electorates enjoy. Under this Government there will be massive investment in the Newell Highway with more bypasses, extra passing lanes and improved pavements. There will be investment in the Pacific Highway, the Cobb Highway, the Silver City Highway, the Oxley Highway and the Mitchell Highway. The Princes Highway will also benefit thanks to the great work of the member for Kiama. The Great Western Highway and the New England Highway will be upgraded. In fact, you name a highway and you see that our important rural road routes are getting the attention they deserve.

There is also massive investment in hospital projects. At the conclusion of this term of government, this Government, representing rural and regional New South Wales, will have initiated, commenced or completed 70 rural and regional hospital redevelopments and expansions—that is, in eight years of government. How many did those opposite achieve in 16 years of government? This Government has started or completed 70 projects in rural and regional New South Wales, but in 16 years of government those opposite achieved fewer than five. That is a shameful record. Those opposite have denied for too long the health facilities the people in Armidale, Inverell, Lismore, Parkes, Forbes, Tamworth, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Byron Bay deserve. We on this side of the House are very proud to deliver what people in rural and regional New South Wales deserve but have been denied by those opposite.

Ms KATHY SMITH (Gosford) [4.32 p.m.]: You bet we have passion about our regions. This budget is an absolute farce. The member for Terrigal is in the Chamber, but for the Central Coast this budget does not have one red cent of new funding. What has Gosford ended up with? Funding of \$30 million for a hospital and that is it. That funding has been projected for a long, long time; it is not new funding. Where is the new funding? Throughout the campaign we were told there would be new infrastructure. Those opposite campaigned on this new infrastructure for the regions and new services for the regions. What is happening?

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Wyong Hospital.

Ms KATHY SMITH: I thank the member for Davidson for bringing up Wyong Hospital. During campaigning, \$200 million was promised for Wyong Hospital. How much is in the budget? It has zilch, nothing. Gosford hospital gets \$30 million out of \$368 million. How many walls will that build? What is it going to do? Those opposite say it is 10 per cent; is that going to be paid off by 2019? Is that going to be built? No, it is not going to be there. Those opposite talk about Service NSW. Woy Woy has a population of 36,000, yet the motor registry, which processes 230 transactions a day, is being closed. Once again, the member for Terrigal has done nothing and has not raised his voice about it. This closure will affect his electorate. People from five suburbs in his electorate have approached me to sign my petition that has 12,000 signatures to date. It will be tabled in this House in August.

People from East Gosford, a blue ribbon area, have been flooding my office with phone calls since receiving my newsletter and asking to sign the petition because they want to support Woy Woy. Services are being cut. Let us talk about infrastructure and railways. The number of carriages on Central Coast trains has been halved. People have to stand on trains when travelling from the Central Coast to the city. Why did the Treasurer, when she was the Minister for Transport, take this action? Why is it not being rectified now? There has been a lot of debate about this, but it is not being addressed. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank members on this side of the House for their contributions to this debate, but I am not so sure about the contributions of those opposite. Listening to the arguments of the member for Maitland was like watching a slow-moving train wreck.

It reminded me of Monty Python's *Life of Brian*: "What did the Romans ever do for us?" That is the way those opposite have approached the budget. Fortunately the *Maitland Mercury* has been kind enough to list in an editorial all the things the Liberal-Nationals Government has done for Maitland, which states:

The state government has not given the Hunter the cold shoulder, despite region's voters having turned against the Coalition at the voting booths less than three months ago.

The 2015-16 state budget, released on Tuesday, contained funding for several key infrastructure projects in the Hunter.

It goes on to say:

Whichever way you look at it, Maitland has not been left empty-handed this time around.

I thank the balanced *Maitland Mercury*. An article in the same edition of the paper has the headline "Maitland remembered in state budget" and it lists all of the great things Maitland received, such as \$19.5 million to continue the New England Highway overpass at Maitland railway station; \$103 million this year to start the Newcastle light rail project; a steel fish cleaning station for the concrete slab and footpath at Queens Wharf Morpeth—I love Morpeth; \$9.9 million to continue planning and site preparation for a new Lower Hunter hospital at Medford; and \$9.35 million to continue the \$20 million upgrade of Rutherford High. The member for Gosford said not a red cent was allocated, but there is also \$5 million for repair and maintenance of the Hunter flood mitigation scheme, including levees and control banks.

There is \$26 million for the Hunter Infrastructure Investment Fund, \$400 million to accelerate infrastructure and population growth areas across New South Wales and \$1.2 million for Tocal Road improvements, which is not too far from my old stamping ground of Largs. That is what the Romans are doing for the people of Maitland and it is wonderful. On top of that there is \$4.3 million to continue the redevelopment of the John Hunter Children's Hospital paediatric intensive care unit, \$1 million to continue the John Hunter Children's Hospital neonatal intensive care unit, and it goes on. This budget delivers for regional New South Wales. I invite members opposite to visit regional New South Wales to find out what the regions are all about and the great things that are happening in them.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 32

Ms Aitchison
Mr Atalla
Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Car
Ms Catley
Mr Chanthivong
Mr Crakanthorp
Mr Daley
Ms Finn
Mr Harris

Ms Harrison
Ms Haylen
Mr Hoenig
Ms Hornery
Mr Kamper
Ms Leong
Mr Lynch
Dr McDermott
Ms McKay
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Minns

Mr Park
Mr Parker
Mr Robertson
Ms K. Smith
Mr Warren
Ms Washington
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari
Tellers,
Ms Hay
Mr Lalich

Noes, 46

Mr Anderson
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Barilaro
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Brookes
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Coure
Mr Crouch
Mrs Davies
Mr Evans
Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward

Mr Greenwich
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Henskens
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humphries
Mr Johnsen
Mr Kean
Mr Maguire
Mr Marshall
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mrs Pavey
Ms Petinos
Mr Piccoli
Mr Piper
Mr Provost

Mr Rowell
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Speakman
Mr Stokes
Mr Taylor
Mr Toole
Mr Tudehope
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Williams
Mrs Williams
Tellers,
Mr Bromhead
Mr Patterson

Pairs

Mr Dib	Mr Baird
Ms Doyle	Mr Grant
Mr Foley	Mr Roberts
Mr Mehan	Mr Perrottet

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.45 p.m.]: Finally we get to talk about love. I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes members of the New South Wales Parliament and the community hold various views on the issue of marriage equality.
- (2) Wishes our Federal colleagues a respectful debate that is tolerant of all views.
- (3) Notes the importance of members of Parliament being free to express their own view and the views of their electorates on this issue.

The vast majority of people in New South Wales and the wider Australian communities have opened their hearts and minds to support the right of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] people to marry the persons they love in the country they love. This is reflected in Crosby Textor polling, which shows that up to 72 per cent of Australians support marriage equality, with the figure rising to 75 per cent in New South Wales. The New South Wales Parliament is home to some of the strongest advocates of marriage equality across the political spectrum. The Hon. Penny Sharpe continues to be one of the most passionate supporters within the Labor Party. The Hon. Don Harwin, President of the Legislative Council was seen to be the first Liberal parliamentarian at a State or Federal level to support marriage equality publicly when he spoke on the Relationships Register Bill in 2010.

The member for Coogee continues to be a strong and effective supporter; the Hon. Trevor Khan was one of the first Nationals members to declare support for reform, and The Greens' Cate Faehrmann successfully passed a motion supporting marriage equality in the upper House in the last Parliament. My predecessor, Clover Moore, was one of the first Australian politicians to support marriage equality, and this Parliament has two members who are in same-sex marriages—that is, me, having married my husband, Victor, in Argentina, and the Hon. Shayne Mallard, who married his husband, Jesper, in Denmark. Recently many of these members of Parliament were joined by the member for Newtown at a rally supporting a marriage-equality free vote in Taylor Square in my electorate, which I emceed. We were also joined by Councillor Christine Forster.

In my experience, this Parliament has always dealt with the issue of marriage equality in a respectful way, as was demonstrated when the Cross Party Marriage Equality Working Group delivered a same-sex marriage bill to the upper House in the last Parliament. That was narrowly defeated. I know that a number of lower House members from all parties wanted to support the legislation if it proceeded to this House. I also acknowledge the former Attorney General, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, who worked with me to get overseas same-sex marriages recognised in the State Relationship Register.

The issue of marriage equality is a live and urgent one for our Federal colleagues, and the debate must be respectful and tolerant of all views. Those opposing reform must cease relying on absurd arguments like it is healthier to smoke than be gay, or arguing that letting same-sex adults marry the person they love is a step towards bestiality.

The challenge for opponents of reform will be to use facts instead of fear. Children are often used by opponents of reform for unfortunate political pointscoring. New South Wales, like many other States, already has same-sex adoption. Children in families headed by same-sex couples deserve the right to have married parents. It is cruel and ignorant to attack same-sex parented families or single parented families. Study after study proves that what is most important to children is a loving and stable environment. Single parents and same-sex parented families can provide such an environment just as much as other couples.

It is important to highlight that advocates of reform have always been respectful of the differing views of religious bodies and have ensured that any proposed legislation does not force members of the clergy to marry a same-sex couple if they do not want to. The international experience for countries who have embraced reform is that marriage's value as a celebration of commitment and love between two adults has improved. Indeed, statistics provided by the United States Census Bureau show that those states that allow same-sex marriage have lower divorce rates than those that do not.

Recently, it was the dying wish of Australian Lee Bransden to marry her same-sex partner, Sandra Yates, in New Zealand. Not everyone can wait for marriage equality, and that is why this reform is urgent. Our Federal colleagues must be given the freedom to vote according to their own values and the views of their electorates on this important issue. In response to my first question to Premier Baird, he stressed the importance of conscience votes and paid tribute to the leadership of former Premier Barry O'Farrell in granting free votes. I call on the Prime Minister to show the same leadership. Many Federal members of Parliament have surveyed their electorates and found strong support for reform amongst their constituents—these include the member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, and the member for Page, Kevin Hogan.

It is estimated that up to 20 members of the Federal Coalition Government are likely to support reform. It is untenable for Coalition members of Parliament like the member for Wentworth, the member for Higgins or the member for Brisbane to say they support reform but cannot vote for it. The Liberal Party says it is the party of individual freedom, and a free vote should be the default position on this issue. The longer this is delayed, the longer we fall behind our closest allies such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. More importantly, we must no longer allow same-sex couples to be treated as second-class citizens and show disrespect to an institution that should be about love, not discrimination. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.50 p.m.]: I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this motion to the House and I commend the House for agreeing to it being heard. I would not have thought this could happen, 10 years ago, in 2005, when a Greens councillor and I moved for Randwick City Council to establish a relationship register along the lines of that of the City of Sydney. There was a bit of outrage around the table. This was going to be the thin edge of the wedge; it was seen as a surreptitious gay marriage debate. Frankly, we had to leave it alone. We put it out to public consultation and not a great deal of interest was shown. My, how far we have come!

In many ways the New South Wales Parliament has led the nation in reform on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning [LGBTIQ] issues, particularly in the last Parliament, but also in the parliaments before that in which we saw issues such as same-sex adoption and equal age of consent being argued vigorously and with great passion. From those who were opposed to such things we have heard, right back to the decriminalisation debate in 1984, that it was the end of the world—that the world as we know it would come to an end. We know that that has not happened.

What I have experienced in my community—and I sense from speaking to representatives around this House that it is the case in many other communities—is that this issue is no longer an issue. We might have Crosby Textor polling that that is the case for three-quarters of the population, but frankly I think most members of the community have moved on and they just want it to happen. They just want to see marriage equality become a reality in this nation. We tried to do it in New South Wales in our previous term in office, which would have been a clunky approach, but we gave it a go anyway. We also indicated to our Federal colleagues in Canberra that we were serious about this, and that governments of all political persuasions need not be afraid. The fact that this issue is not being vigorously discussed in the streets, in the pubs or on social media across Australia is an indication of the fact that the people of Australia are mature, loving and accepting enough to see marriage equality as something they should embrace. It is a matter for individuals to choose who they love and whether or not they wish to marry that person.

Earlier the member for Sydney referred to a number of people. I thank Barry O'Farrell and Mike Baird for the support that they have given us. I also recognise that in previous parliaments Peter Collins, Nick Greiner

and Sir John Gorton were supporters of our community. Those are people who have hero status within the Liberal Party. I believe members from all sides of politics need not be afraid to put up their hands for their communities to afford this right to all people in our great nation. Once again I commend the member for Sydney for moving this motion. I hope this is a respectful debate not only in Parliament but also across our great nation because that is no less than what we would expect.

Ms JENNY LEONG (Newtown) [4.55 p.m.]: I also thank the member for Sydney for bringing this priority motion to the attention of the House. It is encouraging to see a brief moment of unity in the House on this issue of marriage equality, celebrating love in our communities and ending discrimination in our laws. Marriage equality is an important issue. I note the contribution of the member for Coogee in which he said, "I think it is pretty clear that the community has moved on." Perhaps the community was never opposed to this celebration of marriage between two consenting adults who chose to celebrate their love.

Back in the dark days of our laws, there was an amendment that chose to exclude certain people from celebrating their love in the form of marriage. That is a dark and sad period in our history. I hope it is a period on which we can look back and say, "That period is now over, because we can celebrate love and we recognise that all people can have their relationships recognised in the Marriage Act." It is my hope that we see that soon. Sarah Hanson-Young, The Greens senator, said she would like to see a number of marriages as spring is in the air. I think we are all hoping to see something sooner rather than later when it comes to marriage equality.

I recognise the politics of this situation and the reason we are talking about a free vote and calling for a respectful debate. I will touch briefly on both those issues. The Greens do not need a free vote, because to us this is an issue of equality. When it comes to equality we say that every member of Parliament should vote for equality and against discrimination. As representatives of the people our principled position should be not to entrench discrimination but to remove discrimination from our laws. We must consider the damage that having discrimination in our laws can do to individuals who suffer intolerance and abuse in our community.

We must consider the message we send to the schoolyards, to rural and regional communities and to other isolated areas of our community that may not be so tolerant when we say that discrimination is okay in our laws. Members in this place have been able to change their position. Earlier this year we witnessed the immaculate conversion of the Leader of the Opposition on marriage equality. We have seen shifts and changes in people's views, and those views must be encouraged. I hope that in a short time our parliamentary colleagues change their views, support marriage equality and stand up for love in our society.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [4.58 p.m.]: We can feel the love in the room. That is what we are about, not about making things harder for people. It is our job to allow people to have free relationships without being discriminated against. I reiterate the original motion put forward by the member for Sydney:

- (1) Notes members of the New South Wales Parliament and the community hold various views on issues of marriage equality.
- (2) Wishes our Federal colleagues a respectful debate and is tolerant of all views.
- (3) Notes the importance of members of Parliament being free to express their own views and the views of their electorates on this issue.

When I was first elected I met with representatives of church groups in my electorate. The first question that I asked them was, "What do you think about marriage equality?" Surprisingly, in the conservative Heathcote electorate they all said they agreed with it. They have their own issues within their own churches about being able to marry same-sex couples, but all the ministers and reverends agreed that they were open to the idea of marriage equality. In 2015 the people of this State have reached the point where it is time to get on with it. If the conservative people of Heathcote realise and accept that it is time to allow people to do their own thing without interference from Government members or anyone else, we have evolved and we can move forward on this issue. I congratulate the member for Sydney on moving this motion. It is important that we openly discuss this issue in a sedate and mature manner so we have proper recognition of same-sex marriages.

Ms JO HAYLEN (Summer Hill) [5.01 p.m.], by leave: It is my honour to speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Sydney because it deals with an issue that is close to my heart and to the hearts of the people of Summer Hill. In my inaugural speech last month I recorded my support for marriage equality and my impatience for our Federal colleagues to catch up with the community's view on this issue. It is time that our nation's Parliament voted in favour of marriage equality. I am confident that we will see reform soon because the argument has been largely won. The Australian community overwhelmingly supports reforms

that will deliver equal marriage rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community in this country. The Irish referendum was a beautiful display of the worldwide trend that shows support for marriage equality and it is well and truly the view of Australian society.

I congratulate all those members involved in the marriage equality movement across the community and across the political divide, who have campaigned tirelessly to end discrimination. This issue is about discrimination. There are no degrees of discrimination. Discrimination will be maintained in our country as long as there is an Act that denies two people of the same sex who love each other to have their relationship recognised in law. This must be a respectful debate. I recognise that members of this Parliament have differing views and, indeed, members of Federal Parliament have differing views.

I encourage members who have doubts about supporting marriage equality to ask members of their community whether they think their relationships will change if two people of the same sex love each other. It certainly does not change my marriage. I want my gay and lesbian friends, and indeed all members of the LGBTI community in Australia, to have the same right I had. I want them to experience the same joy I did on my wedding day and to have their relationship recognised by law in the community. I am proud that my Federal Labor colleagues have recently consulted with their communities and have publicly committed to support marriage equality. It must be done respectfully and constructively, and I believe we will achieve our goal.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [5.04 p.m.], in reply: I thank the Government for supporting this motion and for allowing it to be debated today. Marriage equality is an issue that is on the national discourse, and rightly so. I thank the member for Coogee for his contribution and for his ongoing support for marriage equality. I also thank the member for Newtown, the member for Heathcote and the member for Summer Hill for their contributions. It is wonderful to see people across the political spectrum supporting marriage equality. I also acknowledge that the Hon. Shayne Mallard has entered the Chamber and, like me, he is a happily married gay man.

I build on the comments made by the member for Summer Hill and acknowledge the people who have been advocating for reform. At the top of that list is Rodney Croome, Tasmanian of the Year, and National Director of Australian Marriage Equality. He has worked hard to promote this reform. It has grown throughout his advocacy so that we are now on the verge of victory. Marriage equality harms no-one, costs nothing and strengthens relationships and families. The longer the Federal Government delays in granting a free vote federally, the further we fall behind our closest allies such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and New Zealand in treating our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex citizens equally. We must stop showing disrespect to the institution of marriage, which is about love and commitment, not discrimination. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS (EMPLOYMENT INCENTIVE) BILL 2015

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

Pursuant to resolution government business proceeded with.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Debate resumed from 27 May 2015.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.07 p.m.]: When debate on this matter was interrupted I was acknowledging honorary historian John Wrigley and honorary medical officer Dr Venkatesan. The community of Camden embraced the Centenary of Anzac event and record numbers attended to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Anzacs. On the day after Anzac Day the Macarthur Lions Club holds the annual Anzac Fun Run at Bicentennial Equestrian Park. Participants run through 200 acres of parklands, which is maintained by wonderful Men's Shed members. They ensure that the course is a long way away from the many snakes that enjoy the park and that it is in pristine shape to make it easier for older competitors to negotiate the hills. The current members of the men's shed, who have an ongoing maintenance schedule for such a vast amount of land, meet on Tuesday and Thursday every week to look after what is considered to be the most precious recreational facility in Macarthur. The men's shed president, Peter Standen, continues to encourage new members.

I thank all the members, who take so much pride in the park: Don Allen, Bob Brown, Neil Burns, Gary Butcher, Stephen Butler, Colin Calver, Luke Cavanagh, Ron Childs, Bryan Coates, Wayne Couley, Jeff Dye, Stan Ellis, Lawrence Farrington, Tony Katon, Neville Kennedy, Phillip Kennedy, Geoff Lees, Les McDonald, John Martinovic, Ron Mayhew, Raymond Monahan, Peter Munns, James Norris, Clem O'Brien, Bob Page, Roger Smith, Ron Taylor, Ken Wallace, Graeme Watson, Robert Wheeler, Garry White, Patrick White, Terry Wilbourn, Alan Withers and Ross Whyllie.

Unfortunately, we were not lucky with the weather, but 500 people still braved the cold and rain to compete, including our oldest competitor, Jock Wylie, who never misses the event. At the age of 89, he managed to complete the five-kilometre run in one hour and 22 minutes. Camden Citizen of the Year and a great mate of mine, Ted Gillroy, was part of the organising committee. All the money raised from the event went to Lifeline Macarthur. I understand the amount raised this year was more than \$6,000.

Lifeline is the only organisation that some people feel comfortable contacting during their darkest times. The co-ordinator of the telephone crisis volunteers is Jacky Moore. Jacky often says that without the volunteers the service provided to the community would not be possible. I was very pleased to present two of her volunteers with the Local Community Service Award. Robyn and Barbara have given over 1,600 hours of service to Lifeline, listening and talking to members of our community when they are at their most vulnerable. I thank the members of the Macarthur Lions organising committee—Ron Gunn, Ted Gillroy, Keith McLeod, Jack Warwick, Stuart Miln and Ian Crowe—for putting together such a successful event.

I also had the opportunity to attend the Anzac ceremony at the Mount Annan Christian College. The college was founded by C3 Church Mount Annan in 1999 and to this day it maintains a very positive relationship with the C3 church. The college and church coexist on the property. The school has gained an outstanding reputation for its first-class education. It was wonderful to see so many students participate in the Anzac service, which was very moving. During the week Mr and Mrs Bird spoke to primary classes at the school about their collection of Army memorabilia. As grandparents, they seize the opportunity to share with the younger students their experiences during the Second World War. I thank principal Nathan Gray, deputy principal Michael Nightingale, head of secondary school Mark Camilleri, head of primary school Debbie Pope and all the other staff and students for an exceptional ceremony.

I also attended the Anzac ceremony at a school that is new to my electorate, Austral Primary School. The commemorative speech was given by Lieutenant-Colonel Lyall Wood, AM, RFD. Lieutenant Wood spoke of John Edmondson, VC. John Hurst Edmondson was born at Wagga Wagga. His parents moved to the Sydney suburb of Liverpool, where he attended Austral Public School and Hurlstone Agricultural High School. He later became a farm worker. On 20 May 1940 he enlisted in the 2/17 Battalion after serving with the 4th Militia Battalion since March 1939 and was promoted to corporal.

After training at Ingleburn and Bathurst, his battalion embarked for the Middle East on 19 October 1940 as reinforcements for the 9th Division. After desert training, his division relieved the 6th Australian Division at Marsa Brega in Cyrenaica on 9 March 1941. On 31 March the German forces under the command of General Erwin Rommel mounted an attack on the Australian and British positions, forcing them to retreat. The 9th Division took up new positions outside the port of Tobruk and on 11 April the now-famous siege began. The Victoria Cross [VC] citation announcement was published in a supplement of the *London Gazette* on 1 July 1941, stating:

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross No. 15705 to Corporal John Hurst Edmondson, Australian Military Forces.

On the night of 13th-14th April, 1941, a party of German infantry broke through the wire defences at Tobruk, and established themselves with at least six machine guns, mortars and two small field pieces. It was decided to attack them with bayonets, and a party consisting of one officer, Corporal Edmondson and five privates, took part in the charge. During the counter-attack Corporal Edmondson was wounded in the neck and stomach but continued to advance under heavy fire and killed one enemy with his bayonet.

[*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The citation continued:

Later, his officer had his bayonet in one of the enemy and was grasped about the legs by him, when another attacked him from behind. He called for help, and Corporal Edmondson, who was some yards away, immediately came to his assistance and in spite of his wounds, killed both of the enemy. This action undoubtedly saved his officer's life.

Shortly after returning from this successful counter-attack, Corporal Edmondson died of his wounds. His actions throughout the operations were outstanding for resolution, leadership and conspicuous bravery. An hour later, 200 German infantrymen attacked the post, forcing the Australians to withdraw, and established a bridgehead in the outer defensive line.

The fierceness of the platoon's defence pressured Rommel into diverting troops from his main attack. The attack failed, with the German tanks being mauled and forced to retreat with heavy casualties. Corporal John Edmondson died of his wounds and is buried in the Tobruk war cemetery. He was the first Australian to receive the Victoria Cross in the war. Edmondson's Victoria Cross was presented to his mother by the Governor-General on 27 September 1941. In 1969 she presented her son's medals and some of his personal belongings to the Australian War Memorial, where they are still on display.

John Edmondson's name is still honoured by the John Edmondson VC rest area at Roses Lagoon on the Remembrance Driveway from Sydney to Canberra; the John Edmondson VC Memorial RSL Club, Liverpool; a plaque in the walk of honour in Baylis Street, Wagga Wagga; the school hall at the Hurlstone Agricultural High School; the high school in the Horningsea Park; Edmondson Park; and Edmondson Street, North Ryde. Edmondson Street in the suburb of Campbell in Canberra, which is situated within 400 metres of the Australian War Memorial, is also named in his honour.

Freemasons' Lodge Victoria Cross No. 928 of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory [UGLNSWACT], which meets in Fairfield, was formed in honour of Corporal J. H. Edmondson, who was posted to Holsworthy Army Barracks, and who was an attending member of Liverpool Lodge. The Edmondson VC Club at ARTC Kapooka, an outer suburb of Wagga Wagga, is also named in his honour. This is a true example of how we must always remember those who have fought for our democracy and freedom. The Australian War Memorial, under director Dr Brendon Nelson, has grown to be one of the first-class war memorials in the world. Combining a shrine, a world-class museum and an extensive archive, the memorial acts as a reminder to all of us to honour and remember the men and women who fought, and continue to fight, for our country.

With the digital age upon us, we have the opportunity to search war records and find out about our loved ones who have served and died. Overseen by the council, the modern memorial has been embraced by the people of Australia and is one of the most visited sights in Canberra. The council consists of chairman Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, AO, RAN, (Ret'd); Air Marshall Geoff Brown, AO; the Hon. Graham Edwards, AM; Peter FitzSimons, AM; Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, AO, CSC, RAN; Dr Allan Hawke, AC; Lieutenant General David Morrison, AO; Major General Paul Stevens, AO, (Ret'd); Ms Gabrielle Trainor; Mr Les Carlyon, AC; Ms Jillian Segal, AM; Mr Kerry Stokes, AC; and Mrs Josephine Stone, AM. All those very distinguished men and women have a passion for what they do.

The memorial offers an array of research and exhibitions, including the poppies adorning the panels of the memorial's Roll of Honour. The poppies have been placed beside the names as a small personal tribute to the memory of a particular person or to any of the thousands of individuals commemorated there. This practice began at the interment of the Unknown Australian Soldier on 11 November 1993. As people waited to lay a single flower by the tomb in the Hall of Memory, they had to queue along the cloisters beside the Roll of Honour. By the end of the day, hundreds of RSL poppies had been pushed into the cracks between the panels bearing the names of the fallen. I am sure all of us in this House today have some special memory of a loved one who fought in a theatre of war. As we spare a thought for those who recently were sent overseas, we must make sure they know how grateful we are.

On Friday my eldest daughter and her classmates will undertake a trip to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. It is such a privilege to be able to visit the memorial. I acknowledge all the people who make the Australian War Memorial so special. For all the men and women who served our country so gallantly and in commemoration of those who passed away while doing so, we as a nation must never forget and never stop expressing our gratitude for their sacrifices. With your indulgence, Mr Acting-Speaker, I mention my other daughter, and how apt it is for the member for Hornsby to be at the centre table.

My other daughter plays for the Camden Tigers under 12s in the soccer State cup. The team has played throughout the State and this week on Sunday they play Hornsby Heights for a place in the final. I am patron of the Camden Tigers soccer club and my good friend the member for Hornsby is patron of Hornsby Heights. I look forward to his coming off second best this week but nevertheless wish his team well. I conclude by expressing my gratitude to those who served and are serving our country. Lest we forget.

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

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RAMADAN

Mr CHRIS MINNS (Kogarah) [5.24 p.m.]: I speak in this Parliament today about the holy month of Ramadan and, by extension, the tremendous contribution that Muslim Australians make to the character of contemporary New South Wales. As members would be aware, Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar when Muslims worldwide commemorate the first revelation of the *Koran*. It is one of the five pillars of Islam. Spiritual rewards are said to be multiplied during the month of Ramadan, which offers to observant Muslims an incentive to participate in this ancient rite of passage.

I remember clearly as a teenager attending an iftar family dinner at the home of a parent of a child who attended the Greenacre Public School, where my father was the school principal. Like many Australians who grew up Catholic and attended a Catholic school, I did not have much exposure to this religion, its customs and ways, but I distinctly remember the charity and hospitality extended to my parents, brother and sister as we sat down and enjoyed a meal to break the fast. Tariq Ramadan, who is an Islamic scholar from the University of Oxford, when reflecting on Ramadan said:

The philosophy of fasting calls upon us to know ourselves, to master ourselves, and to discipline ourselves the better to free ourselves. To fast is to identify our dependencies, and free ourselves from them.

This looks to me, a lay outsider, as the process of self-reflection and betterment—almost like an ancient self-help procedure. The institutionalisation of this sacred rite whereby adherents conduct the same ritual, regardless of their location or standing, at the same time is a beautiful way for a community to work collectively at making themselves better human beings, citizens and Muslims. Tariq Ramadan went on to say:

We must master our egoism, and through this mastery, step outside ourselves and educate ourselves in giving.

Stepping outside one's egoism for self-reflection may well be a decent piece of advice for many in this Chamber—but I digress. My electorate of Kogarah is home to more than 6,000 Muslim Australians from countries as diverse as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Iran and Lebanon. I take this opportunity to place on the record the tremendous community work undertaken by Islamic figures within the St George region and during their holy month pay tribute to their work: Joe Awada, Tarek Ibrahim, Sheik Kamal Mousselimani, Sheik Youssef Nabha, Amer Nasser, Ms Pana Saab, Ms Amanda Fares, Hassan Bazzi, Khalil Haragli, Sayed Hachem, Shaleb Kamel Webbe and Mr Moussa Fares. I also point out the work of the Whip in that other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, and my good friend Louay Moustapha.

While Ramadan is occurring in Australia during a joyous and festive time, some are attempting to celebrate this festival in the most depressing and desperate of circumstances. The raging war in parts of Syria and Iraq and the brutality of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS] will see millions of Muslim men, women and children deprived of a home, a family member or a homeland over the next month. The principles of charity and self-reflection, not to mention fasting, will be difficult to conform to as they find themselves, along with local Christians, Druze and Assyrians, under the oppressive terror of this band of outlaws who are twisting this ancient peaceful religion to the point of perversion.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], nearly 60 million people today are displaced in the world. This figure is nine million more than a year ago and 60 per cent higher than a decade ago. The conflict in Syria and Iraq as well as the desperate struggle of the Rohingya peoples of Myanmar drive the displacement of people throughout the world and are leading to a refugee crisis. In its annual report the UNHCR said that the asylum seekers were entitled to international protection. As one sees the ravages and depravities of ISIS or the chemical weapons used by the Assad regime, it is clear why millions of families are fleeing their homes: They simply have no choice.

Muslim Australians have contributed extensively to the success of modern Australia. It is a real pleasure to celebrate this ancient faith and its adherents in this Chamber today. Australia's multicultural society is truly the envy of the world. We have more diversity in religion, race, language or creed than any nation on earth, yet we are peaceful, tolerant and free. Members of the Islamic community who are celebrating their holy festival are partly responsible for this successful society and I wish them a holy and safe Ramadan.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.29 p.m.]: I join with the member for Kogarah to extend my best wishes to the Muslim community not only in Hornsby but across New South Wales

at the commencement of the blessed month of Ramadan. It is time for all Muslims to reaffirm their commitment to their faith and their families and to helping those who are less fortunate. As the member for Kogarah rightly pointed out, our country has been deeply enriched by the contribution of thousands of Muslim Australians who have made this country their home and who are making a tremendous difference.

I see that every day in my community and I am sure the member for Kogarah sees it every day in his community. I am sure all members of this House know communities across New South Wales that have been greatly enriched by the contribution of Muslim Australians. In Australia we are very grateful for the many Muslim Australian organisations, businesses and individuals who make that difference. I place on record the contribution of Samir Dandan and his organisation in helping to foster understanding and tolerance in modern Australia.

NEPEAN FOOD SERVICES

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport) [5.30 p.m.]: It was my pleasure to join operations manager Ditte Kozak, Penrith mayor Ross Fowler and my parliamentary colleague Mrs Tanya Davies, the member for Mulgoa, at the recent Nepean Food Services volunteer recognition lunch. It was great to see such a terrific turnout and to hear about the rewarding experience of being a volunteer. The volunteers were treated to a sit-down meal and a surprise performance by Mario the Singing Chef, who did a great job and drew plenty of laughs. I indicate to the Parliamentary Secretary at the table that I did not sing because Mario was the star of the show.

Volunteers were invited to participate in games, and plenty of prizes were up for grabs. The day included a lucky door prize and an extra special prize of a 30-inch television that had been kindly donated by Guardian Funerals. To conclude the day, all the volunteers who attended were given a small thank-you gift. It is when I attend events such as these that I am reminded of the selflessness that exists in my community. Located in the Penrith valley, Nepean Food Services has been supporting the local community for more than 23 years by providing a range of services for the frail, people living with a disability and their carers, people with special needs and those in our community who are socially isolated.

The service currently provides services to 430 to 500 clients who live in the Penrith area. This can mean as many as 1,600 meals per week. Nepean Food Services is a not-for-profit incorporated organisation and is a proud member of the Meals on Wheels NSW organisation. Every day cooked meals, prepared at commercial kitchens, are despatched by staff members with the help of volunteers. The dedicated and friendly team, including a group of about 90 volunteers, goes above and beyond to ensure that they make a positive difference to the lives of those they assist.

Nepean Food Services works closely with the disability services Sunnyfield, Flintwood and Nado, each of which occasionally brings people with a disability to volunteer at the service. The services offered include the delivery of nutritious food that is cost-effective, transport to various functions and social events, as well as ongoing support. All the volunteers give freely of their time and all are to be commended. However, I make special mention of three people: Terry Greaves, who assists as a food packer three days a week; Tanya Hetherington, who assists with the Londonderry luncheon club and other special programs; and Robert Oakman, who delivers the regional meals and assists at the Londonderry luncheon and the Let's Dine Out Luncheon Club.

A particular highlight for many clients is the Let's Dine Out Luncheon Club, which dines out every Monday fortnight. Some of the clients, such as those with dementia, require assistance in preparing their meals. Special volunteers go out on a daily basis to heat up meals in the clients' homes. On the day of the Let's Dine Out luncheon, clients are picked up from their home and with the help of a volunteer are taken to a local restaurant or cafe for a nice meal and a good chat.

Special thanks must go to the sponsors of Nepean Food Services. Food Boss Penrith assists with the storage of frozen meals free of charge. Tresami Computer Engineering provides maintenance at a reduced cost and donates funds back to the Nepean Food Services. Guardian Funerals provides a bus and a driver to take volunteers on outings three times per year and on a fourth occasion does a Santa run, delivering hampers to clients and donating prizes for volunteer recognition events. GMR, or Gav's Mechanical Repairs, also is to be recognised for its fantastic work servicing the community buses at minimal cost.

Nepean Food Services provides a vital service in my local community, the community of Penrith, by keeping people connected in a supportive environment. It provides opportunities for people to try new things

and to meet new people and it also supports carers, who are truly our community's unsung heroes. I congratulate Nepean Food Services and all the volunteers on the wonderful work they have done and continue to do on behalf of the people of Penrith.

At the volunteer recognition lunch I had the opportunity to tell those present that the fantastic work they do is a strong reflection of the community spirit that exists in Penrith. To give up one's own time to help others is a selfless act and the true meaning of being an Australian. Nepean Food Services, our local Meals on Wheels body, with its wonderful group of volunteers, is a fantastic organisation. With the support of community members, businesses and local government, it continues to do fantastic work in the Penrith community.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.35 p.m.]: I am disappointed that I did not hear Mario the Singing Chef at the Nepean Food Services luncheon but I am even more disappointed to hear that Stuart the singing sports Minister did not sing at the luncheon. I am told that he has an outstanding voice. There would be no greater supporter of volunteers and of his community than the Minister and member for Penrith. He is an indefatigable enthusiast for his community. Not a day goes by without the Minister advocating for his community in this place. He is a Penrith boy through and through. A community does not happen by accident; it is made by people coming together to make a difference. The people involved in Nepean Food Services help those most in need. I thank them for their support and I thank the Minister for recognising them in this place.

TRIBUTE TO WENDY AND GLENN PENNELL

Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN (Upper Hunter) [5.36 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of the community involvement in Scone of Wendy and Glenn Pennell. Wendy and Glenn and their family are well known within in the Scone rugby league sphere and within the broader community, having lived in Scone for many decades and having been involved in many different community aspects. They have done everything from constructing mirrors in the ladies toilets to keeping the ovals perfectly manicured and running the canteen on game days. These are just some of the jobs the Pennells love to do.

Mr Pennell was president of the senior league from 1993 to 1995, with the club winning the premiership for the last two years. He is now a life member and committee member of the senior league, and both Mr and Mrs Pennell have been made life members of the junior league association. Not too many days pass during the season when Mr Pennell does not stop by at Scone Park to maintain the ovals—a job he has been doing for many years. Mr Pennell enjoys marking the grounds for game days and representative games and tidying up and keeping things nice and neat.

Mr Pennell was one of the people instrumental in establishing the new canteen at the park, together with support from local builders and club people. Mr Pennell is proud of the facilities that the Scone Rugby League Football Club has to offer. It does not bother him to cook the barbecue at the rodeo from 6.00 a.m. to midnight because it raises funds for the continuation and improvement of the club. Glenn was recognised for his commitment to the sport of rugby league in 2010 when he was a finalist in the Country Rugby League Volunteer of the Year award and last year he was recognised as Volunteer of the Year for the region. Mr Pennell was also a member of the Scone Lions club many years ago.

Mrs Wendy Pennell, despite working a full-time schedule and looking after grandchildren, also finds time to volunteer and be an active member of the local Scone community. She has been the treasurer of the senior league for the past three years, after familiarising herself with the role many years ago. She started on the committee as secretary in 1992. This is her third stint as treasurer throughout the years and she also helps organise and coordinate the canteen. Having an interest in all sports, Mrs Pennell was the treasurer of the Scone Cricket Association and the Upper Hunter District Cricket Association for three years. However, this year she has stepped down from those positions.

Mrs Pennell, together with other mothers, busied herself with the goal of raising money to build the new Scone preschool. Through catering for weddings and balls and lots of baking and fundraising, the mothers achieved this goal. She was the treasurer of the preschool committee for many years. Her years of involvement in the schools that her children attended have seen Mrs Pennell bestowed life membership of the Scone Public School parents and citizens association. She is also a patron of the school. Throughout the 10 or so years when her children attended Scone Public School Mrs Pennell held all office positions of the parents and citizens association and thoroughly enjoyed being involved in all aspects of fundraising. Mrs Pennell was a parents and citizens [P and C] committee member, counted the takings for the P and C and the fete for about 15 years, and still operates the door at the annual antiques fair.

With a passion for decorative painting, Mrs Pennell is a keen member of the Scone Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society, and she is also part of a small group of ladies that meets regularly to paint. Mrs Pennell organises a guest artist to visit from Tamworth or Newcastle each month to share skills and tips with the ladies in that group. For the past six years, Mrs Pennell has devoted her time to helping out a friend in the canteen at the Murrurundi Bushman's Carnival and King of the Ranges—a role she did not mind at all as it was helping out people in need of volunteers.

Mrs Pennell said she owes her extremely busy lifestyle to a passion for being occupied. Mrs Pennell would like to start easing off work a bit to give back to the elderly community, such as volunteering at TransCare or Strathearn. I congratulate this remarkable couple who have given so much to the Scone community over many years. I also congratulate the *Scone Advocate* on publishing an article highlighting the great work of Mr and Mrs Pennell in Scone.

DURAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Castle Hill—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.41 p.m.]: I advise this House of a unique facility in my electorate, the Dural Baptist Church. This is not just your average church; the incredible parishioners of the church have toiled for many years to create a facility that is adored by the community and provides so much for the residents of my electorate. In the early 1990s the church community felt there was an absence of indoor recreation facilities in the area. With just 100 church members at the time, a decision was made on a Sunday morning to "go for it" and plans were drawn up in early 1993 for a new sports centre.

Building works started in December 1993 and were finished in August 1994, at a cost of \$2 million. The doors of the centre opened on 8 August 1994 and from the first week of competition the centre had 104 futsal teams, 64 netball teams and eight cricket teams competing each week. Team numbers grew rapidly, with the centre being at full capacity in the peak months of September through to March each year. Demand was so great that an expansion was needed. In 2004 a large addition to the church complex was undertaken, with two more sports courts added as well as increased parking and a meeting space. With improved court space and grandstands, this enabled the centre to host international futsal games. The new building works cost \$4 million. The generous people of the church contributed \$2 million by way of donations, time and materials.

By 2004 the number of futsal teams had grown to 240 and netball teams to well over 100 per summer competition. By 2004 the centre's representative futsal team, the Dural Warriors, had established a reputation as a leading club in New South Wales, taking out club championship honours. By 2015 the Warriors have provided numerous Australian representatives and as a club have represented Australia in overseas tournaments. Apart from sport, the centre has hosted and continues to host many other non-sporting events such as expositions, shows, parties and conferences. Apart from the impact of the centre in the physical dimension of life, it enables the church to engage with the community in a variety of other ways.

Care & Concern Ministries Inc., a public benevolent fund, was established in 1994 to provide services of practical help such as cars, food hampers, gardening and meals, as well as personal, family and financial counselling. Other community users seeking to explore the spiritual aspect of life have been welcomed into the church's wider ministries of playtime, youth groups and Bible studies. Through the involvement of a church member in an overseas aid fund, the church became aware of the plight of our close neighbours in the Solomon Islands who were then engaged in civil war. The initiative was taken in 2001 to commence a long-term partnership which has facilitated the visits of more than 150 young Solomon Islanders to participate in the Australian National Futsal Championships in Australia.

Over the years, the church has celebrated the results as young Solomon Islanders have been rescued from a life on the streets, trained as coaches, referees and administrators, and engaged in the running of local leagues, school visits and visits to the prison in Honiara. In 2005 the centre was also the catalyst for the commencement of a school scholarship program at William Clarke College, Kellyville, which now hosts nine young Solomon Islander students on scholarship programs.

In a strange string of connections, on the back of the work established in the Solomon Islands, the centre was guided to the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. Each year since 2006 centre patrons and church members have ventured from Dural to the Northern Territory and Western Australia Aboriginal communities to provide sport and educational assistance. Pushing beyond sport, partnerships have been established to provide 12 young East Kimberley Aboriginal students with scholarships to the Hills district

schools. The students live with East Kimberley Aboriginal house parents in a group home next to the Dural Baptist Church in Sydney, with the aim of ultimately having the students move into university or trade school studies or employment.

One aspect of this facility at Dural Baptist Centre has been the establishment of a Men's Shed, which I have mentioned many times in this place. With donated equipment, the Dural Men's Shed has grown over the past four years to be among the best equipped sheds in New South Wales, and now has more than 80 members. The dedicated yet small shed committee is continually challenged to meet the needs of men for support in all dimensions of life and has extended this program to support many troubled youth across Western Sydney, from schools as far away as Fairfield High School and Horsley Park Public School. For the Friday night youth group at the centre numbers are in excess of 120 each week, with a range of activities for young people aged 12 to 18 years. Love Thy Neighbour is a group of young adults that moves around the local community doing gardening and lawn mowing for people who need this type of help.

Back in 1991, from that little group of 100 people, who would have thought that 24 years on the church would be experiencing centre life as it does today? The church is now a centre that has 7,000 people through its facilities each week, meeting a wide range of community needs, incorporating a high-profile sports centre, and linking into outback Aboriginal communities and the Solomon Islands. Today the church thanks God for His wisdom in helping chart a way forward. It thanks God for giving its parishioners the courage to take those first steps of change and the courage to keep moving on to keep discovering God's bigger plan. I congratulate the Dural Baptist Church in my electorate for going above and beyond the call of duty by not only supporting my local area but also outreaching to people in the Solomon Islands and the East Kimberley.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.46 p.m.]: I add my gratitude to all involved in the Dural Baptist Church. I know Brian Codrington and his wife, Lynne. They recently won the Dural Pride of Workmanship award at the Dural Rotary Club as a result of their outstanding work in the Solomon Islands caring for the most disadvantaged in that community. However, they have not been recognised for the work they do in our community of the Hornsby shire.

Brian and Lynne, having raised their own children, have been foster parents to many children who have nowhere else to go. They give these children opportunities they otherwise would not get. They are two of the most remarkable people in New South Wales or the country. I join with the member for Castle Hill in putting on the public record my immense gratitude for the contribution they make to our community and for the work they do in building our church and our community.

TRIBUTE TO IAN HUNT

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [5.47 p.m.]: I honour the contribution of Ian Hunt, who was my Labor Party State Electoral Council [SEC] president and who, unfortunately, recently lost his courageous battle with cancer. It gives me great joy to speak about Ian with his wife, Judy, and his daughter, Jenelle, present in the gallery. I have been lucky to have Jenelle work in my office. Also in the gallery tonight is another staff member, Blake Osmond. Most of us come into this place with the support of our community and the support of our party, which I will never forget. Ian Hunt supported me in 2011 as I faced one of the most difficult elections we have ever fought.

In October 2010, when I put up my hand to stand as a candidate in the State election, Ian was one of the first people who said he wanted to be a part of my campaign. Ian was there from the beginning, through the highs and the lows of the campaign. There were more lows than there were highs, but on election night we were victorious. Ian supported, guided and encouraged me through his commitment to and belief in me that was second to none. He also served his own community extremely well. He was a councillor in the northern suburbs of the Illawarra from 1995 to 2004, including two years as Deputy Lord Mayor of Wollongong from 2002 to 2004. He spent time as a member of the Wollongong Showground Trust and the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music. Perhaps he is most remembered, particularly in the northern suburbs, for the redevelopment of the North Dalton Park sporting precinct, which now hosts State, national and occasionally international grade cricket, AFL and many other sporting events.

Ian supported me incredibly in the lead-up to the 2011 election and continued to do so after the election. He was my State Electoral Council president and he represented me on the City of Wollongong Traffic Committee. However, most importantly, he was a fantastic sounding board for me. My predecessor, David Campbell, was also very close to Ian. He provided enormous support, encouragement and great advice,

and the three of us spent a great deal of time talking about what was happening in our community. With Ian gone, it feels as though a part of the party in the Illawarra and particularly in the northern Illawarra has also gone.

When we go through tough times, as we did in 2011 and as I am sure many members from different political parties have at various times, we remember those who stood with us. Ian Hunt stood with me. As the polls in 2010 and 2011 showed that the Labor Party was in real trouble in the electorate of Keira, Ian continued to say, "Do the work. Put your head down and work as hard as you can." I pledge to Ian and his family and to the community that I know he loved that I will do my best to honour the faith that he had in me. I never forget that we are here for a short time, that we are here to make a difference, and that we are here to honour the people who helped us to get here. Ian Hunt got me here. His family were the most important people in his life. He loved everything about the Labor Party, and he particularly loved the right wing of the Labor Party. He was a strong supporter of our faction, our party and our community. Vale Ian Hunt. You will not be forgotten.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I extend my condolences to Ian Hunt's wife and family.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.52 p.m.]: The emotion expressed by the member for Keira demonstrates the strength of the relationship between him and Ian Hunt. Government members extend their deepest sympathy and condolences to the Hunt family. Our prayers are with them at this time of deep sadness.

SIXTIETH NEW ENGLAND REGION NSW TRAINING AWARDS

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.53 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to laud the achievements of the many Northern Tablelands trainees and apprentices who brought home the silverware from last Friday night's sixtieth annual New England Region NSW Training Awards ceremony. The event was held at the West Tamworth Leagues Club, with my colleague the member for Tamworth's dulcet tones ringing out throughout the night as he diligently performed the MC duties. It was also a pleasure to have Senator John "Wacka" Williams and his lovely wife, Nancy, there along with the chairman of the Greater Northern Skills Development Group, Shaun O'Sullivan, and the dynamic duo from the Department of Education and Communities State Training Services, regional manager Greg Poetschka and his erstwhile assistant, Alison Dundon. It was a stellar evening involving hundreds of the region's best apprentices, trainees and trainers, and their families, friends and supporters.

It was a fantastic event at which we celebrated the achievements and the good training and upskilling of young and more experienced people in our region. I was proud and delighted to present the Apprentice of the Year award to an experienced apprentice from Armidale, Geoff Bragg. I say "experienced" because Geoff is not a recent school leaver; he has been in the workforce for some time. Indeed, Geoff has a strong passion for the renewable energy sector. He is the secretary of the Australian Solar Council and the Australian Energy Storage Council and the chairman of the Solar Energy Industries Association. He has worked for many years with New England Solar Power, whose proprietor is Rob Taber of Armidale. I have enjoyed many conversations with him over the years about how we can expand the renewable energy sector throughout the Northern Tablelands. Geoff also won an award for his work in the Excellence in Electrotechnology category. He will now go on to the State finals of the training awards later this year.

I also acknowledge some other great achievers from the Northern Tablelands. The Vocational Education and Training in Schools Student of the Year was Glen Wheller from McIntyre High School, who has done a certificate II in agriculture. He is a champion bloke to boot. It was great to meet Glen and his family and to hear about his experiences and goals. I wish him all the very best and acknowledge the support of his family and his school. The School-based Apprentice or Trainee Student of the Year was awarded to two students from the Northern Tablelands. The runner-up was Alison Quirk, who is doing a health services assistant certificate III. Alison is the captain of Moree Secondary College and has been working with the Hunter New England Local Health District, following in the footsteps of her father David, who is the General Manager of the Mehi health cluster at Moree.

I also acknowledge Rebecca Allen-Wall, who won the School-based Apprentice or Trainee Student of the Year award. Rebecca is also undertaking a health services assistant certificate III and is the school captain at Uralla Central School. Again, she is doing great work with the Hunter New England Local Health District. It was great to meet two young women who are passionate about what they are doing and who have a strong belief

in rural health. I look forward to seeing them progress in their careers and remain in rural New South Wales. Glenn Grylls, who is doing a certificate IV in agriculture, was highly commended in the Vocational Student of the Year category. Fiona James, who works at Moree Plains Shire Council and who is a valued employee according to the General Manager Lester Rogers, is doing a diploma in project management and was the runner-up in that category.

Many of our talented young people came to the fore in the Trainee of the Year awards. Joel Ballin, who also works at Moree Plains Shire Council and who is doing a local government operational works certificate IV, was highly commended. Trent Burey, who is doing a certificate III in agriculture, was absent on the night but was also given an award. Danielle Densley, who works for the Community Mutual Group, won the Sue Haylock Award. Danielle is a terrific young woman doing great work in Moree who has faced great adversity in her life. Ian Targett, who is doing a financial services credit management diploma, is another valued employee of the Community Mutual Group in Armidale. Ian won the Trainee of the Year award. All the winners will progress to the State final. I congratulate all the Northern Tablelands winners and wish them all the best in the final and in their future careers.

NEPEAN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.58 p.m.]: On 10 June I had the pleasure of attending Nepean Christian School's musical production of Disney's famous *Peter Pan*. I first attended a musical production staged by this local Christian school in 2012. On 21 February 2012, I spoke in this place about the outstanding performance, high-quality costume and set design, and excellence that emanated from this small school of just over 300 students. Tonight I have the joy of once again informing the House of an excellent, high-quality production staged by this wonderful school in my electorate.

After walking through the entrance hall, which was decorated with images, set pieces including the notorious crocodile and exquisite decorations inspired by the storyline, I entered into another world—turn-of-the-century London and eventually Neverland. I was honoured to be seated in the front row, but after being doused in glitter and confetti throughout the production I am sure the students had an ulterior motive. I am still pulling glitter and pieces of confetti from my bag and pockets. The set design, costume design, lighting, signing and dialogue were all extremely professionally delivered. What always amazes me when attending the productions by Nepean Christian School is what they can do on such a seemingly small stage.

They were quite inventive in showing the three Darling children "flying" to Neverland. The inclusion of a pirate ship, a treetop hideout with accompanying slippery dip for the Lost Boys, and a river for the boat and crocodile to manoeuvre through showed the depth of thought and inventiveness of this school community. The costumes and face painting of the cast of fairies were simply beautiful—bright and sparkly, just like fairies should be. I also was very impressed to see the detail in costumes for the Lost Boys and the Native American characters. I highlight a couple of standout performances: Wendy, who carried a vast amount of dialogue; Peter Pan, of course; Tinker Bell, who had to show expression mostly by facial and body language; and the hilarious Mr Smee, Captain Hook's boatswain.

I mention the following individuals, as they all played important roles in pulling together this wonderful musical: Abbie Shiel, Adrian Marchio, Aiden King, Alison Hammond, Amy Neill, Andrew Alexander, Bec Harris, Bethanie Ghanem, Bianca Marchio, BJ Weule, Breanna Grice, Caleb Nixon, Callum Jones, Chloe La-Broy, Chris Gordon, Christina Ghanem, Clive Coutman, Connor Green, Delia Daghel, Faith Ghanem, Felicity Vella-Roberts, Gary Watson, Geoff Wheaton, Grace Irving, Greg Watson, Heidi Herdon, Ian Shaw, Isabelle Ciesielski, Jake Sultana, Jessica Cowell, Karen Adams, Kate Blair-Hickman, Kate Palumbo, Katie Gerber, Kaylum Sayle, Leila Toledano, Leonie Dawson, Liam Kensey, Luke Blanch, Maddie Gillman, Madison Banks, Marguerite Maher, Maria Irving, Merrilee Monk, Miriam Bartlett, Naomi Soane, Narelle Burgess, Nikki Marchio, Nikkita Edwards, Peta Bull, Rachel Raj, Rob Weule, Tegan Blanch, Jeanette Logue and Rhonda Jenkinson.

I congratulate the new principal of Nepean Christian School, Mr Cameron Nunn, on his encouragement and support of the production. He really got into the groove by dressing up as a pirate and directing traffic before and after the productions. Mr Cameron Nunn only joined the school community at the beginning of this year and already he is someone who gets out there in the mix. In fact, he was standing out in the cold of a winter's night directing traffic as we moved into the school grounds for this great production. I congratulate every single student, teacher, parent and friend of the school involved in the production of *Peter Pan*. It was another joyful achievement by the creative team at Nepean Christian School.

I recently attended Nepean Christian School for a site inspection and to listen to the growth plans of that school. Plans are underway to expand the school's offerings to provide opportunities for students to stay at the school to complete year 12 studies, as well as to expand further on the school's land with new classrooms and bigger facilities. The school is a fantastic, close-knit school with very deep friendships between the students and the teachers. There is a great collaboration operating within classrooms. That collaboration, friendship and encouragement of individual students' natural talents is evidenced by these productions, which are open to the public to attend. It was a fantastic night. I commend every student and their parents, who had to wake up the very tired students the morning after the production to get ready for school. Congratulations to everyone.

VILLAWOOD EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.03 p.m.]: I am delighted to inform the House of the recent sixtieth anniversary of Villawood East Public School, a school in my electorate that is a true inspiration for the wider Villawood and Bankstown community. Villawood East Public School was officially opened in 1955 by the Hon. Bob Heffron, the then Deputy Premier of New South Wales and Minister for Education. In the school's first week of operation, 311 students were enrolled, but by the end of its first year the school was so popular in the Villawood community that 687 students were enrolled. In 1956, a department for infants was established and later a female department opened, adding to the stature of what was in store for the school. By 1960, the school had 1,000 students enrolled and a total of 28 teaching staff.

In October 1975, a preschool was established at Villawood East by the Hon. Sir Eric Willis, then Minister for Education, and the late the Hon. Neville Wran, who would become the local State member for the school. The preschool has been and continues to be a popular addition to the community, providing quality early childhood education to the children in the community. In 1999, the school was awarded the Director General's School Achievement Award for Programs to Support Students. The school provides a number of other programs to students, parents and teachers, such as Early Action for Success, Reading Recovery, Literacy Language Learners, Taking Off With Numeracy, and Targeted Early Numeracy.

Like many schools in the Bankstown electorate, Villawood East has a high student population with a non-English speaking background, with 86 per cent of the students coming from a non-English speaking background. The professional staff members at Villawood East Public School are consistently at hand to provide quality education, a positive and safe learning environment, and a framework that promotes diversity and a love of learning. Villawood East Public School has been a shining light for public education since its establishment in 1955.

The school encourages students to go on to greater academic and sporting success. Villawood East Public School alumni include medical professionals, graduates in the legal and political fields, scientific and mathematical innovators, district representatives across a number of disciplines, and a National Rugby League [NRL] player. Villawood East alumni have no doubt made a great contribution to the wider Bankstown and New South Wales community. The school's vision is to nurture dedicated students who have a passion for learning, parents who have a devotion to the children in the community, and staff members who work incredibly hard to ensure the best possible education outcomes are achieved for our leaders of tomorrow. After 60 years, the school still prides itself on engaging students in the most up-to-date research-based practices and expert academic training.

Villawood East Public School is additionally always looking to improve itself and continue to excel in both literacy and numeracy, with improving results. The school celebrated its sixtieth anniversary on Saturday 13 June. I was delighted to be able to attend and to address the students, former students and many family members and community members who were present on that day. More than 750 people attended the wonderful celebrations, which included rides, raffle prizes, sausage sizzles, cake stalls and a range of market stalls, including an animal farm. It was also wonderful to see great organisations like the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre come out to support the school. There were also entertainment and dancing performances, food challenges, and a school tour. It was a pleasure to see that many former students had the opportunity to enter the library and look for their old school photos. I met one lady, Jan, who was looking at her school photo from 1957. She was delighted to have found herself in the old school album.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the entire school community, including the Principal, Ms Kerry Marshall. She is a fantastic local principal doing a wonderful job, along with her staff, which includes Ms Monique Ivanisevic, the relieving Assistant Principal. It would be remiss of me not to mention the great parents and citizens association, including the President, Ms Eve Nembotakis, and all the executive members for coordinating a wonderful day, but also for all their efforts throughout the year in supporting the students of Villawood East Public School. I congratulate them on their tireless efforts and utmost professionalism in working with the children at the

school and providing them with the guidance and inspiration to become model citizens in our community. I hope to be celebrating many more anniversaries and milestones with Villawood East Public School. I extend my congratulations to all past and current students and teachers on their achievements over the past 60 years.

WOMEN IN POLICING

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [6.08 p.m.]: This evening I pay tribute to 100 years of women in policing in New South Wales and acknowledge the work of some of the female officers currently serving on the Mid North Coast Local Area Command—women such as Superintendent Kim Fehon, Senior Constable Taya Bailey, Constable Rebekah Steele, Senior Constable Julie Hudson, Senior Constable Kate Barnden, Senior Constable Leanne Gilmour, Senior Constable Wendy Hudson and Sergeant Kelly Rowlatt.

Last week as the baton relay passed through Port Macquarie to mark the centenary of women in policing, the special link that my electorate has to a time in the very early days of female police officers was brought to my attention. Sergeant Kelly Rowlatt has a special connection to women in policing. Her great-grandmother was the first married female police officer in New South Wales. After Kelly's great-grandfather and serving police officer, Walter Jeffrey, died, leaving behind three small daughters and a pregnant wife, Kelly's great-grandmother, Margaret Jeffrey, took the only option familiar to her. As she had been exposed to policing by her husband and her brothers, she applied to be a policewoman, which was relatively unheard of in those days. Although at the age of 35 she was considered to be too old to join the police force, the then Commissioner of Police, William McKay, accepted her application on 1 March 1932 because of her status as a policeman's widow. He was obviously a man of vision. At that time the full strength of policewomen was 10. How things have changed.

Like all female officers at the time, Margaret Jeffrey was appointed as a special constable and operated in plainclothes. Margaret was first stationed at the Clarence Street police station before transferring to the Criminal Investigation Branch [CIB], where she stayed for 11 years. During her time at the CIB she received numerous accolades, including compliments from the commissioner. In 1943 Margaret Jeffery was promoted to Special Constable 1st Class and later transferred to Burwood and Campsie stations as officer in charge, which was rare in those days. Margaret was a bit of a trailblazer. She climbed her way up the career ladder to return to the CIB to become the Chief of Women Police in New South Wales. She held that position until her retirement from the police force as a Sergeant 2nd Class in December 1956 at the age of 60.

For a period of six years her great-grandmother and great-grandfather served the NSW Police Force at the same time, which would be a rare occurrence in today's era let alone the 1950s. Her dedication and passion for policing rubbed off on family members and a number of them joined the police force. Her only son, George, became a policeman and one of his sons, Mitch Jeffrey, became a policeman, as did his niece, Melina. Kelly even married a policeman, Mark Rowlatt. The police force has gone from 10 women when Margaret Jeffrey joined to the modern era of today with a staggering 26.9 per cent of serving female officers.

I would like to think that Margaret played a significant role in pioneering the way for women police officers such as Superintendent Kim Fehon, the first female commissioned officer for the Mid North Coast Local Area Command, or Superintendent Doreen Cruickshank from the North Shore Local Area Command who joined the force 44 years ago and is the longest serving female police officer. In 100 years women have earned the right to stand shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts and now there is no blurring of lines when it comes to the roles that women perform in the NSW Police Force. I congratulate each of them and, on behalf of our local communities, thank them for serving us well as proud officers of the NSW Police Force.

Private members' statements concluded.

Pursuant to resolution matter of public importance proceeded with.

NATIONAL TAFE DAY

Matter of Public Importance

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [6.13 p.m.]: Today is National TAFE Day. Many people in New South Wales have been involved with TAFE at some time in their lives. TAFE colleges include campuses that are spread across most regional, rural and metropolitan areas of New South Wales. More than 500,000 students

choose to study with TAFE NSW each year. TAFE NSW higher education qualifications are an effective and efficient learning pathway for students to evolve into highly competent industry-ready graduates. TAFE also provides ongoing opportunities for people to reskill and gain new qualifications throughout their working lives. In every industry in every area of the economy, TAFE is providing essential qualifications. TAFE trains our nurses and mechanics, childcare workers and writers. We all need TAFE. Labor understands the importance of TAFE and knows we must keep it relevant.

It is ironic that on National TAFE Day—the day after the New South Wales budget was delivered—we are learning more about the demise of TAFE in New South Wales. Yesterday's budget revealed a shocking decline in TAFE enrolments. This year enrolments are down more than 33,000 since the introduction of Smart and Skilled. In 2015, 80,000 fewer students are enrolled in TAFE than were enrolled in 2012 and 11,500 fewer students with a disability are enrolled in TAFE today than were enrolled in 2012. In the past year enrolments have dropped by more than 5,000 students. It was forecast that in 2014-15 the number of Aboriginal students would drop by almost 3,000. The most tragic statistic is that more than 2,600 full-time equivalent staff have been laid off since 2012-13. In 2012 Premier Barry O'Farrell said that 800 TAFE staff would lose their jobs over four years, but the truth is that 2,600 staff have been laid off since he made that claim.

Unfortunately, the Baird Government is paving the way for a skills shortage. It is pricing students out of vocational education and training. More young people are not in school, are not studying and are not working. The Baird Government is gutting TAFE and providing no real alternative to school leavers. We are in the midst of a youth unemployment crisis and the Liberal Government is doing nothing to help young people achieve employment. Instead, it has locked them out of a chance to obtain a TAFE qualification. It is no coincidence that fewer people are being trained. The Liberals are taking the axe to TAFE while offering no pathway to reach its target—that 90 per cent of school leavers would be in training or employment. The number of young people completing apprenticeships and traineeships has tragically dropped to its lowest level since 2010. The Liberals have set us on a road to having fewer skilled workers, which is a road to higher unemployment that will stifle economic growth.

Across the State there are examples of how the higher fees have affected people. The case of Sarah Sladek from the Illawarra comes to mind. She was set to graduate from her Diploma of Early Education and Care with six others in mid-June, but her excitement evaporated when she was told she would not receive official documents until an outstanding bill of \$1,200 was paid. She was told by TAFE two weeks before the course completed that if there was no payment there would be no certificate. She had inquired about her fees several times during the year after becoming concerned about the introduction of the new Smart and Skilled fee structure and she was told that she would receive a letter. She never received that letter—something for which staff were blamed. In fact, the TAFE computer system had malfunctioned and is still not working. On 22 June 2015, in his announcement to the Australian Stock Exchange, SEEK Chief Executive Officer Andrew Bassett stated:

The main cause of SEEK Learning's results being lower than our prior expectations relates to one-off issues with an IT systems upgrade undertaken by TAFE NSW.

Seek Learning had fulfilled its sales obligations but TAFE NSW's IT issues resulted in errors and significant delays in the enrolment process, ultimately leading to incomplete enrolments and very high withdrawal rates. This has been an ongoing issue until recently based on discussions with TAFE NSW.

The issue has been ongoing and until recently SEEK believed it would be resolved ...

It is not only Labor that is raising these problems; across the State people are talking about problems with TAFE and the Government must start to take notice.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.18 p.m.]: It is a pity that Chicken Little descended on the Opposition benches on a day when we should be celebrating National TAFE Day. The New South Wales budget has delivered a record spend of \$2.33 billion for vocational education and training [VET]. This spending includes \$1.991 billion for the TAFE NSW expenditure budget for 2015-16, which is an increase of 6.5 per cent, or \$122 million, from the 2014-15 revised expenditure budget. There is no issue with funding. The community is being misled by the political posturing of the Labor Party, which poured millions of workers' dollars, extracted under the guise of union fees, into a scare campaign which was baseless. Getting more young people into training and learning the skills they need for a long career is a high priority for the New South Wales Government.

We have a package of vocational scholarships that will mean more than 240,000 young people will pay nothing for a VET education, thus making it easier to get a job, including: \$48 million to remove fees for

200,000 concession eligible 15- to 30-year-olds to undertake government-subsidised VET certificate courses; and \$8 million to develop viable pathways for young people in regional areas to enter into education, training and employment. The capital expenditure budget for TAFE NSW is \$101 million. This will support new capital works projects that will benefit students, industry and communities. In particular, information and communication technology projects are critical to the continued success of TAFE NSW to deliver flexible training services to meet the changing needs of students.

The new projects include the Growing Flexible Delivery project from the Illawarra Institute, which will provide students with increased access to technology enabled learning environments, particularly in rural and regional areas. The Applied Construction and Plumbing Technologies Hub at the Coffs Harbour Education Campus of the North Coast TAFE will refurbish underutilised space to create multiuse trade spaces to support the consolidation of construction and allied trades training and delivery. There has been investment in the Hospitality Training Centre at Ryde Campus, Northern Sydney Institute, to provide modern, simulated working environments in facilities that provide connected learning. A major investment of over \$11.9 million has been made in a new Plant and Heavy Vehicle Training Centre at the Kurri Kurri campus of the Hunter Institute which has recently been completed, which provides extra training opportunities for people in the region.

Last week, Albury's Joss Construction took out the top honour of the Master Builders Association Southern Central Region awards for the \$8 million multi-coloured building called the Connected Learning Common at the Riverina Institute's Albury campus. I have been into that building on many occasions since I was there for the opening and it is another testament to the great investment by this Government in TAFE in New South Wales. There is a great story to tell about enrolments in those areas where they are needed. Yet again, Labor has completely missed that mark, as so often is the case.

Yes, there has been a shift in enrolments but that is because industry and business are demanding it. We have seen an increase in higher level qualifications—something those on the other side of the Chamber would not know about—which will provide more value for students, employers and the economy. Enrolments in certificate III and higher qualifications increased by over 21 per cent. Enrolments in diploma and above qualifications have increased by 68 per cent. We have not heard about that from members of the Labor Party because they do not recognise it.

In particular, we are seeing growth in key sectors of the economy. Opposition members would do well to listen so that they may learn what those key sectors are. Community services, particularly aged care and children's services, are up by 35.8 per cent. Building services are up by 44.9 per cent. Importantly, these shifts are being driven by industry demand—something that those on the other side of the Chamber cannot get their heads around. We are delivering on our commitment to connect more young people with jobs—jobs which those opposite vote against. This Government has moved away from funding short courses such as English courses and RSA qualifications because it is strongly focused on providing funding to support the workforce of the future.

Movements in TAFE staffing levels can be attributed to a couple of things. It can be attributed to the separation of TAFE and Department of Education and Communities back-office functions in July 2014 and to the adaptation of staffing requirements to meet changes in course demand. With fewer numbers of short courses and growing numbers in longer courses, TAFE is focused on shaping its workforce for the future and building a successful, competitive and sustainable New South Wales TAFE. The Government has been clear and open about its plans for TAFE to modernise its workforce and increase efficiency and productivity so that TAFE NSW can not only survive but also thrive in an increasingly competitive and changing VET sector. Our plans for TAFE are about better outcomes for students and creating the skills that support the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Mr TIM CRAKANTHORP (Newcastle) [6.23 p.m.]: Today is National TAFE Day. TAFE is the premier public provider of vocational education and training in New South Wales, and Labor is committed to ensuring TAFE is properly funded and supported. But this has proved to be a very hard task, with the Baird Liberal Government's unprecedented attempt to dismantle our proud TAFE system in New South Wales. In all, more than 2,111 TAFE teachers and staff have lost their jobs under the Liberals' watch. Many of these teachers have joined the unemployment queues in Newcastle. Under this Government, the Hunter is currently enduring the highest unemployment figures in 10 years. Under this Government, 6,800 more people have become unemployed in the Hunter over the past 12 months. But by cutting TAFE funding, the Government is also cutting the opportunities for these unemployed people.

We are in the midst of a youth unemployment crisis yet the Government has locked young people out of the chance to get a TAFE qualification. The number of people completing apprenticeships and traineeships has dropped to its lowest level since 2010. This Government will see the State have fewer skilled workers to implement its "era of investment in infrastructure and services that will benefit generations to come" when it cuts this generation out of a trade. Our young people need to be given every opportunity to contribute to our community and to our economy.

Yesterday, the State budget revealed that there has been a shocking decline in TAFE enrolments, which are down by more than 43,000 since the introduction of the Smart and Skilled program this year. There are now 80,000 fewer students enrolled in TAFE than in 2012. And that is only made worse by the issues that they are experiencing with their enrolments system. In my electorate, the Hamilton campus is experiencing so many issues with the technology that there is an entire course where all the students have not yet been enrolled since the year's start.

I support the inquiry into the damage that this Government is doing to the TAFE system. I support an investigation into TAFE course cuts, fee hikes, increasing use of not-for-profit providers and recent IT failures. I support an analysis of the contribution that TAFE makes to the New South Wales economy, particularly in regional areas like my own electorate. For example, yesterday while Newcastle was receiving disappointing results in the budget, 160 workers at the Forgacs shipyard were being told that they no longer had jobs to go to. Those who did not receive notices know that they only have until the end of this year before their jobs will be axed. This Government has now cut shipbuilding from the Hunter TAFE—how about that? The shipyard is finishing a government defence contract and when that is finished there will be no more orders.

Unfortunately, this is not an unusual occurrence. Normally, these workers would go to TAFE to retrain, but how will they do that? There is no longer a shipbuilding course in Newcastle. How will tradies get new jobs when they take up new trades? The Government is now creating a new problem in Newcastle. There is record-breaking unemployment and reduced infrastructure but the Government is only making the situation worse. TAFE is too good to lose and the budget yesterday showed that it needs our support.

Ms TAMARA SMITH (Ballina) [6.26 p.m.], by leave: As the Greens spokesperson for education I recognise the massive contribution of TAFE teachers and other TAFE staff to the New South Wales community. I acknowledge that today is National TAFE Day. I also congratulate the New South Wales Teachers Federation, of which I have been a member for 21 years, in particular for its National TAFE Day initiative. I state at the outset that I have been a student in TAFE, I have taught at TAFE and I have supported many TAFE campaigns over the past 21 years. I echo the disappointment of the federation that in the lead-up to National TAFE Day the New South Wales Government, through its budget, has again taken the axe to TAFE.

The TAFE system has lost 2,111 full-time equivalent positions since the Coalition came to office, which is a loss of more than 15 per cent between 2011 and 2014. In the same time, enrolments have dropped by 83,000 as the so-called Smart and Skilled program funnels public money into the private sector, where training companies are now profiting at the expense of the public, threatening the fabric of the TAFE system. Career opportunities in TAFE education and training opportunities for people in New South Wales have quickly reduced.

Young people are now faced with having to pay more or take out loans to get the training they need to find a job or upskill. In my electorate of Ballina this is a major issue. My electorate is generally a low socio-economic space and that particularly affects our young people. The electorate also has low labour participation rates. There is no TAFE in Byron Bay and upfront fees are causing young people to be dismayed and to leave the area because they cannot get vocational training. Businesses are crying out for young people to be skilled in their industries but that is not happening.

The lack of training is a major issue for us. Young people are now faced with having to pay more or to take out loans. On behalf of The Greens I acknowledge the dedication of TAFE teaching and support staff and the important contribution that they make. For many, TAFE has been a springboard into work and life. As I have said in this House before, I had to leave school in year 10 to look after my mother who had a brain injury. I went back and did my Higher School Certificate at Seaforth Technical College, and it changed my life.

Mrs Melinda Pavey: Good for you. People can still do it.

Ms TAMARA SMITH: They can. I trust that the Government and all members in this Chamber care about TAFE, but I think it is time we went back to the drawing board because the Smart and Skilled program is not working.

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang) [6.29 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Albury, the member for Newcastle and the member for Ballina for contributing to the discussion on the matter of public importance. I recognise the member for Kogarah and the member for Rockdale for their enthusiastic support of the TAFE system. This is an important issue. National TAFE Day is a time when we should be focused on supporting and recognising the work of our TAFE teachers and support staff as well as the great students who go through the TAFE system and make a great economic contribution to our State. But, unfortunately, we are locked into concentrating on how Smart and Skilled is slowly, brick by brick, pulling apart the TAFE system.

I speak to a range of stakeholders from right across the State each week. The reports they feed back to me are that some regional areas that have suffered TAFE cutbacks, such as Moss Vale, Dapto and Belmont, have become ghost towns. There are spider webs in the staffrooms because the number of permanent staff members has been cut to the bone. What they are left with is a casualised workforce that do not have a proper income and that are finding it hard to make ends meet because they are employed for insufficient hours. One story I heard absolutely flattened me. I was told that a teacher who received a Premier's Award for teaching excellence in the textiles area had her work cut back to two hours a week. Despite that, the Government is trying to defend a system that is falling down at every turn, but particularly in relation to enrolment and graduation. I have been told that the only reason students have been able to graduate is that teachers are making their graduation certificates by hand.

The TAFE computers are unable to print graduation certificates, yet the Government says there are no information technology problems—it is just a small glitch. If Government members care about TAFE and want to recognise the contribution of TAFE on National TAFE Day, they should visit their local TAFE colleges and speak to the teachers. They should find out how tough it is and what is going on in the sector. It is not a good feeling when talking to the New South Wales Teachers Federation, which is one of the biggest stakeholders and which represents TAFE teachers across the State. I have been told that the Minister for Skills has not even met with representatives of the federation since the election. However, the Minister has met with the private sector, but he has not met with the key stakeholder that represents staff. On National TAFE Day, let us learn the lessons. Next year, hopefully we will have fixed the problems and we will be able to say nice things.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.31 p.m. until
Thursday 25 June 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**
