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## **LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Thursday 6 August 2015

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

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

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

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

#### **Seventh Day's Debate**

**Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Chris Patterson and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

### **NON-PROFIT BODIES (FREEDOM TO ADVOCATE) BILL 2015**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 25 June 2015.**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [10.13 a.m.]: The purpose of the Non-Profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015 is to prohibit State agreements from restricting or prohibiting non-profit bodies from engaging in advocacy, commenting on or opposing the law, policy or practice of the Government. The Government does not support this bill. First, the bill is unnecessary. The bill is built on the fallacy that the New South Wales Government currently prohibits non-profit bodies from engaging in advocacy or commenting on Government policy. Put simply, this bill is a legislative solution for a problem that does not exist. But that is the Labor way. Non-profit bodies in New South Wales are free to, and do, engage in advocacy, law reform work and policy development. They are free and able to criticise or challenge the policy and practices of the Government. Indeed, non-profit bodies are valued contributors to the debates on policy and law reform. Their insights and practical experience help to ensure that our laws, policies, practices and services are as effective as possible.

I will focus on one important group of non-profit bodies—community legal centres. The shadow Attorney General spoke about community legal centres in his second reading speech and I will too. I also have direct knowledge of and experience with community legal centres, and a huge amount of respect for their work and commitment to serving the most vulnerable members of our community. Community legal centres are independent organisations providing accessible legal services, particularly to marginalised people and communities across our State. Under the funding agreements between Legal Aid New South Wales and community legal centres, community legal centres are specifically authorised to undertake law reform and legal policy work. This would include activities such as making submissions to government bodies or parliamentary inquiries on areas of potential reform.

For example, a couple of months ago I attended the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme roundtable. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme is a New South Wales Government pilot initiative that will enable

people to find out whether their partner has a history of domestic violence offences. It will give information to victims so that they can make good decisions. At the roundtable various stakeholders, including the Redfern Legal Centre and Women's Legal Services NSW, came together at Parliament House to discuss what that pilot should look like so as to ensure this Australian-first scheme does what we need it to on the ground to help empower domestic violence victims. It was a powerful and contrite discussion. The views shared that day, and the submissions that followed, are a critical part of us getting that pilot right.

What is more, the Child Sexual Assault Taskforce recently established by the Government has invited community legal centres to provide input into the way the Government implements its child sexual assault reforms. This is because I believe, and we on this side of the House believe, that community legal centres fundamentally understand the practical experience of child victims within the court system. These are just two examples, in my four months as Attorney General, where I have seen first-hand the unique and valuable work of community legal centres in particular. They provide unflinching, on-the-ground, authentic perspectives to inform the Government's responses to legal and social issues. As Attorney General I will continue to seek the views of community legal centres so that the Government can deliver well-informed and effective reforms for our community in New South Wales.

Secondly, it is entirely appropriate and reasonable for the Government to direct scarce taxpayer funds to the provision of practical services on the ground for those most in need. Taxpayer dollars should be judiciously applied by governments to deliver services that individuals and our community cannot provide. We are notional trustees for those dollars, and that responsibility means that they must go to the areas of greatest need where they can make the greatest difference to the lives of the people in our community. This position is consistent with the New South Wales Government's Principles for Funding of Legal Assistance Services—indeed, referred to by the shadow Attorney General in his second reading speech. Those principles specifically seek to ensure that limited funds for public legal assistance are directed towards legal representation, casework, and advice for disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

In contrast, the Opposition supports a position where Government funds that are allocated towards one purpose—that important purpose—could be spent on another. They would prefer that scarce funding be used alternatively for political campaigning. This is not right or just. Of course, community legal centres are still free to engage in political campaigns but not using taxpayer funds. They are free to seek other funding to do that. I have spoken at length about community legal centres. They are very important and that is why I have focused on them. I have focused on them to illustrate the fallacy upon which this bill is based. However, the bill is far reaching and will apply to any non-profit body funded by government.

Thirdly, the bill, if passed retrospectively, voids some provisions of agreements between New South Wales Government agencies and non-profit bodies that were entered into before the commencement of the bill before the House. The shadow Attorney General must appreciate that retrospective legislation should be contemplated only in exceptional circumstances. The argument to implement retrospective legislation has not been made in this case. This point is only a footnote because the reality is that the premise upon which the bill is based is false and misleading. The bill seeks to politicise an important issue, which is highly regrettable and damning of the motives of members opposite. For those reasons, the Government does not support the bill before the House.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON** (Maitland) [10.20 a.m.]: A woman—let us call her Amanda—came to my electorate office a couple of months ago. Amanda was articulate, well-groomed, clever and engaging. As many people in our community do, she grew up, married and raised two children. Her marriage broke down and both parties went their separate ways. When Amanda met another man she was more circumspect because she did not want to rush into a second marriage with two small children. However, she became pregnant with her new partner's child and everything started to unravel. Her new partner started to abuse her and at times she was hospitalised. Amanda is a brave and strong woman so she left the relationship. She applied for an apprehended violence order [AVO] and was granted one for two years. Despite having an AVO against her ex-partner, he continued to abuse her, even writing her letters from jail, which was breaching the AVO. Amanda could not have her two eldest children listed on the AVO and as a result her ex-husband fought for sole care on

the basis that she could not keep them safe.

Amanda has had to apply for three AVOs against her ex-partner because although the courts have the power to grant a 10-year AVO, it will not do so. Her ex-partner has not been through a program for perpetrators or counselling. He has been to jail and continues his violence against her. What does she have to do to prove this in order to protect her children? Eventually Amanda's two eldest children were removed from her care by the Family Court because it found that she could not protect them against the violence of her ex-partner. By not listing her children on the AVO the courts did not adequately enforce the AVO and therefore did not keep her and her children safe. Her ex-partner has never lived with her youngest child yet he is seeking unsupervised access. Having been through so much, Amanda's finances have been drained and she does not have the resources to pay a solicitor, therefore she is representing herself in court. It remains to be seen how effectively she can do this and whether her plight will be heard.

Members may be wondering whether I am speaking to the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015 or about domestic violence. I am speaking about the bill. Amanda's story goes to the crux of the bill. If those bodies were free to advocate for their clients, Amanda would not be in that situation. She does not want a political campaign in order to score political points. She wants a solution that grants her unfettered access to her children and protection from her ex-partner. She wants access to justice and fairness. This Government is placing a gag on women such as Amanda, the services that can protect and advocate for her are unable to do so and policymakers are being denied the opportunity to tell her story.

Policymakers are usually far removed from domestic violence in our community. We see only the most desperate of cases in our electorates. We do not understand the range of issues that non-government workers, refuges and domestic violence services grapple with every day. We do not see the complexity of the struggle that is their reality. It is a good thing that policymakers are not involved in the minutia. We can be more objective and look at the strategic vision of the Government and therefore make policies that are designed to achieve outcomes for all in our community rather than be caught by sectional interests. However, where the complex area of human services is concerned, we must guarantee that the most vulnerable people in our community are not left behind. Because someone's case is unusual does not mean it is any less desperate or unworthy of our assistance. It is in these complex cases that a solution must be found and not-for-profit bodies must be able to advocate freely on behalf of their clients.

I wish to share a definition that was articulated to me by my lecturer when undertaking tertiary studies in psychology and counselling—that is, social workers heal a damaged person then try to heal the society that damaged them in the first instance. Social workers in our non-government sector are taking on more work to heal people in our community and are trying to heal the community. They have caseloads that are increasing each year, often exponentially, due to unfunded changes in government programs. Those workers are at the coalface helping people such as Amanda navigate the maze of legislation that is acting against them as well as trying to keep them safe and alive.

When our justice system fails people such as Amanda and they lose their children while facing repeated violence from an ex-partner and become impoverished as a result of fighting a system that is designed to protect them, something is seriously wrong. Being a caseworker on cases such as this is soul destroying. The only light at the end of the tunnel is an opportunity to stop this happening to others. Amanda came to me to seek changes to the treatment of other survivors of domestic violence. There are gag clauses on the current service agreements of many refuges and non-government services that care for the most vulnerable in our community that stop those agencies advocating for their clients. Therefore, we do not always see the issues in legislation and how it impacts detrimentally on our communities that we were elected to govern and protect.

The gag clauses mean the Government is not listening to the community sector. It is providing funding begrudgingly but is saying: "Have the cash. Now go away. Do not spend it all at once and do not bother us about this problem anymore." The bill prohibits content in agreements that restricts or prevents a non-profit body, including its staff, from commenting on, advocating support for, or opposing change to any matter

established by law, policy or practice of the State. Any member of the community can become an expert on a topic by opening a Facebook or Twitter account. However, we must not ignore the experience, wisdom, clarity and expertise of non-profit bodies that helps to progress public debate. The Government must not ignore the advice of those entrusted with the special task of dealing with these complex issues.

This nation is proud of its democracy. When we ignore the compassionate experts who help our most vulnerable, when we punish individuals and organisations for speaking out against bad policy, and when we write clauses into agreements that prevent us from hearing where our policies fail, we chip away at the very foundations of our democracy. The bill will enable us all to act with courage, conviction and integrity to ensure that we listen to those who are charged with looking after the most vulnerable in our community. I urge Government members to open their hearts and ears to the most compassionate workers in our community and to support the bill.

**Ms JO HAYLEN** (Summer Hill) [10.30 a.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015. This bill lifts the gags on not-for-profits that prohibit them from speaking up and criticising the Government and from participating fully in our democracy. No-one in this place questions the value of democracy but as Australians we sometimes take it for granted. That is not because we are ungrateful, naive or inherently apathetic—Australians are none of those things—but in a busy and complicated world it is easy to forget that rights are hard won and easily lost. Our call today in this place is to remember that our freedoms are something precious for us to nurture and pass on to our children, for us to preserve and strengthen, to take pride in and strive to protect. Indeed, our call today is nothing less than to defend the quality of our democracy.

A vibrant democracy and an inclusive society are dependent on a vibrant, independent and innovative not-for-profit sector. Not-for-profits play a vital role in our community. They provide critical services to our most vulnerable across almost every sector in the economy. They are social service organisations, community legal centres, healthcare providers, theatre and arts companies, shelters for the homeless or refugees and for those escaping domestic violence. They are large or small; work in the country, the suburbs and the city. Increasingly they fill the gap between the community's needs and what government and the public sector can, or are willing to, provide. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, they contribute \$43 billion to Australia's gross domestic product and engage more than 4.6 million volunteers each year. Importantly, they act as a critical check and balance for government and the private sector. They supply expertise and frontline experience to public debate. They are the heart of Australian civil society.

This bill recognises the value of not-for-profits in our democracy. It frees these organisations to speak their minds and advocate most fully for the most vulnerable. It removes the gags that suppress their independence and fearlessness—the qualities that make them most useful to our democratic structures—and it rights a wrong. The Government's undemocratic laws to gag and silence not-for-profits should never have been introduced in the first place. It will come as no surprise that this Liberal Government introduced laws to actively suppress criticism. The O'Farrell Government followed in the footsteps of the Newman Government in Queensland and brought forward these laws as a way to silence criticism and limit public debate about the harmful political agenda. The community is rightly appalled that this Liberal Government treats the not-for-profit sector with such contempt. This Government, along with its mates in Canberra, has grown ever more committed to hollowing out the public sector and outsourcing much of the work to not-for-profits. At the same time it slashed and burned the not-for-profit sector, cut funding across the board, and then forbade discussion and criticism.

The community is right to be appalled that as the public sector shrinks this Government relies increasingly on the not-for-profit sector to deliver vital services and then gags them. Two years after this Liberal Government moved to gag not-for-profit organisations it still despises consultation and transparency. This Government has turned its back on community consultation around projects such as the Parramatta revitalisation project, which is moving ahead with WestConnex without an environmental impact statement, business case or planning approval. It is committed to cutting local democracy off at the knees, with forced amalgamation of local councils against the wishes of the community. This Government remains allergic to

consultation and public criticism. Community legal centres are a case in point.

Community legal centres give advice on civil and criminal law, employment and discrimination, assist young people and families, and provide critical support for those fleeing domestic violence. They also provide vital services like the Custody Notification Scheme—since its inception in 2000 no Aboriginal Australian has died in custody in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. In my electorate the Marrickville Legal Centre provides a statewide service for youth and the Inner West Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service, amongst others, which are designed to help the most vulnerable. The Abbott and Baird governments have threatened these services and the Commonwealth Attorney-General, the Hon. George Brandis, has slashed funding to community legal centres, only to backflip in the face of community pressure. These cuts threaten the continuation of the Custody Notification Scheme, with the Abbott Government again backflipping as a result of community pressure. They were met with hot air from the New South Wales Attorney General, who condemned the Commonwealth cuts and then refused to provide the sector with certainty by remaining silent on funding from the State.

The New South Wales legal assistance services funding principles prohibit community legal centres from making a contribution to public debate, restricting any activity deemed to be political advocacy. If they are in receipt of government funding they cannot comment on unfair, unjust or ill-formed laws. Disgracefully, they cannot speak up for the people those laws affect. As a result, inferior laws are more likely to be made in this place, with potentially disastrous impacts in the community. Community legal centres are the most eligible and often most qualified to speak for the vulnerable in our community. They are on the front line. They see first-hand how these laws impact on people. They see the hardship, they fight through the unfairness and they have every right to advocate for the people they seek to assist. But rather than listen to this expertise, the Government has chosen to close its ears. Rather than allowing the community to speak up against injustice, which is its birthright, the Government has chosen to silence it and arrogantly push ahead with its own agenda.

The Premier said he is sick of politics in this country, yet he trusts politicians above those in the trenches who are fighting every day for the most vulnerable. He is committed to gagging not-for-profits and silencing criticism of his Government. He is committed to ignoring expert advice from outside this place and from trusting those in the community who see first-hand how laws affect people. This is politics as usual; it has to stop. The Premier might not like politics as usual but he is certainly no advocate for transparent democracy. This bill seeks to uphold a very important right in which we all believe. I urge members to protect that right today. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [10.36 a.m.]: I support the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015. The object of this bill is to prohibit State agreements from restricting or preventing non-profit bodies from commenting on, advocating support for or proposing changes to State laws, policy or practice. The origins of the bill lie in the democratic principle and in the principles of good governance in this State and nationally. No-one would question that non-profit organisations are fundamental to our democratic society; they have been for hundreds of years. In this country and internationally non-profit organisations are relied on to look after the interests of those in need. Time and again, non-profit organisations bring issues that need to be acted upon to the attention of our State and Federal governments. The freedom in which we believe as Australian citizens will be undermined if the advocacy of these organisations is impacted upon or stopped. In fact, the freedom to advocate is part of the package of what it means to live in a democratic society.

Non-government organisations will often have detailed, on-the-ground knowledge of problems and social issues that State governments chose to ignore or simply do not know about. Their knowledge often will be different from and superior to the official knowledge that government may have. Frankly, often they know more about issues than most government officials—bureaucrats or politicians. They are frequently best placed to know how to improve things and deal with the problems faced by different community groups and individuals. They are exposed to large clientele, which gives them an opportunity to recognise systemic patterns that need to be addressed. If government wants the best possible policy, especially in New South Wales, the best possible programs and the best possible governance outcomes the advice, opinions and lobbying of the non-government sector are essential.

I turn now to a brief historical example, but it is also very relevant today. In Australia we are still dealing with the abuse of children in institutional care—whether by governments, churches or other charitable organisations. If it were not for non-for-profit organisations such as Care Leavers Australia Network, Bravehearts, et cetera, public awareness of the abuse of children in institutional care would not have come to government attention and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse would not have been established. The reality is that for decades these children, who have since become adults, were treated like second-class citizens. They were basically forgotten, which is why they are called the forgotten Australians. When we look at the Indigenous population and at the stolen generation we see a similar story. If the advocacy groups that were dealing with these issues did not constantly fight on their behalf and make the State governments, the media and others aware of the institutional abuse, we would not be dealing with these problems now.

These types of problems did not just happen in Australia; they happened throughout the world. If it were not for the advocacy groups we would not be addressing this problem. These groups should have a say when the Government gets it so badly wrong. The forgotten Australians and the stolen generation are prime examples of that. My biggest concern is that the Government is opposing this bill. What has the Government got to hide? Why would the Government oppose such a bill, which basically gives advocacy groups the right in our democracy to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable people? Why would such gag laws be necessary for groups that should have the right to participate in our democracy and help governments to govern better? This bill is so straightforward that the Government should be supporting not opposing it. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [10.41 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015 and commend the member for Liverpool for introducing it. It is important to have this debate in the House today. I understand from the Minister's contribution this morning that the Government will not be supporting this bill, which is a great shame because it will ensure that non-profit bodies in this State will be unfettered—free from the restrictions that governments place on them in order for them to receive the crumbs from the table—and that they will be provided with the revenue they need to support the most vulnerable people in society who are often forgotten in this place.

This bill seeks to prohibit New South Wales from entering into agreements with non-profit bodies that restrict or prevent those bodies from engaging politically and campaigning on issues of State law, policy and practice. The Minister tells us that this bill is unnecessary and that these non-government organisations [NGOs] can advocate for and speak out on behalf of the most vulnerable in society. I think all members have had experience—there is no doubt that I have had experience—of community organisations in our electorates speaking to them about their fears. Unless there is explicit legislation that protects people's rights to advocate and it is set out clearly and specifically, their advocacy will be fettered and their voices silenced.

Let me give members an example about which I am sure the Minister is aware—the Going Home Staying Home reforms. I think all members will now admit that those reforms were a shambles: They were implemented ineffectively and they were a major headache for the Government. Those reforms were also a major headache for women's refuges and other organisations in the community. The not-for-profit sector—the NGOs in that sector—worked constructively and closely with the Government to obtain a positive result. The Minister might say, "That means this legislation is unnecessary," but I know that in meetings I attended NGOs said they felt that they were not able to speak up. They said, "We do not want to get on the wrong side of the Government. We do not want to have arguments with them. We do not want them to think that we are being political. We are not political; we are just trying to speak out on behalf of people in our community."

This legislation will solve the problem. This legislation will give organisations the confidence and the legislative framework to speak out and advocate on behalf of their communities in the knowledge that that right will be protected. The power that resides in the Minister's office—the often invisible authority of the Minister—will not be imposed on these organisations because we, the Parliament, will protect them against the power that is wielded by the Minister. The Parliament will ensure that not-for-profit organisations have the ability



to stand strong and tall and represent people in the community who often do not have a voice. I am talking about organisations such as the Redfern Legal Centre, which does a lot of work relating to police oversight, and the Environmental Defenders Office, which works on charged environmental issues. The cases that these organisations put forward are often controversial. There is often pressure from the media and from the Minister for them to be quiet—for them to stop meddling in what they see as the Minister's business.

Today this Parliament has an opportunity to say, "You have a right to speak up freely. It should not be an implied right that is subject to the authority, pressure and sometimes intimidation from the media or the Minister's office. We give you the right to speak freely." If this is not about classic liberalism, I do not know what is. If this is not about protecting the rights of organisations to speak out in favour of other people—the right to freedom of speech—I do not know what is. Today we heard the Minister saying, "Do not worry. Everything is all right; things will continue as usual." But we know that there is a sense of fear and concern and that many organisations feel they are unable to speak up in the face of the authority of the Minister, in particular.

The Federal Abbott Government has reduced funding for a range of peak organisations in an attempt to silence them—to make sure that their voices are not strong in our civil society. This bill is even more important because it will give rights to organisations and it explicitly sets out that they are able to advocate on behalf of people who are often the most vulnerable in our society. When we stand back we can see that the importance of democracy is not just in the Parliament and the judiciary but also in civil society. We need to build robust and strong civil societies. This legislation will provide the required depth and breadth for civil society organisations to act as bulwarks against authoritarian government. If the Government does not seek to do these things community organisations should feel free to advocate on behalf of the vulnerable in our society.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** Why should the taxpayer pay for it?

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** The member for Ku-ring-gai asks, "Why should we pay for it?" We are not saying that the taxpayer should pay for it. If the member had read the bill he would know what we are talking about. The interjection of the member for Ku-ring-gai only goes to show his lack of understanding. We are not saying, "Let us give NGOs money to be advocates"; we are saying we need a framework that enables these organisations to express their views.

**Mr Alister Henskens:** It exists already.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** If it exists already what is wrong with codifying it? We know that the authority of the Minister in this Government or in any other government will be strong. It will do no-one any harm if we give those people the right to advocate on behalf of the vulnerable in our society. In May 2013 the O'Farrell Government issued new legal assistance services funding principles that put limits on the activities of 40 community legal centres and 22 legal aid offices. The Environmental Defenders Office [EDO], in particular, has played a crucial role in allowing members of concerned communities across this State to stand up against inappropriate developments, even where such developments were sanctioned or proposed by New South Wales.

The funding principles prohibit "lobbying governments and elected officials on law reform and policy issues" and "public campaigning and advocacy, including the use of traditional and social media, participation in rallies or demonstrations for causes seeking changes to government policies or laws", which will only result in silencing them. Anyone who has been to the EDO, who goes to court and has the matter resolved in his or her favour is prohibited from saying, "The Government should change the law to fix this." People are not allowed to say that. Even though it has been demonstrated that there may be a problem or a concern and a contradictory situation has been outlined by the court, people cannot say to the Government, "You need to change that. The courts have determined that there is a problem." People are forbidden to do that.

The cruelest of these organisations is a major problem. I heard a Government member say that a person can approach his or her local member as an individual, but organisations that have the experience and skill should be able to put their case to government. They should be able to say, "This is our experience and

this is something that we think should be protected." The linking of funding to silence from non-government organisations comes at a time when governments in Australia and around the world are doing what they can to marginalise dissenting voices. It is the view of The Greens that democracy should allow a broad range of voices and that organisations should have the maximum opportunity for freedom of expression. The conservatives on the Government side believe freedom of expression should be cruelled and should not be promoted.

Local organisations have a wealth of understanding of grassroots experience, and they can add something to government. We welcome contributions to government from the not-for-profit sector. They sometimes oppose the position that The Greens put forward but we welcome their contribution. We think that is important. An organisation should not have to weigh up its future funding requirements before making a submission to a parliamentary inquiry. If a group wants to advocate or make a submission, The Greens believe that is important. The Greens believe in a democracy with robust debate. We believe in a democracy with freedom of speech. We believe in a robust democracy that ensures civil society can make a strong contribution. The Greens support the ideal of a robust civil society. Organisations should have freedom of speech without having to weigh up the impact on their funding before doing something as simple as making a submission to a parliamentary inquiry.

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Strathfield) [10.51 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015. I thank the shadow Attorney General for bringing this important bill to the attention of the House. Not-for-profit organisations do an amazing job. I have been fortunate to see their work as a journalist, as a member of Parliament, as a Minister and as an executive and non-executive director of a not-for-profit organisation. I have worked or volunteered for a number of not-for-profit organisations. I have seen the absolute commitment of staff and volunteers, who do their job certainly not for the pay and conditions but from a desire to make a difference for their communities.

Not-for-profit organisations exist to help those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable and who face challenges that have an impact on their day-to-day existence. Organisations can often provide services to marginalised communities in a more cost-effective and efficient manner than large government agencies. Importantly, they operate at the coalface. They provide an insight into the policy challenges that face our communities. It is therefore critical that not-for-profit organisations be allowed to speak openly, without fear of repercussions, about policy and service delivery in New South Wales. That is the object of the bill. As the shadow Attorney General outlined in his second reading speech:

The object of the bill is to prohibit State agreements from restricting or preventing non-profit bodies from commenting on, advocating support for or proposing changes to State law, policy and practice.

It is clear, as a number of speakers have highlighted, that this Government is moving to outsource many of its functions. We have already seen that happening in disability services, homelessness services, women's refuges and health service delivery. Not-for-profit organisations are well placed to take on the provision of these services. However, they must be allowed to do so knowing that they can talk directly to government about better ways of doing things. Talking directly to government includes speaking candidly to the media and the community about existing and developing issues of policy and service delivery.

I remember a time when large not-for-profit organisations were willing to weigh in on areas of policy that were not being addressed by government. That is all too rare these days. There was a time when large not-for-profit organisations conducted research and highlighted to government where it was failing. It has been a long time since I have seen not-for-profit organisations doing that. I believe this bill goes some way towards ensuring that not-for-profit organisations, both big and small, operate in an environment that allows them the freedom to stand up for their constituencies. As we know, those constituencies often cannot stand up for themselves. There is an ongoing need to support the vulnerable, disadvantaged, marginalised and socially isolated.

Not-for-profit organisations often operate at the whim of government policy and funding. They are

required to be nimble and adaptable and operate with minimal funding. Their funding is increasingly allocated as grants or three-year contracts, which inhibits innovation in organisations. When lessons on policy development and implementation are gleaned, there is little opportunity to have a conversation with the community on what works and what does not. That conversation is important. We in this Parliament must be able to take the people whom we represent with us. We must acknowledge that there are issues of need. We must be able to bring those issues to this House and speak openly. Government members say that it is the role of members of Parliament to do that. That is true. But it is also the role of not-for-profit organisations, who may not be elected but who also represent their constituencies.

Transparency is at the heart of this bill. That was brought to the attention of the House very well by the member for Summer Hill. The secrecy surrounding many funding agreements and contracts between not-for-profit organisations and the Government is on a scale not seen previously. There is a lack of transparency in some of the larger infrastructure projects that the Government is undertaking, but it is not limited to them. When government tries to restrict not-for-profit organisations from speaking openly we are less able to deal with issues that arise. That only one speaker from the Government has addressed the House on this bill is disappointing. It verges on being offensive. Other members of the Government could have explained to not-for-profit organisations why the Government will not support this bill.

The Attorney General indicated that the Government was listening to not-for-profit organisations. Having roundtable discussions is one way of listening, but it is important that not-for-profit organisations feel comfortable about raising issues not only behind closed doors, with the Minister or agencies, but openly, with the community and the media. That is where they feel terribly constrained. The Opposition has not brought this bill to the House without reason. Not-for-profit organisations, including those in my electorate and those I have had experience with, are crying out for freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is a democratic right. Not-for-profit organisations feel that their voice is being curtailed and that their right to address many of the issues they come across is being hampered by the way the Government is operating.

The Opposition's primary concern is the agreements between not-for-profit organisations and government. The Attorney General ignored that issue in her speech to this House. While not-for-profit organisations participate in roundtable discussions, those discussions are hampered. Roundtable discussions are not the point of this bill. The point of this bill is to look at the agreements between not-for-profit organisations and government. The bill seeks to support not-for-profit organisations to speak openly as commentators and to critically analyse government policy. Anyone who has studied policy development and implementation understands the importance of consultation, seeking views and critically analysing parts of the policy that may not have worked. I commend this bill to the House. It is a good bill. It is a shame that the Government cannot support this important bill. I congratulate the shadow Attorney General. He has championed the rights of not-for-profit organisations. He has seen a need and has brought that to the attention of the House.

As I said, it is disappointing that only one Government member has spoken on this bill, particularly given that there are several Government members in the Chamber. I thank the not-for-profit organisations in my community that do such an extraordinary job. I have had cause to contact many of them in the past few weeks around housing, women's issues, domestic violence and disability. I see day to day their extraordinary efforts to make a difference to my community, and I thank them for that. I thank also the staff and the volunteers. I want them to know that as their local member for Strathfield I am their advocate. They may not feel that they can speak openly to media and in the community because of the restraints imposed by the Government, but I can be their voice. Unfortunately, they feel that way. I encourage them to come and talk to me about the lessons they have before them that the Government needs to heed.

As I said, I commend the bill to the House. Labor members always side with not-for-profit organisations, which understand the commitment of a civil society to making a stronger and better New South Wales. These critical issues must be addressed, and this bill goes some way to understanding how we can improve policy development and implementation in this State. Again, I thank the not-for-profit organisations in my community. I thank members on my side who have spoken in support of the bill, understanding that this issue needs to be

addressed. In particular, I again thank the shadow Attorney General who has been proactive in understanding the challenges faced by this sector and, indeed, has felt strongly enough to bring this important bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [11.01 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contribution of the Attorney General, and member for Vaucluse. I acknowledge the contributions of and thank the member for Maitland, the member for Summer Hill, the member for Prospect, the member for Balmain and the member for Strathfield. The simple aim of the bill is to prohibit State funding agreements from restricting and preventing not-for-profit bodies from commenting on, advocating support for or opposing changes to State law, policy and practice. Substantially the same legislation in the Federal jurisdiction was carried on a bipartisan basis. The then Federal Opposition, the Coalition parties, were effusive in supporting the bill and the principles behind it. Regrettably, that has not been replicated here.

The principles behind the bill are simple and central to a democratic society. Society and governance benefit from fulsome debate. The clash of ideas is an important part of getting the best government decisions and the best government possible. That is especially so when dealing with not-for-profit bodies and non-government organisations. They often have a grassroots view of problems and situations and thus are often best equipped to contribute to debate. They often do high volume casework that reveals general patterns. I note that that point is acknowledged by the Productivity Commission, which would normally be making recommendations supported by the Government rather than the Opposition.

As for the Government's position, the Attorney General said that the Government cannot support the bill, which means it will vote against the bill and vote it down. I have been in this House for some time, and I do not think I have ever heard such an inadequate argument against a bill as that put up by the Attorney. Her primary argument was that this bill is unnecessary. In essence, she argued that the current practice of the Government is the same as that in the bill. If that is the case, what possible argument is there against supporting the bill? If the Government said that it is doing it already, why on earth can it not support the bill to which it says it is already adhering?

The conclusion one would have to draw from that is that if the Government is not prepared to have it in law who will it gag? What plan does the Government have to start gagging organisations? That is the only logical thing that flows from the Government's position to oppose the bill. As I said, it is also in stark contrast to the position in Canberra. The Attorney said that she had great respect for community legal centres. Perhaps that is the case, but she does not have enough respect to support this bill. In practical terms, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the sector about the Government's intentions. One need only look at what happened in 2013 when principles were changed and the concern that caused in the sector in relation to preventing them from being advocates. This legislation would remove that level of uncertainty. If, as the Attorney said, this is the practice the Government adheres to, then there is no proper and logical argument for it not to support the bill.

One can only conclude that the Government has an agenda to start gagging organisations. The second argument put by the Attorney is that the Government must target scarce resources to casework and to individual cases. That is not what the Productivity Commission said. But I think what that means is better reflected in some of the interjections from the Government backbench during speeches—comments such as "only individuals should make representations; organisations shouldn't have to" and "public money should not go to those organisations making representations". They were the interjections from the backbench. I think that is probably a much better and more accurate indication of what the Government thinks.

The third argument from the Attorney was that this bill is potentially retrospective. That is an interesting argument. She said that at the moment the Government is adhering to the bill and there is nothing that it is doing that is gagging any not-for-profit organisation. If that is the case, how can the legislation possibly be retrospective? She cannot have it both ways: Either it is a problem because it is retrospective and it affects things the Government is currently doing, or the Government is not doing those things, in which case it is an entirely irrelevant argument. She should work out which of those things she wants; she cannot have both. As I said, the Government's argument is extraordinarily weak and is interestingly rebutted by a number of

commentaries. In particular, Environment Liaison Officer Cerin Loane wrote to me and said:

We are alarmed by ongoing attacks on environment organisations that threaten the continuation of our important work to improve environmental outcomes and support the public interest. We are also dismayed by funding cuts to community legal centres, including EDO NSW, who provide much needed services to the community and act on behalf of the public interest.

Environment organisations, like ours, play an important role in civil society. They offer a place where the public can learn and actively engage in the democratic process, they build a sense of community and encourage the average citizen to speak to government about important environmental issues. They give structure and process to an incorporated and organised public voice, and most importantly, they influence the protection and preservation of the earth's natural resources and biodiversity.

The overarching ability for environment organisations to positively contribute to democratic society and, ultimately, the protection of the environment, is greatly enhanced by governments acknowledging and supporting that role. The *Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015* is an important piece of legislation that does just that.

I note in passing that the Law Society wrote to me expressing its views through the human rights committee and the Indigenous issues committee. The Law Society is of the view that this is an important bill and it supports the principles underlying the legislation. It makes the point that community legal centres do important work and that it would be inefficient to lose the expertise of committees in their contributions to the debate. The letter stated:

This may be particularly pertinent, noting the view that "longstanding sources of advice to government have been or are being restricted." In this regard, the Committees understand that the criminal law review division of the Department of Justice was disbanded in May 2015 and that the NSW Law Reform Commission has not received a reference since late 2013 and has not had a permanent chair since December 2013.

This bill has simple provisions but they proclaim important principles. Public debate should not be stifled; the voice of the vulnerable should not be gagged. Non-government organisations should not be prevented from approaching members of Parliament. It is important that they be heard and be able to contribute to debate. The proper development of legislation needs to have all informed points of view before the Parliament. That includes non-government organisations and not-for-profit bodies. They should not be treated as an arm of government. They should not be restrained by the Government paying them money. They should not be bought and they should not be gagged. I commend the bill to the House.

**Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 35**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle

Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay

Mr Park  
Mr Parker  
Mr Piper  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari

Ms Finn  
Mr Greenwich  
Mr Harris

Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Minns

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lulich  
Mr Warren

**Noes, 42**

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

Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Henskens  
Ms Hodgkinson  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos  
Mr Piccoli  
Mr Provest  
Mr Roberts

Mr Sidoti  
Mrs Skinner  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Pair**

Mr Foley

Mr Hazzard

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**Bill not read a second time.**

**VISITORS**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I welcome to the gallery this morning students from Wiley Park Girls High School, guests of the member for Lakemba. I also welcome students attending the annual Kiama Student Leaders Forum, guests of the member for Kiama and Parliamentary Secretary.

**Pursuant to sessional order General Business Orders of the Day (General Orders) and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) proceeded with.**

**SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL**

**Debate resumed from 25 June 2015.**

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON** (Maitland) [11.16 a.m.]: The member for Kiama should not get too excited about the promise of a hospital upgrade in his electorate because an upgrade has been promised in my electorate for the past five years. We all know that this Government cannot be trusted when it comes to delivering on regional health. I remind the House that for four of those five years a Liberal member represented

my electorate and she could not manage to get a hospital upgrade.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. With all due respect to the member for Maitland, this motion relates to Shellharbour Hospital. The member should address the motion, otherwise she should sit down.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind the member for Maitland that the motion relates to Shellharbour Hospital and I call her back to the leave of the motion.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** The member for Kiama is confused. If he is trying to obtain something for his electorate he should look at the broader picture—that is, what the Government and the ministry are doing generally in this portfolio area. He can disagree all he likes but at the end of the day—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Kiama is not disagreeing. The motion relates to Shellharbour Hospital.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** Yes, that is what I am talking about. I understand it is about Shellharbour Hospital.

**Mr Mark Coure:** You talked about Robyn Parker.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** I do not know why Government members do not understand. Essentially, the Government has made a commitment to the member's community just as it has to communities all around the State and it is not delivering. The member's motion condemns the Labor Party for not delivering on health, for not making promises, yet his Government has made promises and not delivered.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** That's not true.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is true and there have been cuts to the Health budget.

**Mr John Robertson:** Merged departments, ambulances locked up, bed blockage.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Maitland will direct her comments through the Chair, not across the Chamber.

**Ms JENNY AITCHISON:** It is important to place on the record that the motion condemns the former Labor Government for not making commitments, yet the Government has made commitments but has not fulfilled them. The member for Kiama is totally out of order in condemning the Labor Party. The Labor Party has delivered on health care in my electorate. The Maitland Hospital emergency department was built in the last year of the Labor Government. This department has provided 13 new treatment spaces and 12 new beds, and 300 jobs were created during the construction phase. I am addressing that part of the motion. The motion condemns Labor in relation to one aspect of health funding when the Government has not delivered on its promises.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.20 a.m.], in reply: I join in welcoming the Kiama Student Leaders Forum to the gallery today. If they are looking for examples of leadership, they should not look to the other side of the Chamber. Light travels faster than sound and it is in that vein that some people appear bright until they speak. What we just heard from the member for Maitland, who does not even come from the Illawarra, was a diatribe on promises when no promises were made.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** Your motion is a diatribe, a meaningless diatribe.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The member talked about Health budget cuts. If the member could read the budget without the assistance of pictures, she would know that the budget increased by 20 per cent over the

last term of this Parliament.

**Ms Anna Watson:** What is the start date for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital and what is the finish date?

**Mr GARETH WARD:** The salmon jumps onto the hook. The member for Shellharbour is into it again. The Labor Party promised \$30 million against the Government's \$251 million.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Bring out your dead—the former Leader of the Opposition. What would he know about Shellharbour? He would need a GPS to get there.

**Mr John Robertson:** I ask that the member be directed to make his comments through the Chair.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I was attempting to do just that.

**Mr John Robertson:** Further, the member should cease making personal attacks on the contributions of members to the debate.

**Ms Jenny Aitchison:** What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** You're a goose.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Is the member speaking further to the point of order?

**Ms Anna Watson:** No, my point of order—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat.

**Ms Anna Watson:** —is that the member for Kiama should address members by their proper title.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Shellharbour took a point of order before I had ruled on the point of order taken by the member for Blacktown.

**Ms Anna Watson:** You didn't listen to it.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I direct the member for Shellharbour to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of three hours.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Shellharbour left the Chamber at 11.23 a.m.]*

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Kiama has the call. The member will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** My favourite mythical creature is a well-behaved member of the Opposition, exhibit A. This motion is serious because it recognises a \$251 million commitment to hospitals and health care. Across the Illawarra we are seeing major upgrades—at Wollongong Hospital, where car parking has been improved, and at Shoalhaven Hospital, with a new linear accelerator. At Shellharbour Hospital, where services were cut by the former Labor Government, this Government is proposing a \$251 million upgrade. Members of



the gallery are about to witness the Labor Party voting against a \$251 million hospital upgrade. By voting against this motion, they are voting against a commitment of more than a quarter of a billion dollars to our region.

One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to make sure that our region gets the support it deserves. The people who stand in the way of that support are the people who sit opposite and who are about to vote against this much-needed investment in hospitals and health care in our community. Already, Shellharbour Hospital is getting a \$6.4 million upgrade in ambulatory care. This will expand much-needed medical and surgical services in our community. I will continue to stand up to ensure that our community gets the services, support and investments that we need. With behaviour like that shown by the member for Shellharbour, no wonder we had problems attracting funding when Labor were in government. I will work assiduously every day to make sure that these investments continue to flow to the Illawarra. I will continue to oppose the rhetoric of those opposite. They had 16 years in government but delivered nothing. We will deliver on every one of the healthcare promises we make to our electorate. I could not be more proud to ensure the Government delivers on its promises.

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 44**

Mr Anderson	Ms Goward	Mr Piper
Mr Ayres	Mr Grant	Mr Provest
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Henskens	Mrs Skinner
Mr Brookes	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Mr Humphries	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Mr Johnsen	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	Mrs Pavey	Mrs Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gee	Ms Petinos	Mr Bromhead
Ms Gibbon	Mr Piccoli	Mr Patterson

**Noes, 33**

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

Mr Harris

Mr Minns

Mr Warren

**Pairs**

Mr Baird  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Kean  
Mr Roberts

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Foley  
Mr Hoenig

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negated.**

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 45**

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

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

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

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Noes, 32**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn

Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan

Mr Minns  
Mr Park  
Mr Parker  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Mr Zangari  
*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich

Mr Harris

Ms Mihailuk

Mr Warren

**Pairs**

Mr Baird  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Kean  
Mr Roberts

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Foley  
Mr Hoenig

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**LAKE MACQUARIE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [11.38 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the recent storms that impacted on significant parts of the State highlighted the important role and expertise of the SES.
- (2) Notes the Lake Macquarie SES at Boolaroo did an excellent job in responding to local needs.
- (3) Notes the work of other SES branches and volunteer organisations deserve heartfelt thanks and support for their response to this and other events.
- (4) Notes that the Lake Macquarie SES is in need of improved facilities and calls on the Minister for Emergency Services to respond to its growing need by providing new facilities.

All members would be well aware of the impact of the east coast low that hit on 20 April, sweeping a destructive path from the Shoalhaven to Myall Lakes, with the Hunter and Central Coast regions bearing the brunt. Like the infamous *Pasha Bulker* storm of 2007, this weather event created absolute havoc in the Hunter region, with flash flooding, gale-force winds, widespread power failures, bridges washed away, roads cut, communities isolated by floodwaters and thousands of trees downed—many across cars, homes and roads. Tragically, lives were lost in Dungog and Gillieston Heights as a direct consequence of the flooding. The storm generated more than 20,000 requests for assistance to the State Emergency Service [SES] across all affected areas, more than 170 flood rescues and left more than 220,000 homes without power—some for more than a week.

The force of the storm was equal to a category two cyclone, with winds reaching up to 135 kilometres an hour and between 300 millimetres and 400 millimetres of rain falling on parts of the Hunter during the critical period. The response to this storm graphically illustrated the importance of the SES to the welfare of people living in New South Wales and the invaluable service its 10,000 volunteer members provide in responding to emergencies. While emergency services personnel and work crews from government agencies also contributed to the recovery, the bulk of the work was done by SES members, including some from interstate and other parts of New South Wales who travelled to lend a hand. When we hear stories about SES workers who literally spent days in the field assisting people to deal with damage to their homes it is easy to forget that these workers are not paid for their services. In fact, many end up doing it at a personal and financial cost to themselves.

Lake Macquarie SES units were in the thick of things during the storm response. The city and

Cooranbong units responded to about 3,000 requests for assistance, and were still helping people weeks after the event when I visited the headquarters at Boolaroo. Overall, the storm generated an unprecedented response by SES units statewide, with more than 700 volunteers mobilised to answer the 20,000-plus calls, nearly half of which were from people in the Hunter. Around Lake Macquarie most of the volunteers' work was devoted to the removal of fallen trees and other debris, and patching up homes left vulnerable by storm damage. However, there were also a number of boats set adrift, and jetties broken and submerged in the lake, and people in some low-lying areas needed assistance to deal with flooding.

In other parts of the Hunter, such as Dungog, Maitland and Stroud, the damage and disruption caused by flooding was much more severe. Thankfully, SES volunteers were there to render assistance, just as the pioneer forerunners of the organisation were during the 1955 floods in the Hunter Valley. Coincidentally, this storm response coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the events that led to the evolution of the then Civil Defence into the NSW State Emergency Service following devastating floods. I would be surprised if members who represent the region do not refer to that in their contributions to this debate. It would be remiss of me not to mention the contributions of the many other service organisations, charities and random volunteers who pitched in to assist communities and individuals in need. That assistance included cooking meals and offering the use of shower facilities and power sockets, helping with the clean-up or organising food drops and fundraising efforts. Community spirit has certainly been to the fore in the wake of this disaster, especially with efforts to assist hard-hit communities such as Dungog.

The final point in my motion refers to the resources of the Lake Macquarie City SES unit. The Lake Macquarie unit has premises on council-owned land in an industrial estate in Boolaroo, next door to the council depot. The unit has about 90 members, although a similar number of Rural Fire Service [RFS] members frequently work with the unit. It operates two storm rescue trucks, three smaller vehicles and two flood boats. The base station is a converted shed, which houses the large vehicles and includes a meal room and training space, and a small cluster of demountables, which house the operations centre and administration offices. While the unit operators are very grateful to have this facility, it is clear to anyone who visits—as I did a couple of weeks after the storm—that it is fast outgrowing the premises. Some basic amenities are needed: There are no change rooms, there is minimal car parking and only a single shower for members' use. Perhaps a more pressing problem is the cramped conditions of the administration and operations centre, which threaten to hinder the efficiency of the unit, particularly during crises when all hands on deck are required.

The operations room cannot comfortably hold more than about four people, but at the height of the recent storm response more than twice that number were frequently there. It becomes crowded and noisy very quickly during an emergency, making communications difficult. Similarly, the administration centre is a rabbit warren of small rooms and narrow corridors that only barely serve their purpose. It is clear that a move to bigger, preferably purpose-built, facility would greatly enhance the operations capability of the unit and probably serve as a drawcard to new members. While I acknowledge that the needs of units throughout the State and the demands for government money are many, I respectfully ask the Minister for Emergency Services to give priority consideration to the provision of better facilities for the Lake Macquarie SES unit. I have spoken briefly with new Hunter Region Controller Amanda Williamson, who confirmed to me that she was acutely aware of the deficiencies of the Creek Reserve Road site and acknowledged that she will be looking to address this problem.

I take this opportunity to record two acknowledgements. One is to former Lake Macquarie Controller Darryl Marshall, who has left the job since the April storm. Darryl has been a member of the SES for 35 years and local controller since 1988. He has received national recognition for his contribution and is greatly respected and revered by his colleagues. I was pleased to be able to attend a farewell for him last Saturday night at Club Macquarie, where it was obvious that his former team members hold him in high regard. I trust that Darryl and his wife, Joan, will enjoy their retirement. Finally, I once again thank all the SES volunteers who contributed to the immediate storm response and to the ongoing recovery—another job well done. I trust that Government members will support me in this motion.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [11.45 a.m.]: I am pleased that the member for Lake Macquarie

commenced his contribution to debate on his motion by recognising that emergency services workers and volunteers have done an excellent job in responding to the recent storms. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who have assisted in the response, and I hope that each and every member of this House does likewise. It is certainly the position of members on this side of the Chamber. With that in mind, I have the following amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (4) with a view to inserting instead:

- (4) Notes the Government has delivered consecutive record budgets to the NSW State Emergency Service, including a total expenses budget of \$96.4 million for 2015-16.

That is funding well deserved given the enormous effort of volunteers and staff during and after the devastating storm event experienced from late April to early May this year. I understand that between 20 April and 5 May more than 3,100 staff and volunteers from agencies including the NSW State Emergency Service [SES] and the NSW Rural Fire Service [RFS] provided assistance following storms and flooding. I note that SES volunteers from the electorate of Tweed travelled to the area to assist their colleagues. The NSW Rural Fire Service State Air Desk facilitated 190 aircraft deployments on behalf of the New South Wales SES, particularly around the Wyong and Maitland areas. The April East Coast low storm was the largest storm emergency responded to in New South Wales SES history. More than 21,500 requests for assistance were logged, 5,000 000 calls were received, and 170 flood rescues were performed. More than 8,200 requests for assistance were received from the Hunter and Central Coast areas. There was a huge demand for our emergency services workers.

The effort in Lake Macquarie, specifically, was equally meritorious. Hundreds of volunteers from around New South Wales and agencies assisted the Lake Macquarie SES volunteers to respond to requests for assistance made to that unit. I have been advised that the New South Wales SES volunteers at the Lake Macquarie unit, with the assistance of operations incident management teams from other New South Wales SES units, successfully managed the requests for assistance made to the unit. During the events of 20 April 2015 and 30 April 2015 there were more than 2,100 requests for assistance to the Lake Macquarie SES unit. As I indicated in my amendment, this financial year the budgeted total expenses of the New South Wales SES are \$96.4 million. This is the highest budgeted total expense in the history of the New South Wales SES and represents an 11 per cent increase on the 2014-15 budgeted expenses. This demonstrates the commitment of the Minister and the Government to enhancing SES capabilities through various means, including providing training, equipment and facilities.

I have also been made aware that in the Hunter region the New South Wales SES received an additional storm vehicle, and the New South Wales RFS has received three new tankers for the Dora Creek, Peninsula and Wakefield units under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. It is not just the immediate response to storms and floods that involve our emergency services staff and volunteers; after events such as these they put recovery operations in place to ensure that local communities can return to normal as soon as possible. The New South Wales Government responded quickly to the disaster. We worked with the Commonwealth to quickly make natural disaster declarations in 12 local government areas.

Announced on 22 April 2015, they were in Cessnock, Dungog, Gosford, Great Lakes, Maitland, Newcastle, Pittwater, Port Stephens, Singleton, Warringah, Wyong and Lake Macquarie. A further five councils were added to the declarations to enable them to access financial assistance. Those areas, which were announced on 5 May 2015, were Gloucester, Hawkesbury, Ku-ring-gai, Mosman and Waverly. The number of declared areas eventually reached a total of 22. The natural disaster declarations enable funding to be available under the Commonwealth Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements. That means councils are able to access funding to assist with their clean-up costs and repair or replace essential public assets damaged in an event.

The New South Wales Government provides a diverse range of financial and non-financial assistance measures to support relief and recovery from disasters. They include assistance for individuals and

households, local government and/or Crown reserve trusts, non-profit organisations, and primary producers and small business. The major disaster assistance schemes include immediate assistance for households and individuals who are directly affected by a disaster, grants for essential household contents and structural repairs, concessional rate loans of up to \$130,000 for small businesses, grants to local councils, grants and loans to sport and recreation clubs, and loans to voluntary non-profit organisations to restore essential facilities. The Commonwealth Government also activated the Disaster Recovery Payment and Disaster Recovery Allowance for eligible residents in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, Central Coast and mid North Coast regions of New South Wales.

Our emergency service response and recovery agencies have continued to monitor and conduct impact assessments across the areas that bore the brunt of the storm. We can and will support the points of the member's motion congratulating and praising the work of the full range of emergency services personnel, who are provided every support by the New South Wales Government. It is a testament to their preparedness and commitment and the support the Government has provided that they responded to the event quickly and effectively. The community should be as proud as this Government is of the enormous benefit that the emergency services agencies provide. I acknowledge the resilience of our local communities in the face of that disaster.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [11.52 a.m.]: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for moving this motion and support all aspects of it. The recent east coast low and the devastating weather that accompanied that system highlighted the important role and expertise of our State Emergency Service [SES]. The SES was founded in 1955 in response to severe flooding in New South Wales that resulted in loss of life and extensive damage to property and farming lands. The Labor Premier at the time was Joseph Cahill. Cahill recognised the need for a body of trained volunteers who could be called upon at short notice in times of emergency or disaster to work alongside local authorities and emergency services to help New South Wales get back on track.

In 2015 that body was called upon once again to respond to severe weather and flooding in our region. There is no accurate measure of the commitment of those wonderful volunteers, but an educated estimate is that our SES in Lake Macquarie responded to 2,120 calls for help and contributed more than 6,360 hours of voluntary time to our community. Because the Swansea electorate straddles the Central Coast I also acknowledge the good work of SES personnel at Wyong. They responded to 2,500 calls for help and worked thousands of hours voluntarily. Thousands of New South Wales SES members, along with many who travelled from interstate, responded to tens of thousands of requests for assistance as a result of the terrible storm. We have an ageing community in the Swansea electorate, and many people were unable to access family members and remained without power for extended periods. It was a very frightening time. It was comforting to know that through the wind, rain and flooding the men and women in orange were out there responding to community needs and making sure that every household was safe.

The SES is testament to the resilience of New South Wales in the face of adversity. The volunteers' willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty to help to restore our homes and our streets so that we could resume rescue and recuperation operations is commendable. They responded immediately to the call of duty and got to work ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our community. I ask that we recognise the time and effort that those individuals put in to keep our community safe during times of emergency. They are truly invaluable. Like the member for Lake Macquarie, I note that Lake Macquarie SES is in need of improved facilities. I join him in calling on the Minister for Emergency Services to respond to the unit's growing need by providing upgraded facilities. I look forward to working with the member for Lake Macquarie and the Minister for Emergency Services to ensure that happens.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [11.55 a.m.]: I support the amendment proposed by my colleague the member for Tweed to the motion moved by the member for Lake Macquarie. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his motion recognising that emergency services workers and volunteers did an amazing job in responding to the storms earlier this year. I thank the volunteers from around New South Wales and interstate who assisted in the response in all affected areas, including Lake Macquarie. In excess of 2,100

requests for assistance were made to the Lake Macquarie State Emergency Service unit, which were handled and responded to in a highly commendable manner.

In my electorate of Holsworthy we were lucky to have the State Emergency Service [SES] on our side to help manage the storm damage. I acknowledge the tireless efforts of our local SES volunteers, particularly those in Liverpool, for their work during the storms and subsequent clean-up. I think we all had a soggy lawn, a few mud puddles or a few leaks in our roof but many members of my community were more seriously impacted by the storm damage. The notorious Georges River, which runs through my electorate, broke its banks after heavy rain. Cabramatta Creek, which flows through the new sections of the electorate in Prestons and Lurnea, also overflowed. Flooding obviously has an impact on the people who live in the affected areas. During the heaviest rainfalls the floodwaters closed a number of local roads, including some particularly popular routes for local residents in their day-to-day travels and work commute.

I was honoured to join the new Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, AC, DSC, to visit the flood-affected areas in my electorate, particularly Chipping Norton and Moorebank, where we spoke to residents who had returned to their homes. Seeing the mud and debris left behind by the flood in the days after the storms was eye opening but it was a wonderful chance to thank our SES volunteers for their work and to sympathise with residents about what they had been through during the storms. Once again, the preparedness of our residents meant that the damage locally was kept to a minimum. I am incredibly thankful for that. I am also incredibly grateful to our Liverpool SES volunteers, who were flat out responding to calls from residents about fallen trees, leaks and water damage to their homes. They gave up work, sleep and dry clothes to step in and help to repair roofs, clear roadways and ensure that people did not enter dangerous floodwaters. I have thanked them before and I thank them again today.

As the river rose the SES volunteers helped to evacuate homes surrounded by floodwaters in Chipping Norton, particularly along Riverside Drive, Newbridge Road, Rickard Road, Arthur Street and Davy Robinson Drive. Though it was set up no-one needed to access the evacuation centre at Moorebank Community Centre, for which I am grateful. I wanted to go out to see them but my street was flooded and I could not get there. I am incredibly thankful that no local residents were harmed during the flooding. I know that the SES did all it could to ensure that residents were able to return to their homes as soon as it was safe to do so. I offer special thanks to David Butchman and Michael Rou, both of whom give their time to the Liverpool SES, for keeping me updated throughout the clean-up and the evacuation process. As I said, I could not leave my home so it was good to be in contact with them to know what was happening in the electorate.

Whilst we thank the emergency services for the work they have done so far, I note the recovery effort is ongoing and will continue for some time. I am advised that there were many hundreds of responders in the field during the event, with personnel drawn from all over New South Wales emergency service agencies and from agencies across the country. Overall, as a combat agency for floods and storms, the NSW SES received more than 21,500 requests for assistance—another reason the SES deserve our thanks and support for their herculean efforts and hard work during these storms. The NSW SES and other emergency service agencies stand ready to respond in all natural disasters, be they storms, floods or bushfires, and we give them, their families and their employers our heartfelt thanks.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [11.59 p.m.]: Everyone in this House is well aware of the recent disasters that occurred on the Central Coast and in the Lake Macquarie and Hunter regions. The damage was truly devastating. The loss of lives and property and the impact that they have had on the region is still reverberating today. It is one thing to read about such disasters in the newspapers, but to experience it firsthand is truly a life-changing event. At the epicentre of this turmoil were the thousands of brave men and women putting their lives on the line in order to save lives and assist wherever possible.

I visited the Central Coast and the Hunter recently where I met with the member for Port Stephens and the member for Maitland. We listened to volunteers, emergency rescue staff and local residents who played a vital and active role in emergency preparedness and response in their local communities. I guarantee that an improvement in the facilities available and resources provided by the Government will go a long way to

supporting these affected regions. I have learned of the hardships many of these brave volunteers faced during the super storm. One of the largest factors impacting on their ability to do their jobs was communication breakdown. Emergency response personnel had little or no means of communicating with one another or with local residents, as all the equipment throughout the region simply did not work. This created chaos in those areas; emergency response personnel were driving around looking out for individuals who were in need of help.

The communication breakdown removed the ability to issue new jobs or to mobilise and redeploy crews in areas where help was needed the most. A lot can be learned from those who worked through this recent disaster and experienced those major communication problems. Their thoughts and ideas on how to approach such disasters will prove invaluable. The sleepless nights, bravery and empathy displayed by everyone involved in these recovery and rescue efforts are absolutely phenomenal and their heroism should be commended. I wholeheartedly support the motion of the member for Lake Macquarie, and I sincerely hope the Minister welcomes an open discussion with emergency response workers, volunteers and members from affected communities.

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [12.02 p.m.]: In April the State was devastated by cyclonic winds and disastrous flooding. Damage to property and human suffering was immense. I am sure I speak on behalf of everyone in the Chamber when I say that our hearts go out to the families of all the people who lost their lives and who were traumatised as a result of the storm. The thin orange line separating many residents from catastrophe was the State Emergency Service [SES]. I am proud to once again stand in this Chamber and let everybody know how supportive I am of them—and how supportive this Chamber is of them—and congratulate them on their efforts.

It is said that Lake Macquarie was the second most devastated region by this very bad storm. The whole of the community thanks the SES for its efforts in Lake Macquarie. My electorate straddles the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie areas and my constituents owe much to the actions of the Lake Macquarie SES. I salute them and I join the member for Lake Macquarie and others who call for improved services and facilities as a result of the storm. Cardiff, which is a region in my patch and that of the member for Charlestown, was at particular risk of flooding. By 4.40 p.m. on 21 August the *Newcastle Herald* reported that a deluge of rain had caused flooding in the suburb, which is always a problem. Though we avoided the catastrophes of 2007—a tempest that we remember so well—it was still a nail-biting event that day. I remember it very well because I lost my phone while taking photos of the flooded canals in Wallsend; I nearly went under too by not being careful enough.

The Lake Macquarie community in particular thanks the SES for their efforts. It was only in early April this year that the SES took part in its first emergency service expo in Lake Macquarie. Together with the NSW Police Force and Fire and Rescue NSW, the SES demonstrated how it could respond in emergency situations. How timely was that? Amanda Hyde, the community engagement coordinator of the SES, spoke about how important it was for our local community to know how to prepare for events such as this. Then what do you know? There was June. This demonstrates the level of engagement the SES has with the Lake Macquarie community. No-one could have known that only weeks later the skills demonstrated by the SES and the techniques learnt by community members at the expo would be used and that everyone's mettle would be tested. This storm has highlighted the importance of the SES to all of us in New South Wales. The least we can do is give them thanks, but we must also show our support for more services for a organisation that has repeatedly shown how much we need them.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [12.06 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge everybody who contributed to this debate: the member for Tweed, the member for Swansea, the member for Holsworthy, the member for Fairfield and the member for Wallsend. I genuinely thank them for their participation in this debate. One thing is for sure, we are all agreed that we are in awe of and give thanks to those dedicated volunteers and professional people who manage the State Emergency Service [SES] and who come to us in times of need—the "thin orange line" mentioned by my friend the member for Wallsend. It gives the community comfort to know that these people, acknowledged by the member for Swansea, are there when one of these events occurs. We are all clearly in agreement with those sentiments and we are all obviously very supportive of our



own SES.

I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Holsworthy, who spoke about the potential problems within her area in storm events. That is certainly the case with the Georges River and surrounding areas and the problems that have occurred in this area over the years. The member is certainly very aware of her local SES, the Liverpool SES. I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Tweed and note that people from his electorate came to our area to assist. The storm certainly had a major impact; I am sure that nobody missed it. I was in Sydney at a meeting on the morning of the storm. I was driving back as the storm was still hitting the Central Coast very hard. As I drove back along the M1 I could not believe the carnage I saw along the way. It gives one great heart to know that there were so many people out there working with the community. As has been said, it is not only the SES who assist; others provide support too.

It is clear that the House is in staunch agreement on almost all aspects of my motion, and I am very pleased about that. Unfortunately, the Government has fallen into a habit—I guess it is characteristic of government—of members not being allowed to get away unscathed with a motion such as this. And so a petty amendment to the motion has been moved. The amendment acknowledges the Government's very good work. I congratulate the Government on increasing the budget to \$96.4 million, which is an increase of 11 per cent. It is always better when congratulations come from members other than those on the Government side, otherwise they can ring hollow. Therefore, that is what I will do: I applaud the Government for making that investment in our community.

However, this motion is about the dire circumstances and the capital needs of the Lake Macquarie State Emergency Service. I do not accept the amendment to my motion; it is a minor, mean-spirited amendment. I suspect the Government, because it shows such generosity in so many other areas, will eventually address the issue raised in my motion. I acknowledge the Minister's very good response to the crisis in the Hunter. I acknowledge Minister Elliott and Brigadier Darren Norman, the Regional Recovery Coordinator, for the work they have done. It was an appropriate response. I suspect the Government will address the issue raised in my motion, but I do not accept the amendment to my motion.

**Question—That the amendment of the member for Tweed be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 42**

Mr Anderson  
Mr Ayres  
Mr Barilaro  
Ms Berejiklian  
Mr Brookes  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Constance  
Mr Coure  
Mr Crouch  
Mrs Davies  
Mr Evans  
Mr George  
Ms Gibbons  
Ms Goward  
Mr Grant

Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Henskens  
Ms Hodgkinson  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Dr Lee  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos  
Mr Piccoli  
Mr Provest

Mr Sidoti  
Mrs Skinner  
Mr Speakman  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Noes, 33**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn  
Mr Greenwich  
Mr Harris

Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Park

Mr Parker  
Mr Piper  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Mr Zangari

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

### **Pairs**

Mr Baird  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Roberts

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Foley  
Mr Hoenig  
Mr Minns

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment of the member for Tweed agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

### **COOLAMON AMBULANCE STATION**

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.19 p.m.]: I move:

That this House thanks the Minister for Health for a commitment to a new ambulance station at Coolamon.

This commitment has been welcomed extremely warmly by the community of Coolamon. It is something that is very genuinely needed by this wonderful community. By way of background, the Coolamon community and its council have been advocating actively for the past six years for an ambulance station of their own. Over the past few years, concerns about medical risks have been growing due to longer ambulance response times, which are usually 30 to 40 minutes. The nearest ambulance stations for Coolamon are based in Wagga Wagga, Ardlethan, Narrandera and Temora. Geography is one of the biggest concerns for residents in central and western New South Wales when they require assistance for health and emergency situations. The distance from Wagga Wagga to Coolamon may look small on a map, but it takes a minimum of 40 minutes when driving at 100 kilometres an hour.

In 2014 an Ambulance Establishment Committee was formed to intensify the lobbying to build a permanent ambulance station in Coolamon. Coolamon Shire Council realistically set aside a block of land for a future station. Coolamon falls under the newly formed electorate of Cootamundra, so I campaigned and lobbied

hard at the last election for the new ambulance station for Coolamon. It was important that the new station not be built at the expense of the existing station at Ardlethan, which is much needed by its local community. It is a small station comprising an office and shed at the back of the community centre. It is not a grand station by any stretch of the imagination but it has a presence. It is important that we maintain the ambulance station at Ardlethan and that paramedics continue to be assigned to the area. In fact, I have been given an assurance by the Minister for Health that the Ardlethan ambulance station will undergo improvements.

In the 1980s the Ardlethan community worked hard to have an ambulance station built. Various community organisations have provided a lot of equipment for the station and its vehicles over the years. A lot of retirees and elderly working farmers in the area feel safe knowing there is an ambulance service close by. One of my constituents, Mrs Judy Day, had a terrible experience before the ambulance station was opened in Ardlethan. Her husband drove her to town but by the time the ambulance arrived from Temora she had gone into shock and nearly lost her life. Although it was 4.00 p.m. when Mr and Mrs Day arrived in Ardlethan, it took eight hours to reach Temora. Although there is no doctor or hospital in Ardlethan, a community nurse works in the area for two hours four days a week.

Ardlethan is situated on a major crossroad of two important transport roads and over the years the Ardlethan ambulance service has responded to countless accidents. The Newell Highway stretches 137 kilometres from Narrandera to West Wyalong, which takes 1½ hours to travel. The Burley Griffin Way, another major road, stretches for 151 kilometres and takes 1¾ hours to travel. The Ardlethan ambulance services the villages and locations of Mirrool, Tallimba, Beckom and surrounding properties and has attended many farm accidents and incidents on isolated rural properties. The community was worried it would lose the Ardlethan ambulance station and felt its services were being eroded. The general sentiment was that the viability of the community was looking grim, particularly since the Ardlethan Bowling Club, the hub of the community, burnt down in June last year. Such an incident leaves a large hole socially, emotionally and physically in the lives of the residents in small communities such as Ardlethan.

Money is scarce in the rural communities of Coolamon and Ardlethan as a result of drought conditions, farm debt and unreliable commodity prices. Depression has also been a concern in many of the rural communities, and the potential loss of another service weighed heavily on the collective psyche of the community. In December last year I attended a public meeting and listened to the residents and healthcare workers of Ardlethan and Coolamon shire. It was clear they wanted a new ambulance station for Coolamon while retaining the existing services at Ardlethan. I was actively involved with the community and worked closely with the Ambulance Service of NSW and the Coolamon Shire Council to ensure that the best outcome was reached. I know I can be annoying, so I apologise to the Minister for Health for the number of representations that I make to her. I thank the Minister most heartily for her positive response to my numerous representations regarding this matter.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown) [12.26 p.m.]: This motion reminds me of that old saying: self-praise is no praise. Members on the other side of the House continue to fill Thursdays with their self-praise and self-congratulations. Sadly, we do not see motions that highlight the difficulties of all those who rely on access to ambulance services. It might be wonderful for members opposite to obtain ambulance services for their electorates, but many people wait long periods for ambulances to arrive. We know that, tragically, one individual died after waiting more than 31 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Today there are reports in the media that paramedics have been told not to use St George emergency department. Before the 2015 election, we learnt by word of mouth from paramedics that the Castle Hill Ambulance Station would be closing.

It is all well and good for the member for Cootamundra to thank the Minister for Health for delivering a new ambulance station, but we do not hear the member for Castle Hill talking about his ambulance station being closed. We do not hear the member for Oatley talking about the paramedics who are being told not to attend St George emergency department because it suffers from bed block. We do not see Government members bringing on motions that address the fact that our paramedics and ambulances are tied up in waiting bays because we have bed blocks in emergency departments in hospitals in this State.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** Point of order: The member opposite has not once mentioned the word "Coolamon", which is a key part of the important motion before us. I ask that he address his comments to the new facility for Coolamon, which is the thrust of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Blacktown will address his comments to the leave of the motion.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I will address the issue. For the benefit of the member for Cootamundra, while it is great that Coolamon receives a new ambulance station, in other places ambulance stations are closing. The members opposite do not talk about those issues. Self-praise is no praise. It is all well and good to thank Ministers, but Ministers must deliver on the services that matter. What about improving ambulance response times? What about resolving the issue of bed blockage, which restricts the number of ambulances available to service the needs of people at a critical time in their lives? Our paramedics and health professionals do a fantastic job but this Government is not giving them the support or resourcing they need. Time and again we have spoken about health cuts in this Chamber. The Health budget continues to fail to keep up with demand.

**Mrs Tanya Davies:** It is 20 per cent higher than when you last left office.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** It is still well short of demand. Demand for health services grows by about 8 to 9 per cent annually and the budget falls well short of keeping up with that demand. This is yet another self-congratulatory motion by those opposite. It is a waste of time. The motion congratulates the Government on this new ambulance station but it fails to deal with those issues that really matter. This motion does nothing to address the shortfalls in Health or the bed-blocking that is keeping our paramedics tied up at hospitals.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** Do you even know where Coolamon is?

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** Yes, I do know where Coolamon is. I have been to Coolamon. I know Coolamon, Narrandera, Yanco and all those places.

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 76, relevance. I ask that the member return to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I note the point of order.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** This motion is a waste of the Parliament's time. Whilst it is good manners to say thank you—

**Mr Mark Coure:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 76, relevance. The member is not speaking to the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Blacktown will meander his way back to the leave of the bill.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** To the point of order: I was making specific reference to the words "thank you". Those two words are contained within the motion. It is good manners to say thank you, but the Government is not delivering ambulance stations and ambulance services elsewhere across the State. The Government continues to fail to address the growing demands on our health system. The winter season in particular places increased demand on our emergency departments and requires greater resource allocations than those that are being provided.

Paramedics are being placed under unnecessary pressure because the funding, resources and support are not there to deal with the bed blockage. Paramedics continue to be tied up outside emergency departments because patients are not being dealt with quickly enough. We should be debating a motion about that rather

than sending a self-congratulatory thank you message to the Minister for Health. Instead, the Minister of Health should be told that the Government needs to provide more funding for our health system. We need more ambulances and paramedics. We also need to address the bed blockage that is stopping our paramedics from being on our roads and assisting those in need of help.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.33 p.m.]: Clearly the member for Blacktown has not read the annual reports nor paid attention to the reported successes the Minister for Health has presided over since we came to office. It is untrue for the member for Blacktown to say that the Health budget, which includes ambulance services, has not been increased under this Government; it has increased 20 per cent. Health and ambulance services have received record funding. Hospitals are being built across the State: Wagga Wagga, Lismore, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Parkes, Forbes, Bega and so on. The Lockhart District Hospital, an \$8 million multipurpose service, was recently completed. The redevelopment of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital will cost approximately half a billion dollars. There will also be a new ambulance station at Wagga Wagga, which is a neighbour to my good friend the member for Cootamundra, and Coolamon.

The new Wagga Wagga ambulance station, which is costing \$4.5 million to build, will assist the Coolamon ambulance station when it comes on line. It is insulting for the member for Blacktown to attack the efforts of the good people of Coolamon to have an ambulance station in their town. As the member for Cootamundra said, the nearest ambulance services to Coolamon are about 40 minutes travelling time away. Ardlethan has an established ambulance station. The Ambulance Service of NSW and the local member held public meetings. It was determined that the Ardlethan ambulance station would not only be retained but also enhanced with funding from the Minister for Health.

The people of Coolamon have shown their commitment for an ambulance station. A block of land from a deceased estate, valued at approximately \$100,000, has been donated and a committee has been established to prosecute their case. I support the community of Coolamon and the member for Cootamundra. In a very professional way they have convinced the Minister for Health on the outcomes to be derived. Indeed, the upgraded Wagga Wagga ambulance station and the new Coolamon ambulance station will help to address the issues raised by the member for Blacktown. Hospitals are being rebuilt across this State. I note that the member for Oatley is in the Chamber. St George Hospital is being rebuilt. This Government is replacing the hospitals, which Labor promised but failed to deliver in 16 long years in office. I have only mentioned some of the hospitals. The hospitals all have new emergency departments, but from time to time the ambulance service has been having difficulty in accessing the old infrastructure which was not replaced in 16 years under the former Labor Government.

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, which was built in 1961, is a perfect example of that. In 1961 the population of Wagga was about 25,000 people; the population is now 65,000 people and the hospital services an area of 250,000 people. We all acknowledge that we need investment in infrastructure to cater for the demands on the ambulance service, but unlike previous administrations this Government is doing something about it. I have no problem with the member for Cootamundra thanking the Minister for at last delivering well-deserved infrastructure to the regional and rural communities of this State. I congratulate the member on moving this motion in support of the people of Coolamon.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Cootamundra—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.37 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Blacktown and the member for Wagga Wagga for their contributions to this debate. In my time in this Chamber I have never witnessed such a negative response to a feel-good story for a country community as that given by the member for Blacktown. As I said earlier, the geography in New South Wales is expansive. In rural and regional New South Wales we have many small communities. Some people are forced to travel hundreds of miles to access the services they need. For a large part we are used to it. We have put up with it forever. We know that we cannot have everything; we cannot always have gold-plated service, five-star hotels or hospitals. Coolamon is a beautiful town. It has wonderful shops and great people.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** It is terrific.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Wagga Wagga. It is a terrific community. This great news story should be celebrated by those on both sides of the House. The negativity of the member for Blacktown is insulting to the people of Coolamon and regional communities in general. Those on this side of the House acknowledge the enormous amount of work the people of Coolamon have done. The Coolamon Shire Council and the community have done a fantastic job in achieving this wonderful result. I offer my congratulations on their persistence and doggedness in making sure that the best result possible was achieved.

I also want to thank the community of Ardlethan. There was a big meeting at Coolamon because the people really wanted that ambulance station, but there was also a massive meeting at Ardlethan, which I attended. There were 500-odd people in the community hall. There was standing room only by the start of the meeting, which was conducted by the New South Wales ambulance service. The people there were passionate that they did not want to lose the ambulance presence that currently exists at Ardlethan. The message was loud and clear. The meeting went for some hours. The passion with which the local residents spoke at that meeting would have been enough to put to rest any doubts as to the continuing need for its presence in Ardlethan.

I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his valuable contribution to this debate today. He is an outstanding member of Parliament, who is obviously caring about the seat of Wagga Wagga. He has worked hard to get the additional funding for the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. On my last visit to Wagga Wagga a couple of weeks ago I saw that the hospital is well and truly on the way. It is more impressive every time I go there. It is certainly a lot larger than I ever imagined. An amazing amount of work is going on there.

I mention that because, with its medical imaging facilities and the other services, the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital also services a significant part of my electorate in Cootamundra. It is not just about Wagga Wagga; when we build a big base hospital it is always about the surrounding regions. When I was the member for Burrinjuck—which had different boundaries to my electorate of Cootamundra—about half of my electorate accessed the services of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Members on this side of the House are thrilled with the amount of work that is going into health services in country New South Wales. We sincerely thank the Minister for Health for all that she has done to expedite these wonderful services.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **FAIRFIELD ELECTORATE TRANSPORT ACCESS PROGRAM**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [12.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that Carramar, Villawood, Canley Vale and Yennora railway stations currently do not have mobility access to the platforms.
- (2) Notes the hardships faced by commuters using Carramar, Villawood, Canley Vale and Yennora stations who are elderly, mobility impaired or parents with prams, who presently have no means to access their local train station.
- (3) Calls on the Government to deliver the easy access program to those railway stations to ensure no local residents are excluded from utilising the local public transport network.

The Government's failure, to date, to deliver comprehensive easy access upgrades to Carramar, Villawood, Canley Vale and Yennora railway stations has been a bone of contention with me for a very long time. I have repeatedly asked the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure for immediate action regarding the issue. After

four years of asking, the Government has failed to deliver a complete easy access program for the residents of Fairfield. Nothing has been done for the elderly residents of Villawood, Carramar and Yennora that would encourage them to use public transport.

This Government has done nothing for the disabled residents in these parts of my electorate who cannot access the railway station. I refer to residents like Errol Russell, who is wheelchair bound and lives directly across from Carramar railway station. Errol is forced to take taxis to and from his doctors' appointments because he cannot get his wheelchair from one side of the station to the other. Nothing has been done for parents with prams, who must rely on the helping hands of strangers to carry prams up and down the stairs. What message is the Government sending to these residents?

So far, the only message they have received is that the Government believes they are not important enough for it to upgrade access to their local train stations. According to the 2015 *Dropping off the Edge* report, Carramar, Villawood, Yennora and Canley Vale have been classified as areas that are "most disadvantaged" within New South Wales. Further, when it comes to disability support, housing stress, long-term unemployment and overall education and skills, these are amongst the worst-hit areas in the State. Residents in these areas are doing it hard enough, let alone needing to fork out money they cannot spare in order to get from A to B.

This Government, of course, encourages all commuters to use public transport, citing the benefits of public transport for the environment, efficiency and ease of use. Yet, when it is time for the Government to put its money where its mouth is it is all too hard. Where is the incentive to use public rail transport for the elderly, the mobility impaired and parents with prams whose nearest station are Carramar, Villawood, Canley Vale or Yennora? Between 2011 and to date, I have asked a long list of questions on notice to the transport Minister regarding upgrades to these stations: questions 364, 301, 361, 2318, 2583, 2582, 4217, 4458, 5195, 5196, 5197, 7021, 96, 6399, 6398 and 5583. To date, there has been no commitment from this Government to provide complete easy access upgrades to Villawood, Carramar, Canley Vale or Yennora railway stations.

Time and time again, the needs of my constituents are ignored by this Government. The only upgrade in my electorate has been at Canley Vale train station, where some small ramps to the platforms were installed. This upgrade still provides no means for the residents to access the other side, either from First Avenue to Railway Parade or vice versa. Presently, residents at Canley Vale station must catch a train to Fairfield or Cabramatta to get to the other side. This is simply unacceptable.

Rather than simply being critical of the Government's inaction when it comes to the Fairfield electorate, I have some suggestions on how it can get it right. Upgrades performed at Guildford railway station under the former Labor Government were fantastic and still service the needs of the Guildford community today. When considering upgrades for stations, the Government needs to look at the provision of lifts, inclinators, ramps or underpasses. Obviously, installing all of these at every single train station is not necessary. However, they should certainly be considered when the need arises. The key word here is "need". Residents in Carramar, Villawood, Yennora and Canley Vale need comprehensive, easy access options in order to be able to finally utilise their local train station.

However, their needs have been outweighed by this Government's desire to pinch pennies out our way and to invest in the leafy suburbs of the north shore. Easy access facilities are important for commuters who are elderly, mobility impaired or wheelchair bound and for parents with prams in order to access train stations. The issue is not that they are not willing to negotiate their way onto the platforms, it is that they are completely unable to access the platforms due to the distinct lack of mobility-friendly access to the aforementioned stations.

Many of the residents who struggle to access these services are doing it hard. Taxiing to and from every destination is simply not an option. These sentiments were reiterated last week when I met with the Woodville Alliance and members of various community groups. My local community is crying out for increased access to our local train stations but this Government simply does not want a bar of it. I would like the members of the Government to note that if they vote down this motion today they are sending a very clear message to

the people in and around the electorate of Fairfield. That message is that the Baird Government does not care.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.48 p.m.]: The Government does not support this motion. I understand that new members come to Parliament with a great deal of enthusiasm and energy; they are very gung-ho. New Labor members tend to forget the 16 years that the Labor Government was in office. This motion is a clear example of that. The former member for Fairfield, who was a Minister, held the seat for many years and failed to deliver for his community. That continues with the current member for Fairfield, who is also not delivering for his community.

This Government is committed to providing better access and transport services for customers not only in the Fairfield electorate but across south-west Sydney. The Government knows how important it is to deliver high-quality transport infrastructure to all customers, including those with a disability or limited mobility and parents with prams. That is why in 2012 the Government announced the \$770 million Transport Access Program, which will deliver accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure where it is needed most. More than 380 projects across New South Wales have already been delivered or are underway as part of that program. The member for Fairfield would lead one to believe that nothing is happening, there are no upgrades and the world is coming to an end. On 23 June 2015 the Government announced a significant boost to the Transport Access Program, with \$890 million to be invested over the next four years.

It is unbelievable that the member for Fairfield is calling for mobility access to the platforms at Canley Vale station. The Government delivered that last year. Had the member bothered to visit that station in his electorate, he would have seen the new ramps between the platform and the street, the upgraded footpaths, the closed-circuit television [CCTV] and the improved lighting. Does the member know his own electorate? I am not sure that he does. Given that the member clearly does not know what is going on around him, I will tell him about the other wonderful things happening in his electorate as part of the Transport Access Program. I will be there tomorrow to open a 90-space commuter car park at Canley Vale station, to complement the upgraded station that is close to completion. An extension of Villawood station car park, to provide 37 additional commuter parking spaces, and the installation of additional lighting—

**Mr Guy Zangari**: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance, under Standing Order 76. The motion is not about car parks. It is about providing access to both sides of the platform for constituents in my electorate. Car parking has nothing to do with providing mobility-impaired constituents with access to train stations in the electorate of Fairfield. I ask that the member for Drummoyne be brought back to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans)**: Order! I draw the attention of the member for Fairfield to his motion, which is entitled "Easy Access Program to Fairfield Electorate Railway Stations". I believe easy access includes car parking.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI**: I point out to the member for Fairfield that the easy access program does include car parks. Last year an interchange upgrade was completed at Fairfield, delivering an expansion of the bus interchange and providing better pedestrian access and kiss-and-ride and taxi zones. The claim of the member for Fairfield that this Government does nothing for his community is false. Through the program, the Government has also completed safety and security upgrades at Fairfield station, with the installation of additional help points—

**Mr Guy Zangari**: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance, Standing Order 76. The motion does not mention Fairfield train station. In its first budget, the Government cut that station from the program. The motion mentions Villawood, Canley Vale and Yennora. The speech by the member for Drummoyne is irrelevant to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans)**: Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the member for Drummoyne to be relevant to the leave of the motion.



**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** I return to the Transport Access Program, which is relevant. The member for Fairfield seems to think that the problem appeared overnight. The member failed to talk about the 16 years when his party was in Government, when the then member for Fairfield, a senior Minister, failed to deliver for his community. The Government has a program in place that is based on need. In time, the Government will update every station. The upgrade to Fairfield station has commenced, and the member for Fairfield fails to acknowledge that. The member wants everything in his electorate to be done yesterday. I am sorry; it does not work that way. The Government does not pork barrel. This Government, unlike the previous Labor Government, takes action based on need and following a process.

The list goes on of access upgrades that are underway across south-west Sydney to help commuters travelling on the rail network. It includes new lifts, covered walkways and accessible parking at Ingleburn station. At Panania station there will be new lifts, ramps, new stairs to platforms, bicycle facilities, family accessible toilets and upgrades to wayfinding, lighting and CCTV. The program also includes new stairs, ramps, canopies, ticket barriers, additional CCTV and a general refresh of the station at Bankstown. Lift access at Canley Vale, Carramar, Villawood and Yennora stations will continue to be considered as part of the ongoing prioritisation process. This Government is committed to providing better access and transport services for customers in Fairfield and south-west Sydney.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT** (Prospect) [12.55 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Fairfield on the application of the easy access program to railway stations in his electorate. Many of the railway stations in the electorate of Fairfield, especially Carramar, Villawood, Canley Vale and Yennora, are used by residents who live in the seat of Prospect. That includes the elderly, young families with prams—such as my wife, with our two children—and the mobility impaired. At the stations I have mentioned as well as at Fairfield and those in the electorate of Prospect, including Toongabbie and Pendle Hill, there is no easy access.

The member for Drummoyne states that the Government has done great things and put in a fantastic ramp and handrails at Canley Vale station. The problem is that people can get up to the station but cannot get onto the platform. What is the point of what the Government has done? It is a half-baked solution from the Government, which has not spent the necessary amount of money to help residents. If the member for Drummoyne would come and look at the station, he would be able to see that.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I remind the member for Prospect not to engage with the member for Drummoyne across the Chamber. He should direct his remarks through the Chair.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I apologise, Mr Acting-Speaker. The Government has made many promises. My favourite promise relates to Pendle Hill station where, every morning, the elderly and parents with young children—including my wife and two children—struggle up the ramp.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance, under Standing Order 76. Pendle Hill station does not form part of the motion. I ask that the member for Prospect be drawn back to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The discussion today has been open and far-reaching, but I ask the member for Prospect to return to the leave of the motion.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I will provide an illustration of the easy access problem. I am sure the Minister has heard of similar experiences at Villawood or Canley Vale. My wife is a prime example of someone having difficulty with access. She struggles up the ramp at Pendle Hill with our two children. When she reaches the top of the ramp there is no easy way to get onto the platform so she has to ask strangers to help her. The Minister has promised upgrades to that station but has done nothing.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: My point of order again relates to relevance, under Standing Order 76. In drawing the attention of the House to relevance, I follow the lead of the mover of the motion. There is no mention of the wife of the member for Prospect or Pendle Hill station in the motion. I draw attention to Standing

Order 76 because of the points of order taken by the member for Fairfield.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I ask the member for Prospect to return to the leave of the motion.

**Dr HUGH McDERMOTT:** I do not appreciate Government members wasting my time by taking points of order. Members opposite forget that many residents in the Prospect and Fairfield electorates share a train station, whether it is Pendle Hill, Villawood, Fairfield or any other station. But the Government does not care about that. The Government said it would spend lots of money but no dates have been given and no money in the budget has been designated to set stations. Once again, train stations in Prospect, Fairfield and other parts of Western Sydney have been neglected.

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

**Pursuant to sessional order Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) proceeded with.**

### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

#### **Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 2/56**

**Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [1.00 p.m.]: This is the second Legislation Review Digest for the Fifty-sixth Parliament and was tabled on 4 August. The committee reviewed four bills introduced to Parliament during the last sitting week. First, it reviewed three bills that related to the 2015 budget and one private member's bill, the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015. The digest is unusually short and as such my comments will be brief. In relation to the bills associated with the 2015 budget—the Appropriation Bill 2015, the Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2015 and the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2015—the committee did not identify any issues under section 8 (A) (1) of the Legislation Review Act 1987. As a result, I have no further comments to make on the budget bills—which we know appropriate from the Consolidated Fund sums of money required during the 2015-16 financial year for recurrent services and capital works and services of the government.

I turn now to the Non-profit Bodies (Freedom to Advocate) Bill 2015. The bill seeks to prohibit clauses in agreements between the Government and non-profit bodies which seek to prevent non-profit bodies from commenting on, advocating support for, or opposing any matter established by a law, policy or practice of the State. The committee noted that the bill wishes to be applied to a State agreement entered into before the commencement of the Act, and as such is drafted with retrospective effect. However, given that these provisions do not impact on personal rights, the committee made no further comment. I commend the digest to the House.

**Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Report noted.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.02 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### **VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge in the gallery today 20 students from the Institute of Public Administration Australia, guests of the Leader of the House, Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy, and member for Lane Cove.

I also welcome to the gallery Councillor Rick Firman, OAM, Mayor of Temora Shire, and Mr Gary Lavelle, General Manager of Temora Shire Council, both guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Southern NSW, and member for Cootamundra.

I also acknowledge 50 students and their teachers attending the fifth annual Kiama Student Leaders Forum, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Illawarra and South Coast, and member for Kiama. It was a pleasure to meet you all earlier.

I also welcome Mr Luigi De Luca from Cremeria De Luca at Five Dock—we have a deal for you to come to my electorate to meet my Italian constituents—a guest of the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads, and member for Drummoyne.

## **BATTLE OF LONE PINE**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [2.20 p.m.]: This morning the Leader of the Opposition and I joined 100 students from across the State to commemorate the Battle of Lone Pine. The battle began 100 years ago today and it has been described as one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. It is hard for us to imagine what it was like but as dusk creeps in towards the end of today that is what it was like for our 1st Brigade. The brigade was mostly made up of New South Wales soldiers and as dusk came they were asked to go to battle for their country.

Many of these men were just boys. There are high school students in the gallery today and many of these soldiers were a similar age when they were called upon to play a role for their country. They had trained together at Liverpool and Randwick and were then crowded together in what was later described as "one long grave"—a stretch of land characterised by a lone pine. All war is hell it is said but the stories of Lone Pine are filled with many graphic descriptions of hand-made bombs.

Leonard Keysor, who was regarded at that time as one of the best bomb throwers, was a recipient of the Victoria Cross. As Turkish bombs landed in his trench Keysor would smother the explosions with sandbags or clothing. History records him as catching some bombs mid-flight before lobbing them back across to the Turkish trenches. He was twice wounded but he refused medical aid and he maintained his efforts for 50 hours. Not all the soldiers were lucky enough to escape. Corporal Riggs, a 28-year-old carpenter of the 1st Battalion was put out of action trying to throw back a Turkish grenade. He wrote in his diary:

There was an awful explosion and I was knocked back to billy-ho. One of their bombs had landed at my feet. I scrambled up but my legs were numb. Again I was lucky. Only my legs were hurt and where others had had arms and legs blown off I was intact.

The courage displayed by Corporal Riggs, Leonard Keysor and all those who fought is an inspiration to us today. For four long days their actions were the benchmark for the Anzac spirit and the Anzac legend. During those events, seven Victoria Crosses were awarded, the most ever awarded to Australians for a single action. Whilst the courage and spirit of these men and women are very much alive today, these traits are needed more than ever. The world is different; we face different challenges, such as the challenge of terrorism. But what must walk with us every day is the reminder of what we have and how it was obtained. The freedoms and harmony we enjoy came at a heavy price and we must not take them for granted. These men knew that death was on their doorstep. They were surrounded by horror but they pushed ahead because that was what was asked of them by their commanders, by their nation.

In less than four days of fighting we lost nearly 2,300 Australians—indeed, 1,700 from New South Wales. A hundred years on, it is hard not to reflect on what that meant. How many football teams lost members? How many families lost loved ones? How many classrooms lost teachers and parents? How many groups of mates were never to grow old together? Today we have to grab our mates and be thankful for them.

We must remember we have our values and freedoms because of the actions of some mates 100 years ago. Our duty is to remember their sacrifice and to keep telling their stories. We are proud of them and lucky that they made the sacrifice. Lest we forget.

**Mr LUKE FOLEY** (Auburn—Leader of the Opposition) [2.24 p.m.]: I joined the Premier this morning to commemorate the Battle of Lone Pine. One hundred years ago today, at 5.30 in the afternoon, soldiers from the New South Wales 1st Brigade poured into the eerie haze. These soldiers, many just boys, ran headlong towards the Turkish trenches. By nightfall, at terrible human cost, most of the enemy's front was in Australian hands. But because of the position's strategic importance, the Turks were ordered to retake the position. And so for three days and nights the Turks and Australians fought over a small patch of earth on this desperate peninsula. Private John Gammage wrote of the horrors:

The wounded bodies of both Turks and our own ... were piled up 3 and 4 deep ... the bombs simply poured in but as fast as our men went down another would take his place. Besides our own wounded the Turks' wounded lying in our trench were cut to pieces with their own bombs. We had no time to think of our wounded ... their pleas for mercy were not heeded ... Some poor fellows lay for 30 hours waiting for help and many died still waiting.

By 10 August 1915, the Turks had given up on retaking the position. The Allies held Lone Pine until the end of the Gallipoli campaign. Much of the history and at least part of our egalitarian ethos were created by those heroic few who fought over this otherwise innocuous piece of earth. We should remember the horrors of war and the sacrifices of those injured or killed during this battle. But we should also remember the providence of the battle's name: Lone Pine. The battle is named after a single dwarf pine tree described by the wartime historian Charles Bean. This lone pine stood defiantly amidst devastation and desperation of war, a small symbol of hope and life. It was a material reminder that even in the darkest and most desperate hours there is always hope and life.

In hundreds of towns across New South Wales lone pines grow from seeds collected from the battlefield by a soldier mourning the loss of a brother. These lone pines are a silent tribute to those lost in Gallipoli and through the Great War. This day a century ago a defining battle in a campaign that helped define a nation took place at Lone Pine, Gallipoli. Today we remember those who fought on that day.

## QUESTION TIME

*[Question time commenced at 2.27 p.m.]*

## LEARNING MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS REFORM PROGRAM

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Will the Minister confirm that there has been an increase in stress-related sick leave absences due to the delayed rollout of the Learning Management and Business Reform [LMBR] program?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** As I made clear yesterday, at the rollout of the first 229 schools, there have been issues, difficulties and technical challenges that have caused some stress to staff. I made that clear not just yesterday but previously in the Parliament; it is not a secret. As I also made clear yesterday, additional support and training have been provided to staff by the department. We work very closely with the Public Service Association [PSA] in particular, as most of the staff involved in student administration at schools are PSA members, and with the Teachers Federation. Always when there is a significant change in the administration of an organisation there are going to be people who find the change challenging. I know from speaking to school administrators that when they went from paper-based to computer-based accounting systems similar things happened—people resigned because they did not want to change their work practices of 10 or 20 years. Changing from a system that the department has been using for close 30 years to a new and modern system is an equally difficult transition.

**Mr Chris Minns:** Is it their fault?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Kogarah there will be no interjections. The Minister is answering the question.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** My answer is there have been difficulties, and some staff have had difficulty transitioning to the new system. That is the reality of changing something for the first time in 30 years. Part of the technical challenge has been that this organisation, one of the biggest in the country, has 100,000 staff. To put that into perspective that is equivalent to the staff of the Commonwealth Bank and BHP combined. As I said, it is a very large organisation, one of the biggest education systems in the world with one of the biggest single IT systems in the world and these things will always be a challenge. For 16 years under the former Government we did not have a continual upgrade every couple of years, like most organisations, of IT systems. The former Government did not spend the money on upgrades and consequently this Government is upgrading a system that has not been upgraded for 30 years, and that causes significant challenges.

Had the former Government invested properly every couple of years, or more often these days, in IT upgrades this Government would not be in the position it is in. It is a challenge but as I made very clear yesterday the Department of Education is doing a fantastic job. I want to comment on the claims in an article published in the *Daily Telegraph* today which are simply fanciful. The claim that the project may end up costing billions of dollars is pure fiction. As I said yesterday, we are within Treasury limits for the capital costs of this project and we are managing the operational costs that the former Government did not budget for. The former Government budgeted to buy the car but not to operate it—to pay for the petrol, insurance, maintenance and all of those things.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That is exactly what they did. They budgeted for the capital costs but not the operational costs. We are now paying for the operational costs. We are managing those operational costs which the former Government did not budget for within the overall context of the Department of Education without impacting schools. The department has an allocation of capital funding for IT, as most organisations do, and for capital works and maintenance in schools. That is the normal budgetary process from Treasury and Finance and that is precisely what has happened with LMBR.

## **TRADE AND INVESTMENT**

**Mr MARK COURE:** My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government helping to create jobs by boosting the State's international relationships?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The member for Oatley is an outstanding local member doing an outstanding job in his electorate. Every day he supports projects such as St George Hospital and creates jobs in his electorate. Another outstanding member is the member for Kiama. It is great to have school leaders from Kiama in the public gallery, who are doing very well with Gareth Ward as their local member.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. The member for Keira will stop objecting to those comments. I ask members to come to order; there are students in the public gallery.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The Opposition will be very pleased to hear about the job numbers that were released today. Before the 2011 election the Liberal-Nationals said they wanted more jobs in this State and were tired of New South Wales having the slowest jobs growth across the State for 10 years. The great news is that since we came to government 251,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Blacktown to order for the first time. The member for Port Stephens will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order and stop arguing.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In the past month alone 29,500 jobs were created—four times the next highest State. We now have the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the strongest jobs growth. That is what we are proud to be delivering. We continue to support jobs. We have invested in infrastructure which creates jobs, and we know the Opposition is against infrastructure. We have made it cheaper to do business in this State and have given payroll tax incentives. We have also supported trade in this State, which is very important. As Premier I have had the opportunity in the past 12 months to visit China, India, Japan and Korea where there are many fantastic opportunities in those markets.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from Opposition members. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** For example, the free trade agreement with China provides an opportunity to generate \$18 billion in economic benefits over the next 10 years. Collectively from those free trade agreements we expect to see 9,000 jobs added to the economy each year. I would have thought the Opposition would support trade and investment because they want more jobs.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There is a risk to jobs in this State and it is named "Labor". We have all heard the words of Opposition members. At the moment there is a shameless scare campaign being run by the unions and I have not heard one word against it from the Opposition benches. The member for Kogarah wants to be leader. Show you want to be leader, son. They may laugh at him but he and the member for Lakemba were the only ones who stood up and showed some gumption. Who else will say that the scare campaign should not go ahead? I have heard a lot of words from him in relation to this matter but I hear nothing now. Where is the courage? What do members of the Opposition stand for?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting or they will be removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I do not know what they did in Kiama but not much has come out of it. They have an opportunity to stand up for what is right and we are waiting for anyone from the Opposition to stand up.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** They should be ashamed because this Government continues to support jobs in this State. We absolutely support trade and investment and that is how the economy gets going. The Opposition is not standing up to its union mates or for the people of New South Wales, and that is to its shame.

#### **AMBULANCE SERVICE OF NSW**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. What assurance can the Minister give parents in my electorate who are now wondering whether it is safer to drive their own children to hospital rather than wait for an ambulance after Brad and Lauren Harrison from Bobs Farm spent 43 minutes waiting for help to arrive for their unconscious two-year-old son Cooper?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I thank the member for the opportunity to set the record straight about our wonderful paramedics and the service they provide. I understand the concern of the parents of that young child but I am advised that on that occasion the Ambulance Service had to respond to somebody whose life was in danger. Their expertise through their triage process is that life-threatened patients have to take precedence and that is what happened.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Weren't they all—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Port Stephens that this is not a debate.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Contrary to the current union campaign, there have been 270 full-time equivalent extra paramedics employed since I have been the Minister. The Government has promised to deliver an extra 53 paramedics this term and no hospitals have been on bypass. Despite the media reports, the union suggestion that patients are at risk is not true. I am pleased that the member asked this question because it allows me to inform the House that last night, before the publication of today's *Sydney Morning Herald*, which has a front-page story about so-called ambulance bypasses, the Health Service Union's Facebook page carried the following message:

Our campaign has made it to the front page of the SMH! ... Don't forget to check out tomorrow's Herald. And keep up the good work with this campaign!

This is a union campaign being pushed by the Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much shouting in the Chamber.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** My office has made inquiries of the Ambulance Service of NSW and hospitals and we have been told that no bypass directive has been issued. Journalists are ringing every hospital today asking whether they have been bypassed. The answer is that they have not. One of my officers had a conversation with the Senior Assistant Commissioner of the Ambulance Service just minutes before I came into this place and was told that no hospitals are on bypass. In fact, some of the hospitals that journalists have approached have had a relatively quiet day. There is a peak in demand for ambulance services at this time of the year because of the increased incidence of flu. However, I have a great deal of confidence in our paramedics; in fact, they are now so skilled that we have told them—

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Part of our campaign asks people to consider whether their urgency is a real emergency.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** People have been calling for ambulances services when they have things as trivial as ingrown toenails. We have told the paramedics that, given their skills, they have the right to advise patients of options other than going to hospital.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I would have thought that members opposite would be interested in this issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I would have thought they would show some respect.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I know that people in the gallery are interested. People need to rely on our paramedics, and they do. They should call 000 only when they are seriously ill.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** There was no bypass directive yesterday and there has been no bypass directive today. Ambulances and paramedics respond as appropriate, and they triage and determine the urgency of a patient's condition. A person whose life is in danger will be transported with lights flashing and sirens sounding. Sometimes that means people dealing with less serious conditions must wait. Response time frames today are better than they were when members opposite were in office. Since coming to office, the

Coalition Government has increased the number of ambulance officers and paramedics. It has also invested \$150 million in upgrading and building new ambulance stations in the metropolitan area and more has been done in the country. The member was not here, so I forgive her for not knowing that the Labor Government provided not one new major ambulance station in 16 years.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Port Stephens to order for the second time. The member for Kogarah will stop arguing with the Minister.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I assure members that the Ambulance Service is responding extremely well at a time of peak demand, and paramedics have my affection and respect.

### **HOUSING APPROVALS**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** I address my question to the Minister for Planning. How is the Government driving housing approvals in New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. If they do not they will be removed from the Chamber until next Tuesday under Standing Order 249.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I thank the member for Coogee for his question because I know he is passionate about planning in his community in the eastern suburbs.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** He is passionate not only about there being more houses in Sydney but also better houses. This good news is exciting for the people of New South Wales and for members opposite. We are experiencing the highest rate of housing approvals in New South Wales in 20 years. In June alone, almost 4,900 new houses were approved in this State. That is the third highest rate of housing approvals in Sydney in history. One would have to go back 20 years through the dark days of the Labor regime and into the sunlit uplands of the last Coalition Administration to find the first- and second-highest levels of housing approvals in New South Wales. I can understand why members opposite are excited. The good news does not stop there. I want members to pay attention because this is exciting. In the past 12 months, 57,509 new houses have been approved.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will remain silent.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** The good news does not end there.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES:** Another housing approval has just been issued. In fact, on the all-important housing approvals to question time ratio—that is, HA:QT—we will see seven housing approvals issued during this question time. Over the past four years 162,000 new houses have been approved. That compares to just 112,000 during the last four dark years of the Labor regime. The situation in Western Sydney is even more dramatic. More than 37,000 new homes have been built in Western Sydney, which represents a 55 per cent increase over the last four years of the dark days of the Labor Government. As the clock ticks over another house has been approved; more housing approvals are being issued every minute I speak.

This is not only about delivering more houses; it is also about delivering better houses. As Henry David Thoreau once said, "What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" That is why this Government is focusing on liveability and sustainability. It is also ensuring that the increasing number of Sydneysiders who chose to live in apartments can access liveable and sustainable accommodation that responds well to the streetscape. People want not only a bigger place but also a better place. All of this is made possible not by the Hoff but by the HAF—that is, the Housing Acceleration Fund. That fund provides that little



magic that turns houses into homes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members should sit back and enjoy.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I am a very happy Minister for Planning because this Government is spending \$400 million to support the infrastructure that makes houses into homes for Sydney's increasing population.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on three calls to order.

#### **FORMER DEPUTY PREMIER ANDREW STONER**

**Mr LUKE FOLEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Government pay the legal expenses incurred by the Hon. Andrew Stoner in his aborted defamation action against Alan Jones and a member of the other place?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The answer is no. Now, where was I?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I again remind the member for Maroubra that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have a deep concern. The shadow Cabinet went away for I do not know how long. They were down in Kiama with their brochures and I do not know what they did, but, honestly, is that the best they have got?

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kiama and the member for Hornsby to order for the first time. I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order for the second time. I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order for the third time.

**Mr John Robertson:** My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier has answered the question; nonetheless, he is required to remain generally relevant to the question for the remainder of his speaking time. It is clear by the way he is talking about something that occurred in Kiama that he is straying well away from—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member is pre-empting the Premier's answer. I understand the point of order. I will listen further to what the Premier has to say.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I think everyone in the State would be concerned that that is the best Labor has got. It was a very secretive meeting. We know it was very important. They said that they were going to have a new strategy. They said that they know where they are going and what they are going to do.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Blacktown that I indicated I would listen further to the Premier. The Premier has strayed a little from the question but I am sure that he will return to it. The member for Blacktown would recognise that the Premier has answered the question.

**Mr John Robertson:** Yes, but he is still required to remain relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Is the member for Blacktown telling me the rules?

**Mr John Robertson:** I am arguing my point of order. I am not telling you the rules.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member should know better than to argue with me. That gets me very cranky. I uphold the point of order. I will continue to listen to the Premier, but not for much longer. I direct the member for Maroubra to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time. The member has had several warnings that he was on three calls to order.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** On the way out, why don't you do what the Opposition needs to do and condemn—

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Through the Chair.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Madam Speaker, the member for Maroubra should go out and do what the Opposition needs to, that is, condemn the shameful ongoing scare campaign. They have said that that is what they are going to do, but are they doing it? Absolutely not. The members opposite have no courage and no principles. This question shows it all. Rather than standing up for what they say they believe in—principles, jobs and the economy—they are going after some ridiculous scare campaign and smear. That means that Labor has learnt nothing.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** Point of order: The Premier is flouting your ruling once again.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! No, he is not. The Premier was relating his answer to the original question that was asked. In fact, he was being relevant in his own precious way.

**Ms Jodi McKay:** How?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! If the member for Strathfield had been listening to the Premier she would understand. The member will not argue with me. She knows that makes me very angry.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I do not know what they discussed in Kiama but if their strategy is now to attack the Commissioner of Police, which we saw today, that is shameful. We should be backing the Commissioner of Police. What he has done for this State is outstanding.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: It is relevance under Standing Order 129. It was a Labor Government that appointed the commissioner.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. I warn the member that if he takes another point of order like that he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Why are members opposite attacking the commissioner? We are very proud of the commissioner and what he has done for this State. We are very lucky to have someone like him leading our force. I have put that on record and so should members opposite. The members opposite should be backing the commissioner as well as backing workers and jobs in this State but instead we get the sort of question that would be expected from the old Labor playbook. It is smear and no substance. This Government is standing up for the people of New South Wales and we are very proud of it.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Local Government. How is the Government supporting local councils throughout New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn members that they will be removed from the Chamber if they do not cease their conversations. The Minister will be heard in silence. Opposition members will not interject.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I thank the member for Lismore for his question and his interest in local government across this State. The member for Lismore understands that it is important to have strong councils in New South Wales because we need councils to be able to provide the jobs, housing, planning and infrastructure that communities need. We also need to know that they can provide the services all communities require and deserve. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of joining the member for Lismore in his electorate where we met with local councillors, mayors, general managers and community groups to talk about the issues affecting their communities. I recognise the Mayor of Temora, who is in the gallery. Today the member for Cootamundra brought him around to my office and we spoke about some of the great things that are happening at Temora Shire Council. The mayor is doing a great job. The council at Temora, 80 kilometres north of Wagga Wagga, is punching above its weight. I say well done to the mayor for the work he is doing.

This week is Local Government Week, which give us an opportunity to celebrate and highlight the significant role and important work of local councils across New South Wales. The 152 councils in New South Wales employ around 45,000 people and look after assets worth \$131 billion. It is important that we have strong councils because it will ensure that we have a strong economy. This year the theme of the week is "Active All Areas", which acknowledges that councils look after people of all ages and of different genders, religions and cultures as well as people with disabilities. That is why the New South Wales Government is partnering with councils to ensure that they can address the community's needs into the future.

This week I have had the opportunity to be involved in a multitude of activities for Local Government Week. One council has spent \$5 million on a manganese plant to deal with brown water in its water system. I had the opportunity to take part in some of the tours being run behind the scenes. Councillors are holding stalls in our shopping centres to talk about the importance of local government. I also went to Warringah to meet students and teachers from Dee Why Public School. The students were given a great opportunity to be involved in a mock council meeting to look at the democratic process. Opposition members could learn a thing or two from them about how to behave and show a bit of decorum when taking part in a meeting.

This morning regional mayors attended a Country Mayors Association meeting at which some fantastic initiatives were discussed, including joint organisations, regional planning across our communities, the cutting of red tape and the establishment of a State financing authority. The Opposition did nothing for local government. They ignored it for too long and put it in the too-hard basket. Members on this side are partnering with councils to ensure that they have a strong future. This week I also met up with the Attorney General to visit some streets in her electorate of Vaucluse following the Government's announcement of measures to combat boat trailers clogging up our suburban streets.

The Attorney General made it very clear that this is about balance: providing for boat owners and for residents. The Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight is providing \$5 million to support councils and other organisations for off-street parking. This week we have announced proposed changes in relation to councillor misconduct. Councillors should see their election as an honour and a privilege. They should ensure that their community is confident that they are representing them to the best of their ability. For New South Wales to have a strong future we must have strong councils. The Baird-Grant Government is committed to supporting, strengthening and celebrating our country's achievements. It gives me great pleasure to celebrate the great achievements of our councils during Local Government Week and to remind the House that we are getting councils fit for the future.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There are too many audible conversations in the Chamber. Members will come to order.

## **STATE BUDGET**

**Mr GREG WARREN:** My question is directed to the Treasurer. How does the Treasurer justify paying two public servants, including her own department head, an extra \$100,000 each when her Government has cut funding in my electorate for a TAFE program for special needs kids and the Focus on Families service which helps to support new mums?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. I can confirm that our Government has done more than those opposite could ever do in supporting the vulnerable. Our budget delivered record spending in health, family and community services, education and transport. This Government, unlike those opposite, treats every single dollar of taxpayer money with respect.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 128. The question was not about announcements of Government policy. It was very specific. Many people are watching and waiting for the Treasurer's answer. Would she please give it?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer is answering the question. If members ceased interjecting, we could all hear the answer. The Treasurer has the call.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I appreciate that every member in this House has the right to ask a question, especially in relation to the budget. However, in relation to the member's question, I stress that this Government has spent more money on vocational education and training, including TAFE, than those opposite ever did when in government. This year's budget includes more money than those opposite ever spent. The member for Campbelltown, who is new to this place, wants to talk about waste. Let us talk about waste. Let us talk about the \$500 million those opposite wasted on the CBD Metro.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Orders 128 and 130. This is not a debate. This is not a time for the Treasurer to reiterate Government policy. The question was very specific. Why is the Treasurer giving \$100,000 each to two public servants, one of them her own department head, whilst cutting services to essential needs in my electorate?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Campbelltown says that this is not a debate. His question verges on being argumentative and, pursuant to standing orders, could be ruled out of order. The Treasurer has been relevant to the question and I will listen further to her answer.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I respect the right of members to ask questions but they should do a bit of research before they do so. This Government has increased the number of teachers and frontline health workers in this State, and the list goes on. I will not be lectured by the Labor Party on waste matters. I will not be lectured by them. For all the tax windfall they received, what did they do with it? They fattened up the public service. What are we doing?

**Mr Matt Kean:** Lined their own pockets.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** There are a few examples of members on that side of the House who benefitted from that scheme. This Government has ensured that every single dollar we get over and above that anticipated goes into infrastructure—unlike those opposite, who wasted billions of dollars on projects that never happened. By managing our budget and ensuring that we are reducing waste in the back office, we have provided more frontline services for the vulnerable than they could ever hope to deliver. In relation to vocational education and training, as every single member in this Government is committed to, it is about creating jobs. The latest jobs figures released today show that since we came to Government more than 250,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales. As I said, those figures were released today.

**Mr Greg Warren:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister has made no response relevant to the specific question. I asked a question in terms of Focus on Families and TAFE funding for special needs kids. She has made not one point of relevance.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** If the member for Campbelltown cared about jobs in his electorate, he would have supported the Government's Jobs Action Plan. But what did the member for Maroubra, the member

for Campbelltown and every single member on that side of the House do? They opposed the Government's policy on the Jobs Action Plan. So what we see again today—

**Mr Greg Warren:** Madam Speaker—

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I hope you are asking me for another two minutes.

**Mr Greg Warren:** If I wanted to hear another two minutes of that type of answer, I would go to my son's primary school. I take a point of order relating to Standing Order 129. The Minister has a couple of seconds remaining. Her answer has been of no relevance to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has been relevant to the question she was asked. The Minister's time has expired. Government members will come to order.

### **CHILD SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**Mr LEE EVANS:** My question is addressed to the Attorney General. How is the New South Wales Government better supporting victims of child sexual assault through the justice system?

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON:** I thank the member for Heathcote. He is a good local member and I know that this issue is a matter of great concern to him. The people elected the Baird Government because they know that we will better protect the most vulnerable members of our community. They trust us to deliver for them. There are no more vulnerable people in our community than our children and our young people. Every child in our community deserves to be safe from harm. Sadly, we all know from our local communities that this is not always the case.

This is why the Baird Government has wasted no time in delivering on our key election promises to better protect and to bring justice for our children and young people. The community expects tougher sentences. Child sex offenders now face the real prospect of life in jail. That was agreed to in this House. We increased the maximum sentence for sexual intercourse with a child under 10 to possible life imprisonment. We agreed to an additional 13 child sexual assault offences being put into the standard non-parole period scheme. That will give better guidance to the judiciary when they sentence those offenders.

However, even with all the work we have done, the justice system can still be stressful and traumatic, particularly for children and young people. Imagine just for a moment what it would be like to be a child in the justice system and how daunting it could be—from the moment they first tell their story to police or somebody else they trust through to going to court. Frankly, I am absolutely in awe of these children and young people and their courage. We must make it easier for them to tell their stories. We must make it easier for them to get justice so that the offenders are held to account. We want to ensure that the victims of child sexual abuse are treated with the care, compassion and respect they deserve.

Yesterday I announced a measure that will help deliver justice in a better and fairer way for child victims. We have appointed two new specialist District Court judges, Ms Jennie Girdham, SC, and Ms Catherine Traill, to hear child sexual assault cases across New South Wales. Ms Girdham and Ms Traill are both barristers with experience specifically in child sexual assault matters. They will, in addition, undergo intensive training to give them greater awareness of the special needs of children, adolescents and young people before the courts. These specialist judges, with the expertise they already have and with this training, will reduce that stress and trauma for children before the courts. It will be less traumatic for children giving evidence and, most importantly, it will bring offenders to justice. It will also boost the confidence of the community in our system of criminal justice.

But we are not finished; there is more to do. We have convened a Child Sexual Assault Taskforce, which is going to advise us on how best to use children's champions, which was another election commitment. This has been successful overseas. These people are going to hold the hands of children and young people

during their stressful courtroom experience. The task force will also advise the Government on how best to use the pre-recorded evidence that these young people will give to our courts. We have all the stakeholders around that table, which is what makes it so powerful and so important, to deliver better justice for our children and young people.

Those at the table include the NSW Police Force, the Department of Justice, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Victims Services NSW and Legal Aid NSW. Those specialist judges will also be part of the task force. I was very proud to make that announcement on behalf of the Government. There will always be more to do, and we will continue that work. But, most importantly, the announcement yesterday of the appointment of those two specialist District Court judges will deliver a better justice system for our children and young people and put offenders where they need to be.

## **WESTCONNEX**

**Ms JENNY LEONG:** My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Given the complexity and scale of the WestConnex project and the high level of public interest in it, will the Minister give a commitment that the exhibition periods for all future environmental impact statements related to WestConnex will be not less than 60 days?

**Mr ROB STOKES:** Hello again everyone. I thank the member for Newtown for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of her community. I appreciate that there is a lot of interest in this project in the Newtown community, as there is right across Sydney. Certainly there are many projects that the Baird-Grant Government is getting on with across Sydney and the regions—including WestConnex, Sydney Metro, Sydney light rail, Parramatta light rail and the Gosford Hospital upgrade. All those projects will involve some measure of disruption and dislocation, and it is important that the community can have its say in relation to them.

The current framework in relation to this project is set out under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act section 89F (1) (a). Regulation 83 of the Environment Planning and Assessment Regulation states clearly that the standard exhibition period for an environmental impact statement for a matter of State significant development or infrastructure or a designated development is 30 days. Given the complexity of these issues, I think what the member for Newtown has raised is worthy of further consideration—once, of course, the environmental impact statements are completed. It is a little difficult to say how long things can go on exhibition for before I have reflected upon the completed environmental impact statements.

However, what I can say in the meantime is that the original Secretary's environmental assessment requirements required the WestConnex Delivery Authority to engage in public consultation. That is why there is a public kiosk at Westfield Burwood, for example. Constituents of the member for Newtown and anyone else in Sydney can go and have a chat to the people there between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. I encourage people to get involved and to have their say. In the meantime, when I receive the environmental impact statements I certainly will consider whether there should be an extension of the statutory standard period for the exhibition of these sorts of documents.

There is plenty of development going on across Sydney and we want to hear what people have to say—whether they are government projects or private projects. We know there is huge growth pressure on Sydney. The Baird-Grant Government has planned around \$60 billion worth of infrastructure projects over the next four years. They will involve a level of dislocation but they are about transforming this city into tomorrow's Sydney and providing opportunities for people across the State by making Sydney and New South Wales more liveable and less congested. I conclude with the immortal words of the Village People: "Together we will make the plans." Together we will make a stand. We are going to make Sydney better and we are going to do it together.

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

## **NSW GAS PLAN**

**Mr DAMIEN TUDEHOPE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy. How is the NSW Gas Plan protecting our environment whilst also securing vital gas supplies for this State?

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** At long last New South Wales has a well-considered and science-based plan for this State—it has been a long time coming. What the Labor Party despises about this great NSW Gas Plan is that it actually is a plan.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Unlike those opposite, we actually have a strategy for the management of the great gas resources of this State. We all remember what happened when Labor was in charge of the development of gas resources in this State—petroleum exploration licences [PELs] were thrown across the State like confetti. Under Labor's policy—or lack of policy—almost 60 per cent of the State was covered by PELs. Under our plan the footprint of coal seam gas has been reduced to just 9 per cent of the State. We introduced the NSW Gas Plan because we wanted the regulation of this industry to be sensible and world class and, most importantly, to focus on the development of projects that will have a positive impact on the energy security of this great State.

It gives me great pleasure again to inform the House that on 6 July this year, under action No. 4 of the NSW Gas Plan, this Government bought back PEL 2 from AGL Energy. This PEL covered almost 669,000 hectares, stretching from south of Fitzroy Falls through Western Sydney to west of Lake Macquarie. I inform the House that that means there is now no coal seam gas title covering the special areas of the Sydney water catchment. One would think Opposition members would sit there quietly, be grateful and acknowledge that this Government has delivered where they could not. But, no, they could not do that. It gives me no pleasure to inform the House that in fact the Opposition spokesperson referred to the buyback and cancellation of this significant PEL over the special areas of the Sydney water catchment as "low-hanging fruit". How incredible. Seriously, did they not want us to buy back this PEL and protect the Sydney water catchment? It is a gross insult to the people of New South Wales who have campaigned to protect this important water catchment.

I can inform the House that under the petroleum exploration licence buyback scheme, 15 PELs have been bought back from titleholders and cancelled. Under the buyback scheme we have clawed back almost 4,500 million hectares of New South Wales, which was sold at bargain basement prices by former Ministers Obeid and Macdonald. This Government remains open for further negotiations with any companies that are interested. Through better science and regulation, this Government is focusing on the safe and sustainable development of resources in New South Wales, which will benefit the State's 1.2 million families, 33,000 small businesses and 500 heavy industrial sites that rely on gas every day. It is implementing the recommendation of the independent NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer. Through its gas plan the Government will introduce a strategic release framework for the granting of future petroleum titles to ensure that licences are granted only over appropriate areas.

I inform the House that one of the many electorates that is now coal seam gas [CSG] free, thanks to this Government, is the great electorate of Kiama. A lot of great things have happened in Kiama in the past, such as the discovery of the blowhole in 1797 by Bass. But there was a break until the election of Gareth Ward in 2011. A lot of great things are happening in Kiama at the moment, including a record \$340 million allocated for the Princes Highway upgrade at Gerringong and \$34.8 million allocated for the South Coast Cancer Care Centre. Ultra secret shadow Cabinet policy forums are being held in Kiama. There was more secrecy surrounding that meeting than the Yalta Conference of 1945. Thanks to a spirited member on the other side of the House, I have the leaked policy ad campaign that was approved last weekend by the head office focus group of the Australian Labor Party.

**Ms Kate Washington:** Point of order—

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** It is okay, I was not going to name the member for Port Stephens.

**Ms Kate Washington:** I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The entire answer has been relevant. I will continue to hear from the Minister.

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

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** This is the ad campaign for infrastructure. This is what the Opposition will be rolling out. There is not much to it. I will pass it around so members can have a look. For Jillian, this is the ad campaign for hospitals and kittens.

**Mr David Harris:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Minister that the use of props is not acceptable. Members will stop waving them around.

**Mr David Harris:** My point of order goes to relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I thought it was going to be about props.

**Mr David Harris:** I am pleased that my point of order about props and the relevance of props was raised before I could take it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the Minister not to use props.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** This is the creepy one: "Vote Labor. Or the kittens get it."

**The SPEAKER:** Order! How many more props are there?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** In contrast, this Government will continue to take a responsible approach to the natural gas industry based on science and fact in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

**Question time concluded at 3.23 p.m.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended on Tuesday 11 August 2015 to provide for:

- (1) Government business to be considered during the period in the routine of business set aside for private members' statements prior to 1.30 p.m.
- (2) The following routine of business after the conclusion of the motion accorded priority:
  - (a) Government business;
  - (b) private members' statements;



- (c) matter of public importance; and
- (d) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [3.24 p.m.]: The Opposition will not accede to this motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. Much has been said this week about the Opposition's retreat in Kiama. I inform the House that one of the items that was discussed was the inertia that has befallen this Government since before the 2015 election. The Leader of the House offered nothing to justify the suspension of standing and sessional orders. The Opposition has been at pains throughout the previous term and this term to assist the Government in progressing its legislative program in the House. However, upon returning to this place after a five-week break, at the conclusion of the first sitting week after the budget the Government has transacted two bills. It is setting a cracking pace! Unless I am mistaken, the upper House has no bills before it.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** They didn't sit this week.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Maroubra has the call.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I know they did not sit this week. The *Notice Paper* has been sitting there for five weeks, Gladys. Members of the upper House do not have to sit to know how many bills are before the Legislative Council. Unless I am mistaken, when upper House members return next week they will have no bills to consider. I suspect that the true import of and motivation for this motion is the Government wanting to move the dust diseases debacle out of this place as early as possible. The Government has a glass jaw and much to hide. It should be ashamed of the way it treats injured workers in this State.

If this is how the Leader of the House plans to run the House for the next 3½ years he should get his act together because he could not run a chook raffle. I will be interested to hear what justification he offers when he rises to his feet; I see that he is eager to jump. If he wishes to dispatch business on Tuesday morning in order to send work to the other place, there is a piece of legislation before the House that could be dealt with quite readily. I do not imagine that the "getting the tinnies off the street" bill will lead to too much debate in this place—although it might match debate on the well-remembered library bill. More speakers contributed to debate on the Library Amendment Bill 2011 than there were words in the bill.

The people of Penrith will love it when they start receiving letters from the Minister saying, "Gladys next door does not like boats so get rid of that tinny you have had out the front of your house for 20 years." If Government members wish to pass the tinny bill through the House quickly then we will leave the schedule as it is so it can be sent to the upper House. This motion says to the world that we are lazy and there is no work before the House. Help us out. As my mum used to say, "God helps those who help themselves." The Opposition will not support this motion.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Industry, Resources and Energy) [3.28 p.m.], in reply: How unfortunate. This is a busy, reformist government. It has a number of bills on the agenda. Ministers work long hours developing wonderful policies and legislation for this great State. Members on the backbench are striving day after day to deliver for the people of New South Wales. They wish to contribute.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** With our heavy reformist agenda, we will demand more work from those opposite. We are the workers. We are the lifters; they are the leaners. If those opposite do not want to participate they do not have to; we will. We will continue to introduce good legislation and deliver for this State.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

Mr Anderson  
Mr Ayres  
Mr Baird  
Mr Barilaro  
Ms Berejikian  
Mr Brookes  
Mr Conolly  
Mr Constance  
Mr Coure  
Mr Crouch  
Mrs Davies  
Mr Dominello  
Mr Elliott  
Mr Fraser  
Mr Gee  
Mr George  
Ms Gibbons

Ms Goward  
Mr Grant  
Mr Gulaptis  
Mr Hazzard  
Mr Henskens  
Ms Hodgkinson  
Mr Humphries  
Mr Johnsen  
Mr Kean  
Dr Lee  
Mr Maguire  
Mr Marshall  
Mr Notley-Smith  
Mr O'Dea  
Mrs Pavey  
Mr Perrottet  
Ms Petinos

Mr Piccoli  
Mr Provest  
Mr Roberts  
Mr Sidoti  
Mrs Skinner  
Mr Stokes  
Mr Toole  
Mr Tudehope  
Ms Upton  
Mr Ward  
Mr Williams  
Mrs Williams

*Tellers,*  
Mr Bromhead  
Mr Patterson

**Noes, 36**

Ms Aitchison  
Mr Atalla  
Ms Car  
Ms Catley  
Mr Chanthivong  
Mr Crakanthorp  
Mr Daley  
Mr Dib  
Ms Doyle  
Ms Finn  
Mr Foley  
Mr Greenwich  
Mr Harris

Ms Harrison  
Ms Hay  
Ms Haylen  
Ms Hornery  
Mr Kamper  
Ms Leong  
Mr Lynch  
Dr McDermott  
Ms McKay  
Mr Mehan  
Ms Mihailuk  
Mr Minns  
Mr Park

Mr Parker  
Mr Piper  
Mr Robertson  
Ms K. Smith  
Ms T. F. Smith  
Ms Washington  
Ms Watson  
Mr Zangari

*Tellers,*  
Mr Lalich  
Mr Warren

**Pairs**

Mr Aplin  
Mr Evans  
Mr Speakman

Mr Barr  
Ms Burney  
Mr Hoenig

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

## VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2014-15

**Ms Gladys Berejeklian** tabled:

- (1) Pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2014-15 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Family and Community Services, dated 29 June 2015.
- (2) Pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2014-15 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, dated 29 June 2015.

## 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**.

### **Campbelltown Service Delivery**

Petition requesting the continuation of all services provided by Roads and Maritime Services in the Campbelltown local government area, received from **Mr Greg Warren**.

### **Renewable Energy**

Petition requesting the Government to set a renewable electricity target for 2020 and to increase the renewable electricity target for 2015 and 2030, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

### **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**.

### **Plastic Bags Ban**

Petition calling on the Government to introduce legislation to ban single-use lightweight plastic bags at retail points of sale in New South Wales to reduce waste and environmental degradation, 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 petition signed by more than 500 persons was lodged for presentation:**

### **Repeat Offender Sentencing**

Petition calling for harsher sentences for repeat offenders, particularly those who commit crimes while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

## **REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC CONVEYANCING) BILL 2015**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet, read a first time and printed.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2015 will allow a number of important reforms in conveyancing. It will implement enhanced risk mitigation arrangements in conveyancing by introducing standard verification of identity arrangements across all conveyancing, closing the gap that currently exists for paper conveyancing. The bill will also introduce a nationally agreed priority notice as a further risk mitigation tool for the conveyancing industry. The bill will also provide for the alignment of paper and electronic conveyancing processes, allowing a single conveyancing process regardless of whether a transaction proceeds electronically or in paper. These reforms will facilitate a smooth transition between the two mediums—paper and electronic—deliver efficiency savings, and avoid additional complexity and costs to the conveyancing industry.

National electronic conveyancing commenced in New South Wales on 8 October 2013 on a limited basis, with mortgage-only transactions being lodged by a few banks. A major expansion of electronic conveyancing began on 10 November 2014 with the introduction of transfers, caveats and withdrawal of caveats to the electronic system. Adding this functionality to the system opens electronic conveyancing to solicitors and licensed conveyancers and to additional financial institutions. Importantly, it also introduces real-time electronic settlement functionality through the Reserve Bank, a world first for conveyancing systems.

More than 13,000 dealings have been lodged successfully electronically since the system commenced and its usage continues to grow steadily. More than 500 users are now registered to lodge documents electronically in New South Wales. National electronic conveyancing introduces a number of new practices that are different to those that currently apply in paper conveyancing. The cost and the complexity of conveyancing would increase as a result of the necessity of operating with two different processes, especially with the possibility of a solicitor or conveyancer needing to backtrack and take different steps if a transaction has to

change from electronic to paper or from paper to electronic.

The need to be able to change between media will likely be common in the first few years until electronic conveyancing is widely adopted. This is because all four parties in a typical conveyancing transaction—the discharging mortgagee, vendor, purchaser and incoming mortgagee—all need to agree and be on the electronic system for the transaction to proceed electronically. The key reforms in this bill allow the adoption of a single conveyancing process, regardless of whether a transaction is electronic or paper or changes mid-transaction.

This will be achieved by introducing to paper conveyancing new practices such as verification of identity, client authorisations and standardised certifications, to align with the new requirements for electronic conveyancing. These reforms, together with the introduction of priority notices, also provide an enhanced risk mitigation framework for conveyancing generally that will benefit everyone in conveyancing. It will also facilitate the phasing out of paper certificates of title, which will become an anachronism as electronic conveyancing is adopted over the coming years.

The bill introduces a new section 12E into the Real Property Act to allow the Registrar General to make conveyancing rules that will parallel the participation rules for electronic conveyancing and apply the new practices in paper conveyancing. Those participation rules are established nationally under the Electronic Conveyancing National Law and applied consistently in each jurisdiction. The conveyancing rules will deal with matters such as the requirements for identification of clients, the use of client authorisations and standardisation of the certifications that are required on documents lodged for registration with the Registrar General. At present in New South Wales we have formal requirements for verification of identity that apply in electronic conveyancing, we have formal requirements for a mortgagee to identify the borrower before registering a mortgage and we have formal requirements for a witness to a document to identify the party whose signature is being witnessed if they have not known that person for more than 12 months.

In addition to those formal requirements, solicitors and licensed conveyancers have an informal requirement to know their client as part of professional due diligence. Under the reforms to be introduced by this bill, a single verification of identity framework will be introduced to apply the same risk mitigation practices to conveyancing generally. It is intended that the same requirements will also apply in conveyancing nationally. As a result, practitioners will know what requirements apply regardless of the type or location of the conveyancing transaction. This standardisation of verification of identity frameworks will assist practitioners who will have only one process to comply with. It will make conveyancing more secure for all participants, whether it is an electronic or a paper transaction, with everyone knowing what is expected of them and of the other parties.

The verification of identity requirement is for solicitors and conveyancers to take reasonable steps to verify the identity of their client. The reasonable steps regime allows practitioners the flexibility to adapt to different circumstances. What constitutes reasonable steps may vary according to the circumstances and may require the exercise of some professional judgement by practitioners. However, if a practitioner wants to have more certainty about compliance with the requirement, there is a Verification of Identity Standard, developed and agreed with stakeholders nationally, and anyone following that national standard is deemed to have taken reasonable steps for the purposes of complying with the verification of identity requirements.

The second of the electronic conveyancing practices to be introduced to paper conveyancing is the use of client authorisations. A client authorisation is a document signed by the client to authorise their solicitor or conveyancer to sign conveyancing documents on their behalf. It was introduced in electronic conveyancing to allow a solicitor or conveyancer to digitally sign an electronic document on the client's behalf because it is not economical or practical for every party to a conveyancing transaction to be required to obtain digital signing credentials to sign electronic documents. In some respects a client authorisation is similar to a power of attorney, but it is specifically distinguished from a power of attorney so that, unlike a power of attorney, it is not required to be registered prior to dealing with the land.

Accordingly, obtaining a client authorisation is an essential step in the lead-up to effecting an electronic conveyancing transaction. However, particularly in the early days of electronic conveyancing, parties are unlikely to know whether all parties are participants in the electronic system so as to allow the transaction to be completed electronically. The introduction of client authorisations in the paper as well as the electronic environment will allow a smooth transition between the two lodgement mediums. If a transaction has been prepared with the intention that it proceed electronically and it is subsequently discovered that it cannot, the solicitor or conveyancer will be able to rely on the existing client authorisation to proceed in the paper environment without needing to have the client come in and sign a new set of documents.

It is important to note that the client authorisation does not replace any retainer or other agreement between the solicitor or conveyancer and their client. New sections 107 and 108 are introduced into the Real Property Act that parallel existing provisions in the Electronic Conveyancing National Law providing for the nature and effect of client authorisations as they apply in paper. Importantly, the bill also provides that a client authorisation made under the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW) is effective under the Real Property Act. The next component of the reforms contained in the bill relates to the standardisation of the certifications that are required on dealings lodged for registration under the Real Property Act, whether the dealings are lodged electronically or in paper.

Currently in paper documents certifications are required by the parties as to the correctness of the transaction and by witnesses as to the identity of the person whose signature they have witnessed. Expanded certifications are required in electronic conveyancing relating to verification of identity having been undertaken and to the holding of a client authorisation, and any other evidence required to support the transaction. These are in addition to the normal certification requirements. With the introduction of verification of identity and client authorisations into paper conveyancing, the certifications will be standardised based on the national model using the certifications that are set out in the participation rules for electronic conveyancing.

The final significant reform in the bill is the introduction to New South Wales of priority notices. A priority notice is a notification lodged with the Registrar General of the intended registration of specified dealings in respect of the land. The priority notice reserves the priority of the dealings set out in the notice and to that end will temporarily prevent the registration of other dealings with the subject land in order to preserve the priority of the dealings listed in the notice. Priority notices will protect the priority of the subject dealings for a period of 60 days, with a once only option of extending priority for a further 30 days should there be unexpected delays in lodging the protected dealings.

The objectives for introducing priority notices include: providing greater certainty to the transaction for which priority is reserved; alerting interested parties who search the register to the fact that an intended dealing or transaction is pending; and assisting in fraud prevention as details of a pending transaction will appear on a search of the register and thus increase the likelihood of a fraud being detected. Also, while priority notices are a useful tool for conveyancing practitioners, they are also being introduced as an added safeguard that will assist in protecting parties' interests when moving towards an electronic environment and the removal of paper certificates of title. A priority notice provides the confidence incoming parties at a settlement need to assure them that they are protected prior to registration of the transaction. This confidence is currently provided by taking possession of the certificate of title at a physical settlement.

While the lodgement of a priority notice will be optional, it is expected that parties buying a property will seek to protect their interests to the full extent possible by lodging a priority notice. Therefore the use of priority notices will become an integral consideration in prudent conveyancing practice. The bill also includes some minor amendments, including providing for the appointment and functions of deputy registrars general and, for the sake of continuity, to allow a deputy registrar general to act in the place of the Registrar General when he or she is absent from duty. I am pleased to support this bill and its facilitation of beneficial changes to promote efficiencies in the conveyancing industry. I commend the bill to the House.

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

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

### Seventh Day's Debate

#### Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [3.49 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I respond to the Speech of the Governor, His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in which he outlined the objectives of the Government in this Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales. I am honoured and proud to have been re-elected by the people of the electorate of Northern Tablelands to again serve my community in this the oldest Parliament, the mother parliament of Australia.

There is no greater honour in life than to be entrusted to represent your community, no nobler pursuit than to serve the community and no greater responsibility than to advocate for the needs, desires and aspirations of the people. I fully understand that the support shown to me by my community at the 28 March election comes with an expectation that I will work hard for them, be a strong advocate and represent their issues in this Parliament and in Government. I willingly recommit myself to undertake that task with gusto and I welcome that responsibility.

I acknowledge the pleasant election campaign in the Northern Tablelands. It was a campaign based on issues, ideas and policy. I acknowledge the other candidates who contested the seat: David Mailler, the Independent candidate; Mercurius Goldstein, The Greens candidate; and Deborah O'Brien, the Labor candidate. Whilst we had differing views on some issues—but very similar views on most issues—it was great to see all three candidates being strong advocates for their respective parties and community interests. The candidates are genuine people who are proud of where they live and passionate advocates for country New South Wales. I enjoyed spending time with them not only on the pre-poll booths and polling booths but at various "meet the candidates" forums, particularly those organised by the NSW Farmers Association. There was an excellent exchange of ideas. I thank the candidates for their participation in the campaign and for the way that they conducted themselves. That was acknowledged by the community as well.

One of the major casualties when one is involved in public life—whether in this Parliament, Federal Parliament or local government—is time spent away from family and friends. I acknowledge and thank my partner, Carolyn Lupton—Caz. She is a wonderful woman who has shown great tolerance and forbearance in putting up with me and with the rigours of the campaign. Representing the third largest electorate in the State and campaigning across it intensively for a number of months requires many nights away from home. I thank Caz for still being there, for putting up with me and for the support that she continues to give me.

**Mr Stephen Kamper:** Did she vote for you?

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** Yes, she did. She even took a picture of her ballot paper to prove it to me. She may not have voted for my side of politics at every election, but she definitely voted for me this time. I also acknowledge and thank my wonderful staff in the Northern Tablelands electorate office. Electorate office staff are a special breed. They keep the home fires burning for all of us, no matter what party we are in, or even if we are not in a party. They serve the people of all constituencies with great integrity. I thank my electorate officers: Lisa Williams; Kay McColl; and Lauren Hiscox, a university student in Armidale who comes in and does some work for me. I thank them for their hard work, for their guidance and for often making me look a lot better than I am. They deal with constituent matters when I am on the road or in Parliament. I really appreciate their efforts.

No campaign can take place without strong support on the ground and help from branch members and community members. They are the people who man the booths on election day. I acknowledge the efforts of Graham McKenzie, who is the electorate council chairman for Northern Tablelands for The Nationals. He has done a sterling job, together with Peter Taylor, Matthew Madden and Geoff Manchee in Moree; Archie Cameron in Glenn Innes; Greg Kachel and Bob Neich in Inverell; and Pam Koebel—who assisted throughout

the campaign despite her illness—together with Mitch Faulkner, Sam Doyle and the indefatigable Matt Lynch in Armidale.

Matt Lynch is a very special guy. He is currently at Ronald McDonald House with his daughter Sarah, who was recently diagnosed with leukaemia. He woke up at 5.30 a.m. on election day, went down to the Armidale Town Hall and plastered every square inch of that building and every tree with our corflutes and posters. Much to the chagrin of those working on the booths of the other candidates, when they finally rolled up there was nowhere to put their material. Matt loves campaigns. He sat on the booth all day, as he did for two weeks on the pre-poll booth in the lead-up to the election. I count myself as a political junkie, but Matt Lynch takes it to a whole new level. I give a special shout out to him.

I acknowledge Deputy Premier Troy Grant, the Leader of The Nationals. As a relatively new leader, Troy hit the campaign trail with enormous gusto. He spent a few days in his own electorate during the campaign but travelled to all corners of the State to visit candidates. I acknowledge him, together with the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, for the commitments made during the election to projects that we fought for for a long time. One such commitment was \$60 million to redevelop the Armidale Rural Referral Hospital. That important redevelopment was fought for by my predecessor and, before that, at both the State and Federal level. There was also a \$30 million commitment to redevelop the Inverell District Hospital, a project that the Inverell community had almost given up on. They thought it would not happen, but it will happen and it will be delivered during the term of this Government.

I acknowledge the Hon. Duncan Gay for his visit to the electorate during the campaign and for his commitment to bridge redevelopments, including the Abington Creek and Emu Crossing bridge. He also committed \$1 million for the construction of the new roundabout at Armidale regional airport. That will pave the way for a brand-new industrial and commercial development there, which will bring jobs and growth. I acknowledge the Minister at the table, the Minister for Emergency Services, who was also at Armidale regional airport recently to inspect plans for new emergency services infrastructure that will be a boon for that precinct.

The election saw significant changes to the boundaries of the electorate of Northern Tablelands, as it did for many electorates in country New South Wales. The electorate of Northern Tablelands is now a sprawling east-to-west aligned electorate that covers more than 54,000 square kilometres. It is the third-largest electorate in this State. When the boundaries changed, the seat lost the community and Shire of Tenterfield, which has been part of the electorate of Northern Tablelands since its recreation in 1981. I acknowledge the efforts of Val Gardiner in Tenterfield, mayor of Tenterfield shire Peter Petty, and council general manager Lotta Jackson. I wish them well in working with Thomas George, the member for Lismore, who I am sure will continue to represent them and the rest of his electorate with great distinction.

Walcha shire was also removed from the electorate. It was part of the electorate of Northern Tablelands for eight years and has returned to the electorate of Tamworth. I have greatly enjoyed working with Mayor Janelle Archdale and general manager Jack O'Hara since I was elected at the by-election. I wish them well as they work with their new local member and my colleague Kevin Anderson. I know that he will follow up any issues that they have in Walcha and will represent them very well in this Parliament.

While losing Tenterfield and Walcha was sad news, the great news is that the wonderful, agriculturally rich Moree Plains Shire is now part of the electorate of Northern Tablelands. I take over that area from Kevin Humphries, the member for Barwon. I acknowledge the excellent work being done by Mayor Katrina Humphries and the new general manager of the council, Lester Rogers, who replaced David Aber, who had been in the chair for 15 years and contributed so much to that community. Moree Plains Shire is a wonderful part of the world. It is the richest agricultural-producing area in the country, with some wonderful communities. Mungindi, Garah, Boomi, Ashley, Pallamallawa, Boggabilla, Toomelah, which I will be visiting in a fortnight, and all the other communities are great economic centres and great places to live.

**Mr David Elliott:** Can you spell them?



**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** I could spell them for the Minister but I suggest he check them in *Hansard* as I am conscious of the time. I am happy with the work that has already been done in that community. I have already spent a lot of time there familiarising myself more deeply with a number of excellent community groups. On Monday we opened the \$30 million stage two of the Moree town bypass, with Mark Coulton, the Federal member for Parkes, and Duncan Gay, the best roads Minister the State has ever seen. Also under construction is the \$116 million solar farm, which will have 220,000 individual solar panels which will produce enough electricity a year to power 15,000 homes. A \$15 million rebuild of Moree East Public School is happening at the moment. On behalf of the Minister and the Government, I was proud to turn the first sod on that redevelopment recently.

The council is developing the new Moree Water Ski Lakes precinct, taking the grey water from the artesian spa baths. That will be an enormous tourist attraction for the community. I look forward to that project getting underway. In all my time—slightly more than two years—in State Parliament I have never forgotten where I started my political journey: in local government. I will always be proud of that. I will always stand up for a strong, independent local government that can make as many decisions as possible where they should be made, that is, closest to the community. To that end, I have been fortunate to always have a strong relationship with the formerly eight and now seven local councils in my electorate. I acknowledge the mayor of Armidale-Dumaresq council, Laurie Bishop; the mayor of Uralla, Mick Pearce; the mayor of Guyra, Hans Hietbrink; the mayor of Glen Innes, Col Price; the mayor of Inverell, Paul Harmon; the mayor of Gwydir, John Coulton; and the mayor of Moree Plains Shire Council, Katrina Humphries, whom I have already mentioned.

I have very good working relationships with those mayors, their respective general managers and councils. I have a huge amount of respect for the work they do in their communities. I love being able to walk into their council meetings to have an open chat about issues, to take up issues and to secure vital funds for the projects they are undertaking on behalf of their communities to continue to build the communities they represent. Over the next four years I will continue to work in strong partnership with all my communities, delivering on their needs and advocating their respective views in this Parliament. Issues I intend to take up over the next four years on behalf of my communities include delivering the redevelopment of Armidale Hospital and Inverell Hospital, and the enhancement of Moree District Hospital.

It was wonderful to have the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health, Sarah Mitchell, visit Moree Hospital recently to announce that the development of a clinical services plan will commence shortly. That is the first step to securing resources to redevelop or refurbish some sections of that hospital, particularly the renal dialysis unit, the chemotherapy unit and the operating theatres, which have served the community well but are well past their use-by date and in need of proper attention. I want to deliver \$1 million to support the new industrial development at Armidale airport, and we want to progress plans for a new police station in Inverell. I look forward to welcoming shortly the Deputy Premier and Minister for Justice and Police and the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, in Inverell to inspect the conditions at the police station. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

The Inverell police station was built and opened in 1960 for 14 officers. Inverell now has a 24-hour police presence and has 46 officers working out of a space that was built for 14. I do not need to go beyond that; I am sure members can imagine the cramped conditions that exist at Inverell. We have an excellent police force but we are in dire need of a new station. I look forward to working with Moree Plains Shire Council to deliver the \$90 million upgrade and new passing lanes on the Newell Highway in Moree Plains Shire, and continuing the development of renewable energy projects throughout the Northern Tablelands electorate. Northern Tablelands is a sweet spot for renewable energy in the west. We have a huge potential for solar developments and we are seeing that at the moment with construction of the solar farm.

In the east around Glen Innes, Guyra and Armidale there is huge potential for wind farm developments. Indeed, construction is about to begin on the White Rock Wind Farm at Glen Innes, which will have 119 turbines. We have received support from the State Government for the New England Wind Group to procure the latest technology to assess the best spot to construct a new community wind farm of four to six turbines, and in Uralla we are piloting an Australian first, the zero net energy town project. I look forward to the Minister

for the Environment visiting Uralla shortly to launch the final body of scientific work around that. It is an exciting time for renewables in the Northern Tablelands.

I will work hard to secure the repeal of the Native Vegetation Act—an Act that has been a millstone around farmers' necks for far too long—obtain funding to upgrade the Armidale and Moree regional airports and deliver a helipad for Glen Innes District Hospital. Those are just a few of the important projects that I intend to take up in this new Parliament, the Fifty-sixth Parliament, on behalf of the Northern Tablelands electorate. I am sure there will be many, many more projects such as the BackTrack program and expansion of the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Program. I note that in his address the Governor said something important. I know previous speakers have mentioned it, but I want to read it into *Hansard*. The message is important for all of us as we embark on the Fifty-sixth Parliament. In his address on 5 May the Governor said:

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

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

Those words are incredibly insightful and important, and should be watch words for us all. In the humdrum, in the clash of views and ideas and the sometimes rowdy debate in this Parliament we should not lose sight of those words. We all have a responsibility to bring the views of our electorates to this place, to argue intently for what our communities need, but we also have an obligation to respect the views of others, however much in the minority they may be. Everyone who comes to this place has a right to represent their community, to be respected, to be treated with courtesy, and I think the Governor's words are important for all members of this place to remember as we go forward over the next four years.

I acknowledge His Excellency. I thank him for recently visiting the Northern Tablelands electorate—Toomelah, Boggabilla, Moree and Inverell, where he participated in a training session with the Moree Boomerangs. He did quite well. I think the Boomerangs asked him whether he would stick around until Saturday to play a game. The Boomerangs are doing quite well; currently they are second on the table to the mighty Inverell Hawks. I thank His Excellency for his sincerity and the way he made everyone he met on his journey feel special and important. I thank him for his address. I congratulate all members, particularly the new ones, on their election to this place, and I wish everyone all the best in serving their constituencies for the length of the Fifty-sixth Parliament. I commend the address to the House.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [4.09 p.m.]: I speak in reply to the Governor's Speech made by His Excellency General the Hon. David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret'd) and compliment him on his long and detailed address. Those members who sat in the Chamber during his address were in awe of his great efforts. I commend him for his service to this country prior to taking up his role as Governor of New South Wales. I also commend his wife, Mrs Linda Hurley, for her great support for the Governor. The Governor visited my electorate and invited schools to Government House, which they have since attended. Both the Governor and Mrs Hurley showed genuine interest in the Conservatorium in Coffs Harbour and in numerous other organisations, schools and students in my electorate. I look forward to welcoming the Governor back on many more occasions.

I have known the Governor for a number of years as he used to come to Bellingen in his role as a general serving in the military. He still comes to Bellingen and this year—when Bellingen was still in my electorate—he attended a memorial rugby league match held there for Sergeant Matthew Locke, MG, the first soldier to be killed in active service in Afghanistan since Vietnam. This year the Governor made a point of attending the memorial match in his role as Governor. Jan Locke, Matthew's mother, passed away earlier this year and Norm Locke, Matthew's father and a great friend of mine for many years, passed away this week and will be buried on Saturday. I will advise the Governor because I know he had a great rapport with the family. I will read some of the things that the Governor said in his Speech. I begin with his opening remarks:

I know that honourable members sitting in this historic Parliament, the oldest in Australia, have different loyalties, their own priorities and their own passions.

He went on to say:

Over the next four years you will be called upon to act with integrity, wisdom, and sometimes courage, in the interests of all our citizens.

I commend you to the task.

In concluding his Speech he said:

For four years the Government worked hard to turn New South Wales around, to strengthen the economy, to put its citizens first.

The Government went to its people with a fully funded plan to build on that hard work and future-proof the State.

New South Wales has clearly signalled its support for that plan and the Government has made a firm commitment to New South Wales that it will deliver on the commitments so emphatically supported at the election.

The Government will deliver improved infrastructure and better services, protection for our environment and communities and restore accountability across government—all of this underpinned by the number one economy in Australia, steady jobs growth and solid consumer and business confidence.

You, the elected members of the Fifty-sixth Parliament of New South Wales, have a great responsibility and a great opportunity to service the people of this great State.

You each represent many voices and symbolise the great diversity of New South Wales; the many cultural and language backgrounds that have come together are the beating heart of our State.

There are many new members taking their seats for the first time today among the more established and experienced representatives.

I encourage you to learn from and support each other; remember you are here to speak for your community and it is their interests that come first.

Respect for each other and the people whose voice you represent should underpin every debate and it is that which will lead to good policy and good outcomes for the communities you represent.

In my role as Assistant-Speaker I have listened to many contributions to the Address-in-Reply debate and I have been disappointed with the quality of the contributions of Opposition members. They criticised our budgetary measures and did not recognise what the Governor clearly outlined—

**Mr David Harris:** Maybe because that was your agenda.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** We are hearing those criticisms again now. Opposition members have no respect. In his Speech the Governor mentioned respect. When the member for Wyong was a member in this Chamber some time ago his respect for others was poor and dismal; it always will be as he will not learn respect. As I said earlier, the contributions of Opposition members were more a criticism of this Government's first budget—a four-year plan to build on what it has done over the past four years, which was enunciated by the Governor in his Speech. Mistruths and lies are told by those opposite on a daily basis. Today we heard the mistruth relating to the lease of 49 per cent of electricity poles and wires in New South Wales, which will give

this Government somewhere in the vicinity of \$20 billion.

**Mr Mark Coure:** How much?

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** Twenty billion, which will be put into ageing infrastructure that was neglected for 16 years under the Labor Government. Under former Premier Bob Carr we had the highest revenue of any government in this State but what did we see from it? The people of New South Wales deserve better than what they were given by the Labor Government. Coffs Harbour was promised a new police station and courthouse when the Labor Government was elected in 1995—in fact, it was reflected in the 1995 budget estimates. It took 20 years to deliver a new police station and courthouse but they were not delivered by a Labor government even though Labor members say that they support the justice system and police officers in this State. People who visited the police station said it was the most archaic station they had ever seen. The station could not even muster the necessary number of police officers as it was too small.

Police in Coffs Harbour could not arrest someone and take a statement until a computer became free. For 16 years the Labor Government clearly ignored that desperate need—it just took it off the agenda. The O'Farrell Government and the Baird-Grant Government have ensured that \$80-odd million has been made available to give us the most modern police station and courthouse in New South Wales. The Government is continuing to invest not only in the electorate of Coffs Harbour but also in all the electorates on the North Coast. It amazes me when those opposite say that this Government is going to sell electricity poles and wires. It is not; it is going to lease 49 per cent of them and that \$20 billion will come back into infrastructure in regional and rural New South Wales. In fact, that will equate to about \$200 million to \$300 million per electorate and it will be up to local government, local members and the community to identify the most needed projects in their electorates.

**Mr David Harris:** I thought The Nationals did not support privatisation.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** Madam Acting-Speaker, could you tell the little pop-up over there to keep his mouth shut and learn?

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Wyong will calm down.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** He has gained importance since becoming Deputy Whip but in reality he has a lot to learn. Mick Clough would have said to the member for Wyong many years ago, "Mate, you haven't been here the length of a cigarette yet so just shut up, listen and learn." In his Speech the Governor was more polite; he spoke about showing a bit of respect and learning from other members who have been here longer. I have listened to seven Governors' speeches since becoming a member of Parliament but the only ones that I have seen acted on in regional New South Wales have been those presented by a Coalition government. Service delivery in regional New South Wales has been excellent under Coalition governments and that will continue in the future. As the member for Myall Lakes often says, "We have suffered for 16 long years." In four years this Government, under Premier O'Farrell and Premier Baird, has turned the economy around. We are no longer in a dark chasm and we are now reinvesting in infrastructure.

Look at the amount of money that has been spent on the Pacific Highway. In the past four years alone more than \$1 billion has been spent on the extension of the road between Woolgoolga and Coffs Harbour. The member for Clarence and Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast is in the Chamber and I note that the first sod was turned on the upgrade of the Woolgoolga to Ballina stretch of the road a few weeks ago. Seeing those machines working on the road heartens me. That highway claimed a life a week—52 lives a year or more—yet the Labor Government thought it was far more important to build a cross-city tunnel, which is rarely used, rather than to invest money in the Pacific Highway. Accidents on this stretch of the road not only claimed the lives of locals but also claimed the lives of those driving north for a holiday or on business. In addition to those who lost their lives, innumerable people were maimed or injured in accidents on that highway over the years.

I commend both the Federal Coalition Government and the Federal Labor Government for contributing to the funding of the Pacific Highway upgrade. I commended Prime Minister Rudd and Prime Minister Howard for increasing funding and the current Federal Government has restored the 80:20 funding split for the upgrade. Under the previous Labor Government, then Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese abandoned this split, but the Abbott Government is now contributing the lion's share of the required funding. The upgraded road alone has brought thousands of jobs into the electorate of Coffs Harbour and other electorates on the North Coast and it will continue to do so. The upgrade of the highway from Urunga to Nambucca Heads is now complete. I drove on the highway to Sydney about five weeks ago and I have to say that the upgrade is brilliant. It will not be long before—

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Port Macquarie to Kempsey.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** As the member for Myall Lakes said, the upgrade of the section from Port Macquarie to Kempsey is well underway. That is another stretch of road that has cost innumerable lives and affected many people. I suggest that members opposite read the opening and the conclusion of the Governor's Speech to this House. The Governor detailed the program for this Government over the next four years. We have clearly shown in our first four years in government that we can and will deliver. We have retained the State's triple-A credit rating and the State's economy has grown by \$40 billion in the past four years alongside savings of \$9.7 billion which will go into front-line services.

Premier Baird, both as Premier and formerly as Treasurer of this State, can be proud of this record. I suggest all members of the Coalition frontbench, including Deputy Premier Grant, know the size of the task ahead but they will deliver. Once again I remind those opposite to treat this place with a bit of respect and ensure that they support legislation for the sake of the legislation and not by pushing a union line as they are with the current Health Services Amendment (Ambulance Fees) Bill. Instead those opposite should push a line for improved services and infrastructure for their constituents. I commend the Address-in-Reply to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

##### **Presentation**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** The date and time for His Excellency the Governor to receive the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech will be advised at a later time.

#### **CENTENARY OF ANZAC**

**Debate resumed from 4 August 2015.**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.24 p.m.]: At dawn on 25 April 1915 soldiers of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps [Anzac] landed on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula where it was planned that they and other troops would put Turkey, who had joined Germany against the Allies, out of World War I. Horrific battles ensued, but the Turks were unable to evict the Allies and the Allies were unable to overcome the Turkish defences. In December 1915, the Allies commenced a withdrawal having suffered heavy casualties. It was with this landing that there began to emerge the tradition of Anzac, with the ideals of mateship and sacrifice that distinguish and unite all Australians irrespective of their origins.

The Anzac tradition—the ideals of courage, endurance and mateship that are still relevant today—was established at the landing on 25 April 1915. Gallipoli was the start of a campaign that lasted eight months and resulted in some 25,000 Australian casualties. The men who served on the Gallipoli peninsula created a legend, adding the word "Anzac" to our vocabulary and creating the notion of Anzac spirit. More than 100,000

Australians have over the years paid the ultimate price to protect our freedom and our way of life. At this time we are commemorating the centenary of the First World War that was waged from 1914 to 1918. Most Australians can point to someone within their immediate family or on their family tree who served either at Gallipoli or in the First World War. My family is one of these.

My maternal grandfather, Ronald Falconer Mackintosh, was born in 1900 in Edinburgh, Scotland, and migrated to Australia as a boy. During the First World War he claimed to be older than he was in order to join up, and for the Second World War he claimed to be younger than he was so he could join the 8th Division in Malaya and be part of the withdrawal onto Singapore. He was present during the fall of Singapore. He became a prisoner of war for the duration of the Second World War. At the end of the Second World War he was mentioned in dispatches in recognition of services rendered to other prisoners whilst he was a prisoner of war. After the Second World War he became a member of the Ex Prisoners of War Association and was later awarded life membership of that association. He died in 1996 at the age of 96.

Many communities, even small ones, have memorials to those from their area who served in the Great War, the war to end all wars, although it was not. I will mention some of those from my electorate of Myall Lakes who served in the First World War. Mr Albert James Dun and his older cousin, Mr Percy Muir Dun, enlisted on the same day in February 1916. Albert was the only son of James and Eliza. He recorded his occupation as wharf hand and he was single. Albert was taken on strength with the 55th Battalion in France on 26 October 1916. Albert was wounded to his right shoulder on 10 March 1918. He was hospitalised in England and returned to his unit on 12 August 1918.

His enlistment record reveals: his service as Australian Imperial Forces; his unit as the 55th Battalion; his place of birth as Bungwahl via Bulahdelah—a famous place in the electorate of Myall Lakes—his age, date and locality of enlistment as 19 years and 11 months on 7 February 1916 in Newcastle; his next of kin as James Dun of Bungwahl via Bulahdelah, his father; and his date of discharge as 5 April 1919. I played rugby with a descendant of Mr Dun for the mighty Manning River Ratz. Albert was mentioned in orders by Brigadier General Stewart, commanding the 14th Australian Infantry Brigade, in connection with operations between 30 September and 2 October 1918 from the 55th Battalion. The citation read:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during an attack on the Hindenburg Line N. of Bellicourt on 30th September 1918.

In absence of stretcher bearers this soldier was detailed to attend to the wounded and regardless of all personal danger he moved forward in advance of our line under extremely heavy M.G. and shell fire and carried a severely wounded comrade back to a place of safety. His exploit, which was a particularly gallant one, was certainly instrumental in saving the life of the wounded man.

Throughout the operation he worked unceasingly and with utter disregard of personal risk in carrying and tending the wounded and by his cheerfulness and careful handling helped greatly to alleviate their suffering.

After the war Albert returned to Australia unfit for duty per the *Khyber* on 31 March 1919 and was discharged on 5 April 1919. There is a recording of an Albert James Dun marrying Philomena Payne in the Dungog district in 1929. Albert died in the Taree district in 1973. His descendants still live in the Bulahdelah and Taree districts.

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

## **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** I acknowledge in the public gallery Ms Marie Andrews, a former member for Gosford and member for Peats, and local residents of the peninsula in the electorate of Gosford and surrounds.

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

## **WOY WOY SERVICE NSW CENTRE**

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

**Ms KATHY SMITH** (Gosford) [4.30 p.m.]: In May I received an undated letter from the Director of Corporate Relations at Service NSW, advising that the motor registry in Woy Woy was ceasing business as of 10 August 2015. It did not take long for the public to learn of this move and, as expected, my office was inundated with phone calls, emails and personal callers. We were prepared and we immediately began to distribute a petition. That petition now sits with this Parliament, signed by over 15,000 residents of the Gosford and Terrigal electorates calling for the full Service NSW facilities our communities deserve.

The peninsula has 36,000 residents, but when the population of the Terrigal electorate, who also signed the petition, is added along with areas of Gosford not on the peninsula, we are looking at 70,000-plus residents affected by this decision. The Woy Woy Motor Registry is located in the heart of Woy Woy and is surrounded by a multitude of small businesses—fashion boutiques, stationery suppliers, florists, hair salons, cafes, et cetera—the type of businesses that provide employment and support Australia's regional towns. The long-term viability of these businesses is in serious question as the people who conduct on average 250 transactions each and every day at the motor registry shift to Gosford and take with them their purchasing power, which supports the local economy.

The many small motor repair and car sales businesses in the area will now have to travel to Gosford every time a motor registry transaction is necessary. How many of these businesses are expected to survive this extra burden? I have received reports from driving instructors who will be greatly affected by this closure. One instructor found parking so difficult in Gosford that she and her pupil were too late for an appointment for his driving test and his test had to be rescheduled. The instructor then arrived late for her next appointment only to find that this pupil had cancelled her lesson as the delay had caused conflict with other arrangements. Instructors are halving their number of clients per day, which will result in imposing greater strain on Service NSW as these people look for assistance. It makes more sense for government services to be located where the people are rather than for the people to have to travel to an inconvenient location.

The Baird Government is signing a death warrant on this town. The impact on employment in the area will be dire. Another cause for great concern is the impact on the elderly population. A media release published earlier this week advised that the Baird Government will provide a mobile service one day a week for those on a restricted licence. I am pleased that the most vulnerable will have this service, at least for a little while, but what about the elderly and disabled who are not on a restricted licence? Gosford has a network of very steep hills and those who do not qualify for the mobile service will have great difficulty in accessing the services located there. Parking has long been a problem in Gosford. With the addition of on average 250 more spaces needed each day and the impending closure of 400 spaces due to the sale of the Kibbleplex building, parking will be even more of a problem. Gosford City Council, by the way, voted unanimously to support this action. The member for Terrigal said in this week's media release:

This decision shows that Service NSW listens to customer feedback and acts accordingly.

The Government may be listening but its announcement shows clearly that it certainly is not taking note. As the petition clearly states, we are not asking merely for motor registry services; we are asking for full government services for all the people, not just some government services for some of the people. I recently wrote to the member for Terrigal suggesting we take joint action on this issue. To date, I have not had a response. Some very successful rallies have been held about this issue; one was held outside the office of the member for Terrigal this morning. Because of the size of previous rallies, four police officers plus a paddy wagon showed up—but very few constituents did. Why? The message had got out that the member would not do anything

anyway, so what was the point in turning up? That is a good indication of the difficulties people face when travelling in this area.

The Baird Government has announced plans to open a Service NSW facility in Toukley. Toukley has a population of 6,000. We have 36,000. When queried, the Government advised us that the Toukley facility would also service an area north of Wyong. That is good news and we are very pleased for the local people because they also will be fortunate enough to have a Service NSW facility in Wyong 10 kilometres away. What about the 70,000-plus people who live on the Woy Woy peninsula and in surrounding areas? Who on earth made the decision that these people do not deserve the same quality of service? Of course they do and that is what we are asking for. This a base population of 36,000 residents and it is growing every week. *[Extension of time, by leave, agreed to.]*

As demonstrated by the 15,000-plus signatures on the petition, this decision to close facilities in Woy Woy has outraged residents of two electorates. It is a disgrace that the member for Terrigal—a resident of the Woy Woy peninsula himself, by the way—will not work with his constituents to resolve this matter. I promise that I will work, together with the residents of the Gosford electorate, to resolve it. On behalf of those people, I call on the Baird Government to provide a full Service NSW facility in Woy Woy.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Hawkesbury—Minister for Finance, Services and Property) [4.38 p.m.]: I thank the people of Woy Woy for attending the people's House to hear the member for Gosford speak to her petition. That is what democracy is all about. I commend the member for collecting more than 10,000 signatures in order for this debate to be heard in this place. The job of the State Government, I believe, is to deliver the best possible services—services that people want quickly, conveniently and simply.

The problem for many people is that in the history of time governments have made it difficult to interact and transact with government services. If people wanted a driver licence they had to go to a motor registry. If they wanted a birth certificate for their child they had to go the births, deaths and marriages office. If they wanted a senior card application they had to obtain a signature from a justice of the peace and then go to another office. That kind of service delivery model was inefficient and inconvenient and caused unnecessary problems for our citizens. That is why the Government decided to establish Service NSW to consolidate all government services in one place. There will be one shopfront to visit, one phone number to call, one website to browse and one app to download. Our customers have loved this approach, including those in Gosford, who have given the Government a 98 per cent satisfaction rate.

As part of this change, the Government is consolidating and merging single-agency shopfronts, and that is why we are discussing this petition today. Over the past two years we have been consolidating Fair Trading counters, registries of births, deaths and marriages and selected motor registries into new one-stop shops. We are doing this to create the customer service network of the future and to best meet the needs of our citizens. I am advised that Service NSW chooses the locations of these sites independently based on demographics, citizen behaviour, access to parking and transportation, and the size of the available premises. Gosford was chosen as a site for a Service NSW centre because it is set to expand as a key Central Coast hub over the coming years. Compared to a motor registry, the Service NSW centre at Gosford offers more services, lower wait times, better customer service, more staff and longer trading hours.

I appreciate that a change of location is a challenge for the residents of Woy Woy. I understand that some people are used to visiting the old Roads and Traffic Authority site, and I accept that some residents feel that some essential services are being removed. However, through the Service NSW centre at Gosford people will be able to access more services over longer hours, they will spend less time waiting and will even be able to book ahead to make an appointment, which could not be done at an old motor registry. One concern raised with me relates to elderly or other residents who have a restricted or modified driver licences. About 2,000 of them are residents of the Woy Woy region.

The member for Terrigal Adam Crouch, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Scot McDonald, and the Federal member for Robertson Lucy Wicks have been proactive in contacting my office to put these



concerns to me. I thank them for their representations on behalf of their local communities. In response, Service NSW will now provide a mobile service for Woy Woy customers who have restricted or modified licences or those seeking to apply for these licences. This mobile service will visit the Woy Woy community once a week and offer registry-related services for this category of licence holders.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! Opposition members will come to order. I remind them that calls to order are still in place.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** I am advised that a location for the new mobile service is being determined. Additionally, I have asked Service NSW to explore other opportunities to improve service delivery on the Central Coast, and I will continue to monitor this transition. In addition to the efforts made to date, which have included media announcements, information on the website and stakeholder communications, Service NSW is in the process of conducting extensive communication with customers. This includes widespread letterbox drops of 50,000 flyers to the Woy Woy peninsula and email notification this weekend to 50,000 existing Roads and Maritime Services customers to ensure that they are aware of the change. The agency has also been writing to community stakeholders, driving schools, local businesses and government agencies. *[Extension of time, by leave, agreed to.]*

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! Opposition members will come to order. If members continue to interject I will place them on three calls to order.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** While change is difficult, as I have noted in my time in this Chamber, this Government is doing this because it believes it is in the interests of customers to provide the best service model possible. Instead of having to travel to different locations for different services, customers will be able to go to just one location. The Government is making this change because it believes it will be more convenient for more people. We believe we can offer a much better service. If members have not done so already, I encourage them to visit the Service NSW centre at Gosford and let me know what they think.

I reiterate that the Government understands this is a change for the people of Woy Woy. We have heard their concerns and have already made changes by providing the new mobile service. I thank the people of Woy Woy who have taken the time to communicate their concerns to me and my office. My commitment to the member for Gosford and to the people of Woy Woy, particularly those who are in the gallery today, is that I will continue to monitor the delivery of customer services in the Woy Woy region. I will ensure that we have the best service delivery model possible.

**Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong) [4.45 p.m.]:** That is what this Government is all about: cutting community services and saving money. It does not care about providing services to the people of this State. I congratulate the member for Gosford on her advocacy on behalf of her community on this important issue. I know how important this issue is to the local people because I grew up on the peninsula. I was born in Gosford Hospital and lived on the Woy Woy peninsula in my youth. My mother and father and my two sisters and their families live there. I know what closing this office means to the people living not only on the peninsula but also in Kilcare, Pretty Beach, Empire Bay, Bensville, McMasters Beach and so on, who travel to Woy Woy to do their business because it is a major bus and rail hub. Government should be about providing easily accessible services, not closing them down. People on the peninsula like to do their business locally; they do not want to travel to Gosford.

One of the reasons for their reluctance to travel further afield is that they must travel on Brisbane Water Drive. The people in the gallery can tell members opposite how long they have to wait in traffic jams on that narrow road. When they eventually get to Gosford there is no parking. I have been to the Gosford Service NSW office. It is nice and the staff are fantastic and helpful. However, I had to wait for 1½ hours to get my boat licence because there were so many people waiting to be served. This Government's solution is to direct more people to that office despite the fact that they will have to wait for ages listening to music. What Government members do not understand is that the peninsula population comprises primarily elderly people who have difficulty travelling. It is a big effort for them to get on a bus or train to travel to Gosford and then to walk from

the bus stop to the office, which is not close to the station—it is at the other end of the town.

I joined the member for Gosford at the first rally in opposition to this proposal and watched the elderly people getting out of their cars, manoeuvring their walking frames and struggling into the office. Expecting those poor people to travel another 12 kilometres to conduct their business is simply outrageous. This Government needs to think less about saving money and more about people and their needs. I spoke to local businesspeople and they said that it is bad for business, bad for residents, bad for the elderly and bad for young people. It is short-sighted, ill-conceived and counterproductive.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [4.48 p.m.]: I support the Government's scheduled consolidation of the Woy Woy Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] office that has been brought before us today for discussion. Since the announcement of the consolidation I have been working constructively with the Minister's office and the outstanding team at Service NSW—unlike the member for Gosford. Rather than grandstanding on the issue I have worked with the Government to ensure that it has taken into consideration my concerns and those of our local community.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I call the member for Swansea to order for the first time.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** The fact is that this Government has been listening carefully to the community and consequently it has been able to come up with solutions that address the needs of the entire Central Coast. With the rollout of any new service, including Service NSW centres, there will always be some local concerns. But through outstanding customer service quality and the proactive approach of this Government, the rollout of Service NSW has been a success. I can say from firsthand experience of using the Service NSW centre in Gosford as well as the 24-hour internet service and phone service that the level of staff expertise, their professionalism and the standard of service they provide is second to none.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I call the member for Prospect to order for the first time. I call the member for Fairfield to order for the first time.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** That same high level of service was highlighted further by the announcement that my colleague the Minister for Finance Services and Property, the Hon. Dominic Perrottet, made on Monday that Service NSW will now offer a new weekly mobile service to Woy Woy peninsula customers who are on a restricted or modified licence or who are seeking to apply for those licences. That service is scheduled to commence later this month and will be provided in conjunction with the existing services located at the Service NSW office in the Gosford central business district. An immense car park is located at the Imperial Centre next to that office, and it offers three hours of free car parking. More than 800 services can be accessed at the Gosford one-stop shop in the state-of-the-art centre that is open Monday to Friday from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! I call the member for Gosford to order for the first time. I call the member for Swansea to order for the second time.

**Mr ADAM CROUCH:** That level of customer service was unheard of under the Labor Government. During this period of working with the Minister and the community on changing the RMS shopfront to a state-of-the-art Service NSW centre at Gosford the almost unanimous feedback from local residents is that once they have used the Gosford centre they are very impressed by the level of customer service, the fast and easy access and the array of services provided under one roof. Residents in my electorate have made it clear to me that they believe we should also have a state-of-the-art Service NSW centre in the electorate of Terrigal.

The member for Gosford and her constituents are already benefiting from a multimillion-dollar upgrade.

Given the overwhelming feedback I have received, I will—unlike members opposite—continue to work in a proactive, positive and constructive manner to deliver the same level of service to the good people of the Terrigal electorate. To have a state-of-the-art, twenty-first century Service NSW centre would be a dream come true. Finally, I note the comments of the member for Gosford about the protest that her Labor mates held in front of my office that had a grand total of five people in attendance. [*Time expired.*]

**Discussion concluded.**

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

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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### **BROOKLYN PAULSON NANGA MAI AWARD**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.53 p.m.]: I inform the House that Great Lakes College year 7 student Brooklyn Paulson has been awarded the prestigious Nanga Mai Award, which celebrates innovation, achievement and excellence in Aboriginal education. Brooklyn was a year 6 student at Tuncurry Public School when she was nominated for the award. During each year of her attendance from kindergarten to year 6 her calm and confident manner developed. Brooklyn was the first Tuncurry Public School student to present a Welcome to Country in Gathang and her teachers are looking with great anticipation to see what area of studies Brooklyn will choose in her secondary education.

### **THE PLACE YOUNG PARENTS GROUP**

**Ms JODIE HARRISON** (Charlestown) [4.54 p.m.]: I recognise the tremendous efforts of staff at The Place Community Centre in Charlestown. I especially recognise the dedicated staff attached to the Young Parents Group, which is the only group of its kind in the Hunter. The program started in 2012 and it provides an opportunity for young parents across the Hunter and New England region to connect and learn parenting skills. The service receives regular referrals through the Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Health and other non-government agencies.

The two staff attached to the program organise a mix of social activities for parents and their children as well as developing parenting skills through first aid, cooking, budgeting and other educational courses. The Young Parents Group is an important example of the return on investment that government can achieve through focusing on early intervention. The young parents who participate in the program are prime examples of early government investment achieving long-term results. Government funding for the program is being discontinued. I will be working with The Place to identify other sources of funding and ensure the ongoing viability of the Young Parents Group.

### **EDGECLIFF INTERCHANGE**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [4.55 p.m.]: Accessibility improvements are needed at Edgecliff Interchange. The interchange is the major bus and train station in my electorate and it is used by many in our local community. Entrances to the bus and train stations are on different levels of the interchange. There is no lift or escalator access to or from the bus station to the interchange entrances or exits, only stairs. In addition, the only access from the bus station to the train station is via stairs. Those ongoing conditions are not safe or reasonable for commuters, particularly those who are less mobile, including parents with young children. I have raised these concerns on behalf of my community on many occasions. The concerns must be addressed now, given the recently announced bus changes in my electorate. Three different bus routes—the 328, 323 and 326 services—will not run into the central business district and will require commuters to change to either another bus or train to travel to that destination. I urgently call for improved access at Edgecliff Interchange.

## **IRISH NATIONAL ASSOCIATION CENTENARY**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.56 p.m.]: I recognise the Irish National Association, which on 25 July at a function at the Gaelic Club celebrated the centenary of its establishment. I recognise the attendance of Association President Dennis O'Flynn, Irish Consul-General Jane Connolly, Bishop David Cremin, historian Dr Richard Reid and also Maurie O'Sullivan. Albert Dryer was the main organiser of the association 100 years ago. In March 1918 he and others involved in the association were interned in Darlinghurst Gaol and prosecuted under the War Prosecutions Act, it being alleged that they were members of the proscribed Irish Republican Brotherhood. Some of Albert's descendants were present at the centenary dinner, at which a booklet of the 100th Anniversary Oral History Project was launched. It includes a series of interviews that tell a great deal about Irish life in Sydney in recent decades. The interviewees include Maureen Whelan, Eugene McCauley, Denis Foley, Trish McGrath, Tomas de Bhaldraithe, Tom Power, Pat McGrath, Bishop David Cremin, Jimmy Mullarkey, Liam O'Mahony, Michael Lyons, Father Michael O'Suilleabhain and Maurie O'Sullivan.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Adam Marshall):** Order! I remind members to resist the temptation to have a conversation during the giving of community recognition statements. It is not only discourteous to their colleagues but also contrary to the standing orders.

## **SALTWATER CREEK PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AND BMX TRACK**

**Mr ADAM CROUCH** (Terrigal) [4.57 p.m.]: Last Sunday I had the pleasure of representing the New South Wales Government at the official opening of the brand-new Saltwater Creek pedestrian bridge and BMX track on the Central Coast. I congratulate Mayor Doug Eaton, Deputy Mayor Lynn Webster and the staff of Wyong Shire Council on that outstanding project, which was delivered under budget. The project at one of Wyong shire's most popular parks will benefit many residents, including the young and senior citizens alike in our local community. The popularity of the facility was evidenced by the many local residents who attended the official opening. It was pleasing for the Wyong Shire Council to be able to present its plans for the new boat ramp.

## **NEWTOWN ELECTORATE NAIDOC WEEK CELEBRATIONS**

**Ms JENNY LEONG** (Newtown) [4.57 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the Parliament to the fantastic National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee [NAIDOC] celebrations that were held in the Newton electorate to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I acknowledge Kasey Hilderson of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group for his efforts in organising their NAIDOC celebration and the group for its ongoing work. It was a pleasure to participate in the opening proceedings for the NAIDOC event organised by the Inner City NAIDOC Community Committee and the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence. The inner-city family and sports day attracted more than 5,000 people to Redfern to celebrate culture. The Darlington Public School assembly for NAIDOC Week was another wonderful event that I was privileged to attend. The school has a commitment to the principles of NAIDOC Week, and it shows that commitment all year round. I congratulate Darlington Public School on its amazing and incredibly creative assembly.

## **DARCY GILSON AUSTRALIAN GLOBAL GAMES SWIM TEAM**

**Mr MICHAEL JOHNSEN** (Upper Hunter) [4.58 p.m.]: I congratulate Singleton YMCA swimmer Darcy Gilson of Singleton, who has been selected in the national squad swim team for the 2015 Global Games in September in Ecuador. Darcy is only 14 years old and it will be the first time he has represented Australia. He is one of the youngest members of the team. Darcy will be competing in at least four events in the open age category. Darcy has been swimming only since 2011 and in that time he has broken six New South Wales 13 years and under SB14 multiclass records in both short and long course swimming. This year Darcy competed at the 2015 Georgina Hope Foundation Australian Age Swimming Championships, winning with a handful of medals, personal bests and a New South Wales record. Darcy has also achieved an Australian record in the 13

years and under SB14 division multiclass, which is held for those with intellectual disabilities in his age range. I wish Darcy all the best at the upcoming Global Games as he represents Australia and the Upper Hunter electorate.

#### **EASTLAKES LEGACY WIDOWS CLUB TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [4.59 p.m.]: Today I wish Eastlakes Legacy Widows Club a very happy twenty-fifth anniversary. I was thrilled to be able to mark this wonderful occasion at Swansea RSL with so many of the wonderful members of this very important organisation in my community. To their formidable secretary, Noeleen Scotman, I say thank you for your efforts to ensure that the club has had a strong voice for its members for the past 25 years. I struggle to find a more noble cause than that of Legacy. Legacy currently supports around 90,000 families of defence personnel who have given their lives or their health for our country. I know firsthand the great work of Legacy. My grandmother was widowed in 1941 when her husband was killed in action in Libya. She was left with six children and received assistance from Legacy, which was much appreciated. Once again, I pay tribute to the wonderful and strong women of the Eastlakes Legacy Widows Club and wish them success in the future.

#### **BUSH CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.00 p.m.]: In 1965 Dr Charles Huxtable, then serving with the Royal Flying Doctor Service at Broken Hill, initiated the establishment of the Bush Children's Education Foundation. The principal aim of the foundation is to ensure that no child from outback New South Wales is deprived of regular schooling through isolation or difficult financial circumstances. I attended a reception at New South Wales Government House last week with the Governor, Minister Gay and others to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation and its valuable work. Mr Cliff Cowdroy, OAM, received the Premier's Award for his outstanding service on the board of the foundation from 1992 to 2015 and as its chair from 2000 to 2015. I congratulate Mr Cowdroy and the Bush Children's Education Foundation and wish all those involved with the foundation the very best for the future.

#### **CAMBODIA VISION ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [5.01 p.m.]: It was my great pleasure to attend the annual fundraising dinner for Cambodia Vision. This great cause aims to provide equipment and procedures that prevent blindness and give basic medical care to small and impoverished provincial towns in Cambodia. On its 2014 trip to Kratié Province the group carried out more than 430 cataract procedures and provided 2,000 pairs of sunglasses, 1,703 pairs of reading glasses for the elderly, 247 pairs of custom-cut reading glasses and 250 hearing aids. I express my heartfelt thanks to the doctors, nurses and volunteers for the life-changing work they do. I congratulate Mr Ming Ly, chairman of Cambodia Vision, and his organising committee on the wonderful night. I know that we will be hearing many more success stories from them in years to come.

#### **HOLLY SANDERS ILLAWARRA REGION NAIDOC AWARD**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I congratulate local Gerringong Public School teacher Holly Sanders, who recently won a regional National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee [NAIDOC] award. Earlier this month, the Regional NAIDOC Awards Dinner took place in Nowra and Mrs Sanders was recognised for her efforts with the worker of the year award. She was responsible for establishing an Indigenous cultural space at the school, encouraging students to engage in storytelling, dancing and painting. Mrs Sanders is a tremendous example of the quality of teaching that exists in our public education system. I sincerely congratulate her and thank her for her ongoing contribution to Gerringong Public School and as an outstanding educator in our district.

#### **IRRAWANG HIGH SCHOOL SHOWCASE SPECTACULAR**

**Ms KATE WASHINGTON** (Port Stephens) [5.03 p.m.]: Last week I was privileged to attend Irrawang

High School's Showcase Spectacular for 2015. Showcase is an annual event held over two nights that sees schools from the Lakeside Learning Community come together for shows jam-packed with talent. I was delighted to attend the second night's show at which I saw hundreds of students from Irrawang Public School, Medowie Public School and Irrawang High School dancing, singing, blowing trumpets, peeping on recorders and blasting us on the drums. At the previous night's show, students from Wirreanda Public School and Grahamstown Public School joined forces with the talented team from Irrawang High School.

I congratulate each of the principals from the participating schools: Mr Col Elliott from Irrawang High School, Mr Glen Whitten from Medowie Public School, Ms Philippa Young from Wirreanda Public School, Mrs Nancye Farley from Irrawang Public School and Mrs Sue Kane from Grahamstown Public School. Not only is the Showcase Spectacular a terrific show; it is also community building, creating connections across local primary schools to their feeder high school and instilling pride and confidence in our future generations. I congratulate all the students, families and staff involved. It was an impressive show, with many proclaiming it to be the best ever—an accolade that I cannot disagree with.

### **BRENT LIVERMORE CLARENCE VALLEY AMBASSADOR**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 p.m.]: I congratulate Brent Livermore on being named the Clarence Valley Ambassador for 2015. Brent has had a fabulous sporting career, reaching the pinnacle of captaining the Australian Kookaburras hockey team on 67 occasions, playing 318 international senior games of hockey and scoring 28 international goals. However, he has never forgotten his home town of Grafton, where he started playing hockey. Brent is an exceptional young man and a wonderful choice for the ambassador award. I wish him continued success in the future.

### **TRIBUTE TO SENIOR CONSTABLE SAM DONNI**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [5.04 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a function I attended in June: a community barbeque at the Glebe Police Citizens Youth Club [PCYC]—which is an excellent organisation in my electorate—to farewell Senior Constable Sam Donni. Sam had been a youth case manager at Glebe PCYC since 2003, working with kids in juvenile justice and other youth at risk. He instigated specialised programs, including the highly successful Café 2037 barista coffee school, which gives participants accreditation and turns lives around. Sam says it is about giving chances that are not available elsewhere. He is a role model—a warm, generous and calm person who has given so much to our community, particularly to vulnerable and challenging young people.

Sam has been recognised for his remarkable efforts with the Rotary Community Officer of the Year and Police Officer of the Year awards. I thank Sam for his tireless contribution to our community and wish him continued success in his new position as crime prevention officer with Kings Cross Local Area Command. Well done for your work in our community. You will always remain in our hearts and we look forward to seeing you around the Glebe community in the coming months.

### **NSW HEALTHY TOWNS CHALLENGE**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that Tullamore recently won the NSW Healthy Towns Challenge. The Healthy Towns Challenge is a State initiative to help smaller communities become healthier by facilitating local partnerships between agencies, businesses and individuals with an interest in improving overall health in towns. Tullamore took out this year's prize after competing with four other towns from around the State, including neighbouring community Tottenham.

Each town's collective progress towards a healthy weight, based on the people who participated in NSW Health's Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service, was used to select the overall winner by the Centre for Population Health. Participants from Tullamore and Tottenham lost a combined total of 100 kilograms during the challenge. An informal get-together was held at Tullamore Bowling Club recently for those

unable to attend the official presentation. Richard Clegg, Chairman of the Tottenham/Tullamore Healthy Town Challenge Governance Committee, accepted the award on behalf of the community alongside Parkes shire councillor and committee member, Barbara Newton. Well done to the Tullamore community on this wonderful achievement.

### **HUMAN CARE WELFARE EID CELEBRATIONS**

**Ms JULIA FINN** (Granville) [5.06 p.m.]: I commend Human Care Welfare for its fantastic Eid celebrations, which included a great musical show. Hundreds of people gathered on 26 July to celebrate Eid—mainly people from the Hazara community but also friends and supporters involved with Human Care Welfare. The joyous celebration even included a visiting singer from Afghanistan who came to prominence on *Afghan Star*. Human Care Welfare provides support for newly arrived migrants from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, including English classes, driving and computer skills, and information about life in Australia. They teach in the first language of participants—Dari, Hazaragi or Persian—and have made a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of people in the Granville and Auburn areas. While providing new skills is the main focus of Human Care Welfare, bringing people together to celebrate Eid was a great success that I hope is repeated every year. I congratulate Hassan Rezayee and the executive on their great initiative.

### **LENNON MAHER AND CHILDFUND AUSTRALIA DREAM BIKE APPEAL**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [5.07 p.m.]: Today I talk about a little hero: seven-year-old Lennon Maher of Wattle Grove, who walked 3.8 kilometres with his mum, Cathy, to raise money for ChildFund Australia's Dream Bike Appeal. Funds raised during the appeal helped buy bikes for children living in isolated communities across Cambodia, Indonesia and Ethiopia. Lennon's initial goal was to raise \$1,000, but he surpassed that by raising \$4,600—enough to buy 46 bikes for kids. The last leg of his charity walk coincided with his seventh birthday and he was surrounded by about 20 classmates when he finished. I congratulate Lennon on his fundraising efforts and for dedicating his walk to and from school each day to help kids less fortunate.

### **MARIAN COMPLEX FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Strathfield) [5.08 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the role of the Marian complex in my community of Strathfield and the great work of the Catholic Women's League. I was pleased to attend the fiftieth anniversary celebrations recently and reflect on the history of the Marian complex. In 1965 the president of Sydney Catholic Women's League, Phyllis Chandler, supported by Monsignor Michael Cronin, developed Marian Court for unmarried and widowed women over the age of 55. Since 2003 married couples and single men have been residents and there is now the Marian Chapel and a function room on site.

The complex is run by volunteers. In particular, I mention Esther Doyle, a former State and national president of the Catholic Women's League [CWL] and secretary of the board of management. Esther has documented the history of the Marian complex, which of course is tied to the great work of the Catholic Women's League. I also pay tribute to Noreen Keoghan, chair of the board of management, and Moya Potts, current State president and former CWL Sydney president. I congratulate all volunteers, staff and residents on their great commitment to this wonderful complex in the heart of Strathfield.

### **BEARS TYREPOWER TUNCURRY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.09 p.m.]: I inform the House that Bears Tyrepower Tuncurry has been named Tyrepower's best international dealer for 2014, which was announced at Tyrepower's annual conference on the Gold Coast. Bears Tyrepower Tuncurry is owned and operated by Mark and Leah Barratt. They won their first award in 2013 for improving Tyrepower's image and went on to win State and national awards. The outlet has a clean and efficient presentation to customers, and Mark attributes its success to being a friendly family-owned store with a focus on customers.

## **GIRL RISING**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [5.09 p.m.]: On 18 June 2015 I had the pleasure of attending the screening of *Girl Rising*, which is a feature documentary that tells the story of nine extraordinary girls born into unforgiving circumstances. The event was well attended and premiered at Hoyts Cinema at Wetherill Park, hosted by Fairfield City Council and the Immigrant Women's Health Service. Following the screening, a panel discussion and question and answer session took place, which was focused on the importance of education for girls and women from refugee and migrant backgrounds. I congratulate Dr Eman Sharobeem, Chief Executive Officer of the Immigrant Women's Health Service, and all those involved in creating this moving documentary on their outstanding work with girls and women throughout the migrant and refugee community.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

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

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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### **TRIBUTE TO FERGUS THOMSON, OAM, FORMER MAYOR OF EUROBODALLA**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega—Minister for Transport and Infrastructure) [5.10 p.m.]: My good friend Fergus Thomson, OAM, former Eurobodalla shire mayor and councillor, passed away on Friday 24 July 2015 following a long battle with a brain tumour. The effect of his passing on the Eurobodalla community has been significant. The outpouring of love and support and best wishes for his family, in particular his wife, Yvonne, and his sons, James and Brendan, has been incredible. First and foremost Fergus was a family man. He lived his life in the Belowra Valley as a sheep farmer. He served on local government for many years and he contributed enormously to the local community. One of his passions was volunteering at the Moruya Surf Life Saving Club, which he joined in 1962 and was recognised as a life member.

Fergus followed in his father's footsteps and was elected to council in 2004. He made an enormous contribution to the Eurobodalla community. He always showed an enormous passion for the local Aboriginal people and strived to represent their interests. Working with a shire mayor as a local member can have its ups and downs. I enjoyed working alongside Fergus. He was happy every day of the week and was passionate about his local community. We argued occasionally, but at the end of the day I knew I could rely on his friendship. He faced many challenges in local government, particularly planning issues, but he stood by what he believed in.

Fergus attended every community event with his wife by his side and showed compassion for people. He made an enormous contribution to his local community through local government. He took on a leadership role throughout the south-east, combining the local shires through their respective representative bodies. He was involved in local and environmental issues covered by the rural lands protection boards and he became an adviser to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. His motivation to become a councillor and then mayor was his love for the community. He said:

I love the community and I think that is the only reason you could ever go into local government.

He also said:

There's nothing better than to walk down the street in Moruya or Batemans Bay or somewhere and see all my friends and people you've actually been able to help—that's the reward.

His work was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia, and Yvonne was always by his side. I know the community is grieving the loss of Fergus. He was passionate about his local community and was a true champion for the region. He continued to serve on local council while battling his brain tumour, which is



testament to his passion for his local community. I pass on my deepest sympathies to Fergus's family, particularly Yvonne, Brendan and James.

### **SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY INSTITUTE OF TAFE**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.15 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House serious issues concerning the South Western Sydney Institute [SWSI] of TAFE. Two campuses of the South Western Sydney Institute are located within my electorate—one at Miller and one at Liverpool. Although the issues I raise relate to both Liverpool and Miller TAFE campuses, they also affect other campuses outside my electorate. The issues have been raised with me by my constituents currently employed on those campuses, although for reasons that will become obvious their identities will have to remain anonymous. In recent times there has been much discussion about the Smart and Skilled policy. Much of the discussion has focused on its implications for students and the adverse consequences upon them, which has been a concern for my electorate, as well as the impact it will have on TAFE teachers.

There are 83,000 fewer students and 2,600 fewer teachers than there were. The Smart and Skilled policy has had significant impacts on the employees of TAFE, including TAFE teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. TAFE cannot operate without ancillary and support staff. Although their concerns have not been as prominent in much of the recent discussions as those of teachers and students, they too have become victims of Smart and Skilled. First I will deal with the SWSI Class Support Review-General Class Support to Sections. This is the title of the April 2015 consultation paper that was released by the South Western Sydney Institute. It deals with the positions of general assistant, general assistant-tools storeperson and tools storeperson. The positions are sometimes referred to as storeman or storeperson. The long and short of it is that the positions are to be slashed. The consultation paper states:

From 1 January 2015 reforms were implemented across the New South Wales Vocational Education and Training System. The introduction of a Smart and Skilled entitlement training model has necessitated the need to realign class support provisions to reflect the current and future operating environment and meet the sustainable business needs of the institute.

In plain English, Smart and Skilled means fewer support jobs in TAFE. Some support staff in TAFE in my electorate have not been appointed permanent staff despite having worked there for many years and having agitated to become permanent. The Smart and Skilled changes—erroneously called "reforms"—are described as being a "new competitive environment". Some of the jobs of a general assistant will be given to teachers, of whom there will be fewer, and who were trained for other roles. The consultation paper also states:

The current support requirements identify the need for general assistants to undertake broader class support service provisions whilst incorporating some tool management responsibilities within the teaching sections.

The consultation paper has the usual rhetoric about class support staff being highly valued and being part of the team. The consequence of the "proposed change initiative for staff" is fewer jobs and staff. There will be 29.5 general class support positions across the institute, which is a reduction of 12.15 full-time equivalent positions. In simple English, it is about a 30 per cent reduction in staff. Therefore, a bit under one-third of staff positions in those categories will be abolished. There is a belief that staff will have to reapply for their jobs—something feared to be just a way of replacing currently unionised staff. Even if staff members continue to be employed, they may well be moved to campuses other than where they currently work. This is challenging for long-term temporary employees, even if they have been seeking permanent appointments for some time. It is my understanding that the changes at Miller TAFE are just about to be announced and, unbelievably, the person who drew up the plan did not even visit the workshops.

A process is also proceeding within SWSI involving other support staff. The Minister for Education has approved a phase 2 customer service management review, which will involve a number of changes. For example, libraries will be replaced by "hubs", grandly described as customer service centres. This will also

mean fewer jobs for administrative and library staff. I have seen an SWSI document, dated 19 December 2014, that sets out the new organisational structure. A significant number of positions will be affected and staff can be moved around willy-nilly. The organisation structure chart contains the warning, "All appointments will be to institute positions with an expectation that staff may be required to work at sites other than their initial location." The staff who spoke to me said that management's enthusiasm for pursuing these changes waned somewhat in the run-up to the State election but has now been reinvigorated. This will result in significant job losses among administrative staff, psychologists, librarians and so on. As with the store person categories, a significant number of long-term temporary employees are at risk in this process.

These changes are not restricted to teachers, students and support staff. The axe is now being swung through the management of TAFE. Each campus currently has a manager. There are nine campuses in the South Western Sydney Institute area; they are being reduced to four. Those positions are being amalgamated so that there is a cluster services manager for several campuses. This is seen by many observers as a way of getting rid of managers who were less than enthusiastic about Smart and Skilled. That is an advantage to government over and above saving money and reducing the effectiveness of TAFE. The lack of a manager on site at each campus is a problem in a number of ways—namely, it dilutes the capacity of leadership essential for a successful TAFE and it has practical disadvantages for student discipline issues. These are regrettable changes that seem to be part of a gutting of the world-class institute that was TAFE NSW.

### **COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY**

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.20 p.m.]: Today I inform the House of my continued support for commercial fishers not only in Clarence but also across the State as the commercial fishing industry undergoes a major restructure. In March last year I spoke about this matter in this House, and my comments are just as relevant today as they were then. We have to get this restructure right to ensure that we have a sustainable, competitive industry that produces fresh, high-quality seafood for the people of New South Wales. The fishing industry experiences the same highs and lows experienced by most primary industries—low market prices, cheap imports, and unfavourable environmental conditions such as floods or droughts. Fishers often say to me that a drought on the land results in a drought at sea and their catch is drastically reduced. In addition, they do not have faith that the Government will act in their best interests, given that poor decisions of past governments have resulted in the mess in which the industry now finds itself.

From my discussion with fisherman in my electorate, they have every reason to be suspicious of the reform package. Previous governments allocated the shares that are causing the problem this reform package is endeavouring to address. They rightly feel that if they are to undergo significant reform so too should the department that regulates them. The fishers contend that they should not have to bear the full cost of these reforms because each time the department introduces policies and regulation it comes at a huge cost to the industry. Over the past 30 years the fishing industry has undergone massive changes. Some of those changes have been forced on them—the allocation of shares, gazettal of marine parks, net restrictions and restrictions on the nights they can fish. Other changes have been introduced by fishers themselves as self-regulatory measures to ensure the sustainability of their industry—voluntary closures of fishing areas to enable rejuvenation of stocks or voluntarily restricting fishing days after flooding events to allow stocks to replenish.

Fishers in my electorate are hardworking, honest people who just go about their business in a professional manner. Their biggest threats are environmental and weather conditions, and legislative and regulatory changes. Thirty years ago there were 6,000 commercial fishers in New South Wales; today there are 1,000. In New South Wales 85 per cent of the seafood we eat is imported. The local fresh seafood catch is fundamental to this restructure. We must ensure that the reform package strengthens the New South Wales commercial fishing industry and sustains it into the future. We cannot afford to get this wrong. If we do, there will be less fresh seafood in New South Wales and imports will increase. This will mean that the restructure has simply strengthened our competitors at the expense of the local fishing industry.

I have been briefed by the Structural Adjustment Review Committee [SARC] tasked with preparing the restructure package. The committee has advised me that it has reviewed the previous package and made

adjustments based on its assessment of the impacts this will have on individual fishing businesses. The committee has assured me that the package is different to the draft exhibited last year and that the impact on the majority of fishers will be minimal. I have also met with a number of fisherman and representatives from the Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative and the Ballina Fishermen's Co-operative. Both have reviewed the new package and consider that whilst marginally better than the first, it will still devastate the fishing industry in New South Wales. They are concerned that under the new package they will not have the throughput and thus will no longer be viable. This will jeopardise about 70 jobs in the Clarence and 30 jobs in Ballina.

Fishers have told me that they will have to buy back their jobs and they will have to reinvest tens of thousands of dollars to catch the same volume of seafood they catch today. That is the typical story of every fisherman I have spoken with. They contend that the purchase of additional shares will not result in the catching of more fish and will not increase their income level. Indeed, they do not believe their business will be worth any more after the restructure. I have raised these concerns with the Minister and the department, and I will continue to do so. I am confident that the Minister, who has met with commercial fishing representatives, understands the concerns of the fishing industry. The fishing industry must be fully briefed on the proposed restructure and supported, rather than have it thrust upon them. I assure the industry that I will continue to work on its behalf to make the industry sustainable, but not at the expense of the hardworking fishers in my electorate.

### **BERRY BYPASS AND ELIZABETH FARRELLY**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 p.m.]: Before I start my private member's statement I take this opportunity to thank the member for Blue Mountains for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I was incredibly impressed with her inaugural speech and her work in this place continues to impress me. There is a reason why people flock to the South Coast from Sydney every day: Its beauty and its diversity are things that cannot be replicated. Visiting the South Coast is not just a holiday; it is an enchanting experience that is embraced by those who cherish the almost storybook-like landscape and lifestyle. For those of us who live on the South Coast every sunrise reminds us that we are so blessed to live one more day in paradise.

Those who want to share our home are welcome, but it seems that one commentator has a different view—seemingly slipping into a parallel universe—almost as if our green hills, warm and charitable locals, and effervescent village character is an episode of her own personal version of the *Truman Show*. When she visits the shops pop up, the people come from nowhere to fill the front windows with prestige products and grass is painted on a three-dimensional canvas with cows drawn in perfect parallax error. When she goes it is all deflated and stuck away in anticipation of the next occasion Elizabeth Farrelly may descend from the village to the north to pass judgement on the needs of the community she occasionally passes through, and the locals withdraw to the hills to enter hibernation.

After 11 years in politics it is rare that anything upsets or indeed angers me, but not this time. *Sydney Morning Herald* opinion writer, Elizabeth Farrelly, wrote an article almost encyclical in nature, passing judgement on the South Coast and Berry in the midst of a road upgrade that has been talked about since 1955. In attempting to ridicule major highway upgrades Ms Farrelly said that traffic congestion through Berry was part of its character. As the local member of Parliament who has stood on a platform of building the Berry Bypass in two elections I can assure the House that the vast majority of the local people hold a very different view. For the families who have lost loved ones, or faced serious accidents, I can assure all members that locals, and dare I say the vast majority of tourists, want a safe arrival in Berry and on the South Coast rather than a road that has taken far too many lives—particularly young lives.

Ms Farrelly indicated that congestion is character. Well there you go. I had not realised that traffic jams are what the populous are screaming out for. It is little wonder that King Street in Newtown is packed to the back teeth. How honestly ridiculous! As for congestion work associated with major infrastructure, in what may come as a shock to some, major highway upgrades do not get lowered from a Chinook helicopter and deposited on a community ready to plug and play. If only building major infrastructure was as easy as "just add

water". Ingrained in Ms Farrelly's article was not only arrogance but also criticism that these highway works are a "boy thing" and that the landscape from Kiama to Nowra is dripping with testosterone-filled road upgrades.

I am reminded with every cross and bunch of flowers standing solemnly and conspicuously on our highway roadside that this suggestion is not only wrong but also offensive. As for the claim that these works have changed our towns, I point out that the highway works around Berry are a bypass of the town. The work at Gerringong already bypasses the town, with the highway upgrade being a duplication of an existing road, not to mention that the urban design around the Gerringong project is not even complete. The only aspect that will change in our community is the provision of a safer and less congested highway, including funds committed for the Albion Park Rail bypass. These investments represent more than \$1.5 billion of New South Wales Government spending and commitments to the Princes Highway—infrastructure that will save lives and serve well the community that lives here.

So come to the South Coast. Enjoy our wine, food and beautiful vista. It is a unique environment. In spite of some road works, Seven Mile Beach will still be there, Berry will still serve the best coffee, Gerringong will still proudly present great food and surf-wear, and Kiama will still serve cracking and delicious ice-cream and gelato of every possible flavour and colour, and the blowhole will still be going strong. If none of these things appeal and it is congestion everyone is after, please stay in Newtown. I think the best thing about Sydney is the road out of it. Elizabeth, if I am driving you mad, please drive somewhere else.

In a twitter exchange with Elizabeth Farrelly I offered her a briefing on the Berry bypass and for her to meet with some of the fantastic staff who are constructing these road works. She said that she would consider that, and I would be more than happy for her, and anyone else who would like to see these works, to come to our community. Regardless of what side of this House we sit on, all of us want to do the best for our communities. I appreciate members on both sides of the House who come here with the genuine intention to do so. But I think any member would feel aggrieved if someone who does not live in a community passed judgement on things the local member had fought and argued for—things that the member knows are in the best interests of the community.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It is the free-range chicken.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** It is chickens, roosters or hens from the member for Shellharbour. I am sick of her paltry interjections. I say to Ms Farrelly that she is welcome any time for a briefing but she should first understand our community and she should certainly understand the facts.

#### **EMBRACE 4 BIPOLAR WEBATHON**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: I wish to advise the House of an event this Saturday, 8 August, commencing at 6.30 p.m. called Embrace 4 Bipolar Webathon in Wagga Wagga. Samantha Brunskill wrote to me:

I was diagnosed the Bipolar Disorder type 2 in 2010. Although Bipolar Disorder at times can be a very testing illness on a day to day basis, I made a commitment when I was diagnosed that I would endeavour to "concentrate on the best parts" of the illness—the creativity, flights of ideas. Fortunately, in my family business this works to my advantage at times if channelled into the right way.

In April this year when I visited my doctor, he emphasised the fact that although I am achieving great things now, I need to be ready, as when I reach my 40s my working memory will decline and I won't be able to make the complex decisions that I am now. This sparked my search to become more involved in Bipolar Research within Australia and Nationally. I emailed the Founder, Carol Smit of the Ian Parker Bipolar Research Fund, which is the first of its kind in Australia. Through conversations with Carol and a successful proposal being accepted at my next Directors Meeting, I was named as a National Ambassador ...

Ms Brunskill's letter continues:

One of the main things I was astounded by when I was diagnosed, was the lack of people speaking positively, or providing hope to those who are being diagnosed with the illness. Since speaking very publicly about life living with Bipolar Disorder, I've had almost 30 people indicate to me that they would like to see a Bipolar Disorder Support Group in Wagga, which we hope to begin late August for a monthly catch up.

This is why I am organising a "webathon" in August this year with the aim of raising \$200,000 for Bipolar Research to begin securing the perpetuity of the fund. The webathon will be a Gala Dinner style event, with 60 minutes livestreamed through to a web platform where donations will be able to be made globally. We are hoping to raise the money through sponsorship of the event and donations.

Samantha goes on to say that they have already held a Beanies 4 Bipolar Walk, which consisted of a walk around Lake Albert. Adults were charged \$20 and kids were charged \$5 and the event included a free beanie and a sausage sizzle. There was good attendance of that event. Samantha says:

If we are successful with achieving our \$200,000 target, this could see a never before seen injection of funds into Bipolar Disorder Research occur.

A number of people are attending the Embrace 4 Bipolar event: Professor Michael Berke from Deakin University and Vice President of the Bipolar Society of Australasia; Carol Smith, founder of the Ian Parker Bipolar Research Fund; Emma Gliddon, inaugural Ian Parker Bipolar Research Fund scholarship recipient; webathon hosts Julieanne Horsman and Adam Drummond; and a range of VIPs including Wagga Wagga City councillors. I have also accepted an invitation to attend and support this webathon. It is important to note that the Ian Parker Bipolar Research Fund is the only one of its kind in Australia. The group has already raised \$50,000 and 16 local businesses have supported the event. A mood disorder support group is hoping to be created by the end of August for monthly catch-ups in the region. The group is trying to raise awareness and also raise money for PhD scholarships so that people can research the illness further to understand the causes, et cetera.

I commend Samantha Brunskill and her group. They have come together to put on this fundraiser for the region to further enhance bipolar disorder research. It is sometimes difficult for individuals to talk about themselves but this young lady is doing this in such a way that she is garnering support not only from our region but also nationally as she is a national ambassador for the disorder. She is going about this in a most professional way and I am certainly proud of her as she is a citizen of Wagga Wagga. I encourage individuals, groups and families to come along to the fundraiser. I encourage members of Parliament to make a donation and get behind the only organisation in Australia that is researching bipolar disorder. Some fantastic people have founded the Ian Parker Bipolar Research Fund. I look forward to seeing more wonderful results and getting more correspondence from Samantha Brunskill as she leads the charge to raise funds and help people.

#### **THE OTHER CHEF FINE FOODS**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie—Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [5.35 p.m.]: This evening I would like to make the House aware of one of Port Macquarie's culinary success stories. For more than 10 years the Other Chef, a Port Macquarie-based jam and condiment business, has been cooking up a storm. The business is owned by husband and wife team, Monica and Eric Robinson. They first came to my attention through my son Ben who, as a carpenter, was doing some work at their home in Lake Cathie. Ben came home one night praising the smell of Eric's cooking. In this case it was his strawberry jam being cooked from a 10-litre pot on a 1970s electric stove.

Creating mouth-watering jams and condiments for an ever-increasing number of customers was Eric's part-time job, in between working as a chef in a local restaurant and teaching commercial cooking at TAFE. As

the Robinsons' success grew, so did the need to take their business to the next level and move to a modern production facility in the industrial area of Port Macquarie—if only so that they could stop having to step over boxes of stock in their home.

Today they offer a range of more than 20 products, including their award-winning strawberry jam, preserved lemons, spiced mango chutney, chilli jam and the very best onion jam, just to name a few. From small beginnings, their range is now available across three States at more than 30 outlets, which is not bad for a home business. Whilst their original brand, the Other Chef, is still winning medals, and will always remain a flagship of the business, contract manufacturing and private-label services have become the core of this family owned and operated business. I have watched this business grow, and now the Other Chef is gearing up to represent the best of New South Wales fine food producers when it joins the Flavours of New South Wales stand at the Fine Food Australia trade show in Sydney in September.

Since 2003 the Other Chef has strived to produce the best jams, relishes and sauces, and we are proud to offer the team this chance to show off their produce to the world on the Flavours of New South Wales stand. Fine Food Australia is again expected to attract around 30,000 visitors over four days, including hundreds of national and overseas buyers. It is the largest trade show in the Southern Hemisphere and a fantastic showcase for our local produce. The Flavours of New South Wales stand will feature some of the State's best produce, including coffee, jams and condiments from the mid North Coast; simmer sauces and macadamia products from the Northern Rivers; and oils, vinegars and fresh fruit juices from the Hunter and Central Coast. Fine Food Australia, now in its thirty-first year, is an annual food trade show alternating between Sydney and Melbourne. This year's show will run in Sydney from 20 to 23 September.

The success of the Other Chef and other businesses that start from home and grow to become fully fledged businesses should serve as an inspiration to others. Home-based businesses are a large part of the Australian business community, with nearly one million people running a business from home. But, if, like the Other Chef, people have the vision, expertise and drive to expand across Australia they really can kick some goals in the business world. I wish Eric and Monica all the best at the Flavours of New South Wales stand and look forward to tasting their fantastic food for many years to come.

## **SWANSEA ELECTORATE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY** (Swansea) [5.40 p.m.]: Without doubt, Swansea is the most beautiful electorate in the entire State of New South Wales.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Bruce Notley-Smith):** Order! The member for Swansea is misleading the House.

**Ms YASMIN CATLEY:** I wish the member for Oxley were present to hear this, as I am sure she would agree with me. Swansea has beautiful beaches, including Catho, Caves, Budgewoi and Blackies on one side and Lake Macquarie, the largest coastal saltwater lagoon in the Southern Hemisphere, on the other. There is Lake Munmorah and Munmorah State Conservation Area, including Frazer Park, beach and wetlands. Wallarah National Park includes the most picturesque coastal walking track in New South Wales. There is Belmont Lagoon Reserve, Belmont wetlands and Pelican Blacksmiths Reserve. Swansea Heads is known not only for its natural beauty and as the entrance to Lake Macquarie but also for its significant Aboriginal heritage, dating back a staggering 8,000 years. In the electorate of Swansea extensive landholdings are reserved because of their environmental significance.

I am proud both State and Federal Labor governments worked to reserve that land. Swansea truly is the jewel in the New South Wales environmental crown. Perhaps the toughest aspect of having such beautiful surrounds is the day-to-day upkeep required to ensure that these natural beauties remain in pristine condition. Today I advise the House that, since my election, I have had the great pleasure of meeting with a number of groups and their members who volunteer their free time to ensure that Swansea's natural environment is kept to the standard that it deserves. I want to pay tribute to one group in particular for the work that it does to keep

my community both beautiful and environmentally sustainable. That group is the Budgewoi Beach Dunecare group.

Budgewoi Beach Dunecare celebrated 20 years of continual operations in June this year. That is an amazing effort. I congratulate it on that wonderful achievement. The crew commenced coastal rehabilitation works in 1995 along Budgewoi Beach, in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and 12 months later Wyong Shire Council also became involved. Works carried out by the group include propagation, planting endemic tube stock, direct seeding and native transplanting; site vegetation management, maintenance and monitoring; access way, boardwalk and viewing platform design and construction; beach profiling, fore-dune realignment, fore-dune stabilisation and monitoring; connectivity of ecologically endangered communities; and lobbying for greater protection of our coastline. The group lobbies all tiers of government. It also educates community members and involves them in dune restoration.

Budgewoi Beach Dunecare certainly knows all about partnerships. Since 2008, marine biology students from the Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle have teamed up with the group to undertake technical monitoring that has gathered important data demonstrating an increased biodiversity in rehabilitated coastal dune systems at Budgewoi Beach. The group has also engaged the local primary school and several local high schools to participate in dune restoration works. A significant partnership between the group and the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council has added another dimension to its collaborative efforts. I recently had the pleasure of observing some of the group's work through an awesome guided tour, led by Secretary and Treasurer Trevor Burkett and President Phil Heaton, who is the one of the most passionate advocates for this cause that I have ever met. The Budgewoi Beach Dunecare crew is made up of people who are driven by a passion for the local environment. They meet every Tuesday of the year—rain, hail or shine.

In 1995, when the group was formed, Budgewoi Beach was struggling. Budgewoi Beach is categorised as a high-energy, open beach. The beach has experienced decades of degradation through mineral sand mining, sand extraction, dredging spoil placement, poor access and residential development. As a result, the foredune structure of Budgewoi Beach had become destabilised, allowing wind-blown sand to advance inland and leaving the frontal dune less able to withstand erosion and prone to sustained long-term retreat. This situation became the driver for Budgewoi Beach Dunecare to commence hands-on dune restoration works, partnering with all tiers of government. The Dunecare team has undertaken a massive amount of work to restore the beach and its surrounding dunes. The group has achieved much in its 20 years and I hope it continues for at least 20 more.

## **HORNSBY GANG SHOW**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.45 p.m.]: I congratulate the talented performers and support staff involved in this year's Hornsby Gang Show. The show is a personal favourite of mine each year. Scouts and Girl Guides from across northern Sydney come together to create, choreograph and perform musical theatre. The Scouts and Girl Guides provide the youthful energy and vision that keeps Hornsby Gang Show so innovative and fun. Every year a new Hornsby Gang Show creative team meets to develop a completely new show. The team is made up of youth members who come together to write songs and sketches and to develop settings around which dances will be created.

Hornsby Gang Show offers an opportunity not only for young people to perform but also for its creative team to write, design and produce a unique show of their own making. The creative team meets every fortnight from October to January. During brainstorming sessions the team comes up with new concepts, workshops different ideas and listens to lots of music. Once the team has a collection of music and sketches, it explores different staging designs for costumes, settings and movement. A show is then assembled that balances casting and mood to create a fast-paced, funny and family friendly performance.

I am pleased to report that the production director, Mike "Doc" de Beer, and his musical director, Derek Rose, set a new benchmark this year, with a fantastic performance full of colour and intrigue. The show changed its venue, for the first time in 31 years, to Leslie Hall at Barker College. This year's theme was Top

Secret. The young performers learnt the words and dance moves for 10 different items in two acts. The show took the audience on a wild and unpredictable adventure, featuring a mythical forest, a glimpse of the Wild West and cyclists competing in the Tour Down Blunder. It finished with an ultimate game show, with yours truly as a contestant. The Top Secret theme was explored through a mad scientist with a secret weapon and a special agent trying to bring him to justice.

The production was fantastic, moving from monkeys in a jungle to a secret lab and then a daydream. It featured jaw-dropping design and lighting. The songs and sketches also provided the opportunity to feature a song by local artist Bella Hemming. It was wonderful to see and hear her perform *The Stalker Song* on stage. The wonderful vocals and dancing made it an item to remember. This was just one of the many fantastic acts throughout the night. I am proud of the young men and women who poured their heart and soul into this production. Many months of careful planning and practice went into the performance and it showed on the night, with impressive displays of singing and acting.

This year the Gang Show season featured eight shows, from Friday 26 June to Saturday 4 July. A total of 110 youth members from 41 Scout troops, Venturer units, Rovers crews and Girl Guides groups from the northern Sydney region took part. The show was performed to the largest audience in the history of the Hornsby Gang Show, with over 3,600 tickets sold. Six of the shows sold out. The 110 gang members were divided into 10 different patrols that were given local Aboriginal place names. They included Benowie, Berowra, Berrilee, Colah, Comenarra, Elouera, Garigal, Ku-ring-gai Mirrabooka and Muogamarra. The members of the patrols came from different sections of the movement and different geographical areas. Older members were able to mentor younger members and all were able to meet new people.

There were over 30 acts in the Gang Show extravaganza. I single out my good friend Richard Hodge and his Elouera Patrol for their outstanding singing, dancing and acting. Richard and his patrol, including Michelle Porter, Lucy Pennington, Dana Tribbia, Sam Morris, Susy Cornfield and Nick Binham, lit up the stage in a range of flashy outfits featuring sequined vests, Spanish dresses and outstanding realistic monkey costumes. I think my friend Richard enjoyed the sequins a little too much. The large sell-out audience was given value for money with a diverse song range selected by the production team of Matt Osborne, Tanya and Angella de Beer, Glyn Bickford, Cameron Sutton, Michelle Porter, Julia Ralton and Brodie Miller. The talented quartet of Stuart McBurney, Lauren Webb, Swa Bickford and Nick Macfarlane brought the songs to life in front of an appreciative audience.

I acknowledge the hardworking management committee and backroom staff who made the production possible. Volunteers like general manager Bryan Mattes, personnel manager Debbie Lawson-Smith, musical director Derek Rose and wardrobe manager Eleanor Sands should all be proud of their efforts in helping to bring the wonderful performance together. These Scout leaders donate their expertise and give substantial time as volunteers to enable the show to proceed, which in turn keeps the cost of providing such skills to Scouts and Guides to a minimum. Since 1973 the Hornsby Gang Show has trained thousands of Scouts and Guides in all aspects of production, including stagecraft, acting, singing, dancing, lighting, sound and prop building. The Gang Show aims to develop young people's confidence and self-esteem while ensuring that everyone has fun and a good time.

The Gang Show experience develops confidence and self-esteem in young people, as well as leadership and creativity as they work together to develop and deliver over a week of performances every July. Whether they are on stage, working behind the scenes or developing the show, everyone is an integral part of this amazing team. Hornsby Gang Show members audition every year in December, with the only prerequisites being that each member must be an active scout or guide for their local troop and be aged between 11 and 26 years. The show also gives young musicians the chance to play in the production orchestra. This is a great learning experience for musicians looking to hone their skills in front of a live audience and be part of the bigger Gang Show experience. Orchestra performers do not need to be a guide or a scout, with anyone over 15 years of age and a level 5 or above being eligible. I encourage anyone looking to join the fun for next year's Gang Show production to sign up and get involved. It is a wonderful organisation, it is a wonderful production, and it makes a big difference to my community in Hornsby. [*Time expired.*]



## NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

**Ms TRISH DOYLE** (Blue Mountains) [5.50 p.m.]: The Federal Labor Party introduced the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] in 2013. This is good Labor policy. The official rollout of the NDIS supposedly commenced on 1 July across the Nepean-Blue Mountains area for young people under 18 years of age living with a disability. There is currently a great deal of concern and confusion from both carers and service providers in my area at the lack of information about the implementation of the NDIS, given the expectation that families are due to receive packages from September 2015 onwards. There appear to be major delays surrounding the rollout. New services promised in media releases and on the website are not being delivered in a timely fashion. The Minister needs to urgently address a range of issues, raised by some of the most vulnerable people in society.

On Tuesday 21 July I hosted a roundtable discussion in Springwood and was joined by more than 60 people from my electorate and including 30 service organisations. The shadow Minister for Disability, Sophie Cotsis, MLC, also joined us. I will provide some feedback about this roundtable—the purpose of it—to provide an opportunity for those currently providing and receiving disability services to speak and be heard. We were privileged to hear people talk of how and when the NDIS would be implemented—their hopes, dreams, wishes, concerns, doubts, questions—as well as learn about people's ideas and opportunities to roll out best practice services for people living with disability.

Many people commented that they had very little information about how the rollout would occur in a practical sense in our area and were keen to learn more. They are concerned about the impacts of the NDIS on access to housing, transport, education and other services currently provided by the New South Wales Government. Many service providers and carers are well aware of the importance of the person-centred plan; however, they had questions about the quality of the planning process and the need to employ skilled planners with experience in working with people with disabilities. In the transition from block funding to a structure that is based on unit costing or fee-for-service, participants are concerned about continuing access to current services and service providers. A big question remains about service viability and continuity during this massive change to the funding landscape.

Service providers have specifically requested the implementation of appropriate transitional arrangements so that people with disabilities and their families receive adequate support during this period of enormous change. Particular attention needs to be paid to the most vulnerable groups in our community and those who currently experience difficulty accessing disability services due to language and cultural barriers and social isolation. As the member for Blue Mountains I am keen to ensure that there are opportunities for my constituents to provide feedback about gaps and barriers and to evaluate quality issues during the rollout in the Blue Mountains. The NDIS presents a once in a generation opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of people with disability and their families. I am committed to ensuring that the NDIS is the best it can be and that people with disabilities and their families have access to quality services that enhance their lives.

On three occasions I have written to the Minister seeking a briefing, and I have yet to receive a reply. I would appreciate an opportunity to meet and discuss questions raised by people in my electorate. Some of these following questions will be formally submitted to the Minister, but I also want to put them on the record in this place. How will the Minister ensure that the needs are met of those people with immediate problems—families in crisis, children at risk and those most vulnerable in the community? How will people who are not included in the first round of funding survive until the next round which is due in July 2016? What will happen to people who are excluded from the NDIS once the Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC] services have been disbanded?

Will the Minister explain the process and the time frame for recruitment of NDIS planners? Can the Minister clarify the job security situation of current ADHC staff, and what will happen to those skilled workers whose roles are not funded? What is the status of the current ADHC group homes and the future supply of housing? Disability advocate, analyst and Blue Mountains resident El Gibb, in her *bluntshovels* blog post,

"Whose NDIS is it anyway?", poses some hard questions and comments. I encourage all members of this place and anyone committed to the NDIS to read this article. El asks:

"What is really changing, with NDIS?"

"The shut down of all New South Wales public disability services didn't rate a mention, nor the proposed sale of Home Care", says El.

"The lack of housing options for disabled people was not part of the roll-out celebration."

At the NDIS forum I hosted, people appreciated El's contribution and the contributions of others. It is critical that we get this right. How many service providers in Australia are led by disabled people? How many put the rights of disabled people first; the right to live somewhere they choose, to be safe in their home, to not be seen as mistakes or broken? Asking some of those questions, rather than just accepting the hype about the NDIS, should be the norm rather than the exception. With a social reform as big as this, and on which so many hopes rest, is it not worth making sure that this is an NDIS that works for everyone?

### **BLUESCOPE STEEL PORT KEMBLA**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [5.55 p.m.]: Last night 300 people gathered at the Fraternity Club in the electorate of the member for Wollongong with the sole objective of saving the steel industry in the region. I take the opportunity this evening to briefly outline my concerns on behalf of the many workers and contractors employed by BlueScope Steel who live in my electorate about the future of the steel industry. My concern is shared by my Labor parliamentary colleagues the member for Wollongong and the member for Keira, as well as the Federal member for Throsby and the Federal member for Cunningham, Stephen Jones and Sharon Bird. Between us, we represent the vast majority of workers and contractors employed by BlueScope Steel in the Illawarra.

Over the past month it is fair to say the Illawarra has been gripped by uncertainty after BlueScope Steel let slip to its workers that unless costs were cut the plant at Port Kembla could be closed down. BlueScope Steel management has since pulled down a cone of silence and refused to come clean on the future of steel-making in the Illawarra. This is simply not good enough. It is now time that BlueScope Steel management both in the Illawarra and in Melbourne start to take the workers and the community into its confidence. It is time it explained its future plans for the steel industry in the region. It is time to level with the Illawarra community. This continued uncertainty is a big cost on confidence in the Illawarra region.

On an almost daily basis we are learning of electrical and engineering companies facing closure in the region. It is simply unacceptable for a big company like BlueScope Steel to pull down its shutters and refuse to engage with regional stakeholders. I implore BlueScope Steel management to face up to its corporate social responsibility. The region in which this company has operated for the past 80 years deserves far better treatment than it has received throughout the last few weeks of this crisis. Some people in the Illawarra community may think that the possibility of the steel works closing is not serious. Those people may believe that they have heard these threats before and BlueScope Steel will not pull the pin this time. I suggest that those who hold this view are sleep-walking into a catastrophe. This false sense of security may have taken hold because BlueScope Steel has pulled down the shutters. It is absolutely misguided thinking.

On the performance of the State Government so far, I think it too has this mindset. I find it extraordinary that the head of Government in New South Wales, the Premier, has said so little about the effect of this crisis on the second largest region in the State. I find it perplexing that the Premier would not even officially confirm until today that he has in fact met with BlueScope Steel representatives. The State Government, in my view, has a certain relaxed attitude to the threat of closure of the steelworks in the region. This too is simply not good enough. The Premier has a moral responsibility to level with the people of the Illawarra about his meeting, which he finally disclosed was held recently. He should be making a ministerial statement in this House about what was discussed with BlueScope Steel representatives and what, if any, requests were made of his

Government.

He has this responsibility for one particular reason: BlueScope Steel, despite downsizing over the past 31 years, is still a very big employer in the Illawarra. The South Coast Labour Council and the Australian Workers Union, which organised last night's public meeting, have commissioned the University of Wollongong to undertake an important study on the impact to the second largest region in the State if the steelworks close. When it is released soon that report's findings will shake to the core those who have a relaxed attitude to this threat.

I do not have any insider information on the report but I would not be surprised if it finds that up to 10,000 full-time equivalent jobs will simply be wiped off the map in the Illawarra. If that is not bad enough, add in the lost household income in the region each year. It would mean that the Illawarra region's contribution to the State's economy every year would be substantially lower than it is today. The Illawarra would be facing an economic and social catastrophe. We would become the State's equivalent to Detroit, Michigan, in the United States of America.

Some people like to peddle the view that Newcastle faced similar circumstances in 1999 when its steelworks closed and it flourished. This rose-coloured glasses view ignores a few convenient facts. First, Newcastle had fewer workers in steel production than BlueScope Steel has today in the Illawarra. Secondly, Newcastle was well positioned with mining assets and projects that took up much of the slack. Thirdly, Newcastle took full advantage of the long boom in commodity price increases since 2003. That mining boom has now ended.

Other people in the Illawarra hold the fanciful view that if the steelworks close down the solution will be a so-called Disneyland on the site. To be frank, such proponents are deluded daydreamers. Last night's public meeting resolved to do a few things, the most important of which is to mandate the use of 50 per cent Australian-made and produced steel in infrastructure projects across the country. There is a precedent to do that for State infrastructure projects because the Victorian Labor Government has mandated 100 per cent use of Australian-made and produced steel in its infrastructure projects. It is also proposed that a steel summit should be convened as a matter of urgency. These are two immediate measures which must be considered by both the Federal and State governments.

I join my parliamentary colleagues from the Illawarra in calling on the State Government to re-establish the Local Jobs First policy of the former State Labor Government, which was abolished by this Government when it came to office in 2011. I note some criticism of mandating steel use in infrastructure projects with claims that companies might gouge the Government with price increases. I acknowledge there are such risks. But surely it is not beyond the wit of governments to negotiate a set of principles which sees some clear, reciprocal obligations imposed on agreements with the private sector to ensure such risk is minimised.

## CYCLING

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Attorney General) [6.00 p.m.]: Cycling is very popular in my electorate of Vaucluse—indeed, across all of New South Wales—and is enjoyed by many people for transport, recreation, exercise and sport. Cycling has threaded its way through my life. In the 1970s it was the preserve of athletes, eccentrics and people with alternative lifestyles. My father was none of those but healthy food and cycling as a regular form of transport were encouraged at home. I spent a lot of time as a small child on the makeshift pillion seat on the back of my father's small-wheel bike. Not many people arrived at school on the back of a bike in those days and I recall wanting to jump off the bike across the street from my school lest any of my friends saw me. Of course, those small-wheel bikes are now all the fashion. We have certainly come a long way.

Today I enjoy cycling around my electorate. During the 2015 election campaign I found that cycling was the best way for me to get between activities. A ride on an early Sunday morning out to South Head from my home in Darling Point and back is one of the highlights of my week. Sydney is often at its best with cycling

community events—cyclists, drivers and pedestrians showing great respect for one another and for the rules of the road, and why not? Cyclists are also drivers and pedestrians at other times. The Spring Cycle through metropolitan Sydney is one such community ride and it will be held again soon. The event is supported by TAD Disability Services, an organisation I got to know through Mel Gibbons, MP, and board member and local resident Andrew Every. In June I was pleased to recognise Andrew for his work with TAD Disability Services with a Premier's Volunteer Recognition Program award.

The March 2015 International Women's Day: Heart Foundation Gear Up Girl bike ride was another great ride from Sydney Olympic Park to Cronulla, which I undertook. That was a very important ride because it focused on helping women build their bike confidence on the roads. However, a tragic reminder of the risks of cycling was highlighted not long ago when Dr Henri Sueke was struck and killed by a truck while out cycling along New South Head Road, Rose Bay, in my electorate. I offer, as I did at the time, his family and friends my heartfelt sympathies and best wishes. A group of his friends are running in this week's City2Surf in his honour, led by Eitken Franklin. I wish them all the very best.

In my electorate I have been working to try to do my bit to decrease such risks on the road for cyclists. In August 2014 the New South Wales Government provided \$40,000 in funding to Woollahra council to upgrade and improve cycle routes for the growing number of cyclists in my electorate. In March 2015 the New South Wales Government provided \$11,250 in funding to Woollahra council to install directional signage for cyclists to encourage safe navigation. Cycling paths are increasingly providing links between our suburbs, public transport hubs and commercial districts—such as the one recently opened along Oxford Street adjacent to Centennial Park. That is a great cycleway which I have used many times on the weekend to get into the city.

These important projects—and there should be more of them—improve safety for both cyclists and drivers, but there is so much more to do. Cycling is great; it is fun, it is healthy and it is practical. It is great that now even more people, whatever age they are, are cycling recreationally. Let us all continue to respect the road rules and respect one another as we share the roads—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

## **BIRRONG RAILWAY STATION**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [6.05 p.m.]: I again raise in this place the concerns of commuters in my electorate regarding the unacceptable state of Birrong railway station. As I noted in this place in September last year, as part of the changes to the Sydney Trains timetable in October 2013 the current Government, without public consultation, converted what was a small, quiet suburban railway station that serviced predominantly only the suburb of Birrong into a major interchange on the Bankstown train line. These changes were part of a number of other ill-conceived changes to the train timetable, which included removing the entire Liverpool via Regents Park service from the inner west train line. This has resulted in commuters from Villawood, Chester Hill and Sefton stations utilising Birrong station instead of their local stations in an attempt to avoid having to catch three trains to travel to the city via the inner west.

I am deeply saddened to report that in the past 12 months and in the 2015-16 State budget not a single dollar has been allocated for the urgently needed upgrade of Birrong railway station, despite my continued representations to the Premier and both the current and former Ministers for Transport. Simply put, Birrong railway station has never been equipped to accommodate the dramatic increase in patronage that has been experienced in the past 18 months, which was thrust upon it by this Government.

Since the 2013 timetable changes, patronage at Birrong station has increased by a dramatic 33 per cent and in the surrounding suburbs patronage has, unfortunately, decreased. These statistics only serve to showcase that the train timetable changes have made using public transport far more of an inconvenience for commuters in my electorate, which has only resulted in decreased overall patronage. However, Birrong station has unfairly shouldered the burden of the loss of the Liverpool via Regents Park line; the poor decision-making of this Government and the fact that Birrong was the only station with an increase in the total number of train journeys proves this fact.

I recently held mobile offices in both Birrong and Sefton where more residents once again expressed to me the urgent need to upgrade Birrong railway station. Ms Margaret Nekeare, a Sefton resident, conveyed her concern regarding the lack of security and lighting at Birrong station. Margaret told me that since the loss of the Liverpool via Regents Park line at her nearest station in Sefton, she has been utilising public transport a lot less frequently due to the inconvenience of having to change trains on multiple occasions when heading to the city via the inner west. Margaret's young daughter is forced to change trains at Birrong late at night when travelling for shift work, a wait that on some occasions is almost 30 minutes due to the lack of coordination under the new train timetable. Birrong station at present is very poorly lit, and the Minister has continued to ignore my calls to upgrade Birrong station with improved lighting.

The lack of security and lighting at Birrong was also brought to my attention by residents of Potts Hill at a community meeting held just this week. Potts Hill is a new suburb with approximately 650 households which has opened for residents just this year. In fact, the Government recently boasted about providing new housing in this suburb. However, sadly, better public transport options have not been provided for this new suburb. Birrong is the closest station to service Potts Hill. At the community meeting, the Potts Hill residents expressed to me that they feel unsafe when walking home from the station at night, particularly as it is very dark when walking up the steep stairs and across the small road bridge when exiting the station. This issue is exacerbated by a high brick fence, which blocks all visibility when exiting the stairs. There simply is no way for a commuter to see who or what is at the top of the bridge due to the poor lighting and brick fence.

The conversion of Birrong into an interchange has created a vast range of inconveniences for residents. For instance, Birrong station at present only has approximately 20 car parking spaces available for hundreds of commuters who are driving from as far away as Bass Hill, Georges Hall, Yagoona, Potts Hill, Chester Hill and Sefton to utilise the station. Furthermore, Birrong station does not have a safe drop-off and pick-up point, which has resulted in vehicles simply stopping in the middle of the road bridge so passengers can enter at the narrow staircase.

Ms Diane Greentree and Miss Tu-Linh Nguyen are Birrong residents who have expressed their disappointment to me regarding the lack of accessibility at Birrong station and the fact that the station is almost completely exposed to the elements. The elderly, mothers with prams, and disabled commuters face the choice of either lugging articles up and down the steep set of stairs—an issue only made more difficult by the fact that the stairs are sometimes slippery when wet due to the lack of shelter at the station—or going to another station. I call upon the Premier and the Minister for Transport to cease paying lip service to the commuters of my electorate and to immediately upgrade Birrong railway station with the facilities and infrastructure that are so desperately needed.

## **WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [6.10 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an event coming up in my electorate. I am one of those people who is—

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Positive.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** Absolutely positive. I rarely take holidays, which my wife does not like. So every two years she books a holiday to France because our daughter lives in Versailles. This year we spent three weeks with Elizabeth in France. Our other daughter, Alexandra, lives in Sydney and she met us in Helsinki, from where we travelled to Jyväskylä for three days to watch the World Rally Championship [WRC] round in Finland, formerly known as the 1000 Lakes Rally. It was a holiday and a work trip because I have been a Confederation of Australian Motor Sport official for 40-odd years. I still do controls for them at weekends, as rallying is in my blood, but I have not been able to afford a rally car. While in Finland I met Scott Pedder, and I congratulate him on coming fourth in the WRC2 and fourteenth overall. The amount of money spent on rallying is phenomenal.

A World Rally Championship round is coming to this State and will be run in Coffs Harbour from 10 to

13 September. Scott will compete in this round, as will Jari-Matti Latvala, who is second overall, and Sébastien Ogier, who won the Finnish round and is leading the World Rally Championship. I met them in Finland and, as I said, they will be in Australia next month. I congratulate Rally Australia and its chairman, Ben Rainsford, the president of the Australian Confederation of Motor Sport, Andrew Papadopoulos, and the team in Coffs Harbour on organising this year's rally. I invite every member of this Parliament to attend the championship.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Can I stay at your house?

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** Unfortunately, you cannot as all the beds are already booked but if you bring a tent you can stay in the backyard. We have 50 acres and we can put up tents, so you would be most welcome. Rallying is one of the most exciting sports. I thank the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, and Minister for Sport, Stuart Ayres, and Destination NSW for the support they give to this event. It costs a lot to put on this event but the net return to the Coffs Harbour economy is \$13 million. The rally is beamed into 150 countries and has a television viewing audience of more than 50 million.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Name them.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** I can name them; they are mostly your relatives. It is mainly watched by people in Europe. I met with Oliver Petro from Red Bull Media, the promoter of the event. Oliver is coming to Coffs Harbour for the event. As a representative of the Government that will be hosting the rally championship in Australia, my visit to Finland granted us some kudos with the World Rally Championship board. We will host the event in 2015 and 2016 and we hope to get it for another three years after that.

**Mr Damien Tudehope:** What about the environment?

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** I acknowledge the comment of the member for Epping. The rally in Coffs Harbour is the only event of all the WRC and Formula 1 events to be awarded the Achievement of Excellence, the best of three levels in the Environmental Certification Framework. That is because it is well run. We manage the environment by holding the event on forestry roads and running it to the highest environmental standards. I invite each and every member to come to Coffs Harbour for this event. I have advertising brochures and posters I can provide to members for their electorate offices. If members would like a poster, let me know. I invite all constituents to come and see the greatest motor sport; it is better than Formula 1. They will see the best drivers on this planet competing in Coffs Harbour. Those who attend this event will be not only supporting the Coffs Harbour economy but also supporting tourism.

## **MEN'S HEALTH**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [6.15 p.m.]: On 14 July 2015 I attended the launch of *A Male's Tale*, a DVD created by Parks Community Network Inc. *A Males Tale* is a documentary delving into a number of concerning issues surrounding men's health. The focus of the DVD is particularly on men in Fairfield who are suffering from domestic violence, depression and a range of other health issues, yet they do not seek any help. The launch also had a guest presenter, Maggie Hamilton, who discussed broad issues relating to men; it was a real eye-opener. Throughout the course of the evening, many issues were raised affecting men's health.

In society, boys are taught from a young age that it is their duty in life to be macho, to be strong, to fear nothing and to get over the little things. However, in today's modern society, we all know this should not be the case and these barriers need to be broken down. It is okay for a man to talk. It is okay for a man to express how he is feeling. Just because a man behaves in a different way to the construct of how a man should behave, does not make him any less of a man. These social constructs need to stop.

The stereotypical view, as we have all seen on the glossy magazine covers, display a tall, rugged man with chiselled abs, which unfortunately portrays a very skewed view to young boys as to how they need look. Some men suffer from bigorexia or anorexia, both of which are rarely discussed or put forward in the public domain as men's issues. But they are real, they exist and it is something we cannot simply ignore. Men and

women suffer from issues surrounding body image and characteristic traits and they try to meet society's expectations. These issues over time can create serious mental health problems, as well as, unfortunately, the current mindset that has been drilled into today's men that they must be strong and not care about feelings. These kinds of issues simply do not get talked about..

Maggie's presentation also discussed how men are less likely to seek medical advice when health issues arise. Once again, this all comes back to the narrow-minded view that men need to "suck it up and be strong". In recent years these kinds of issues have finally started surfacing in the public domain. I commend the National Rugby League [NRL] for its ongoing efforts with Beyond Blue and bringing mental health issues to light. The NRL has used some of its biggest stars to highlight such issues in a variety of ways that will get through to men of all ages and all backgrounds.

*A Male's Tale* provides an extraordinary insight into the work of the Parks Community Network Inc. in working with men's groups to champion the cause and raise awareness in the local community. In *A Male's Tale*, they identify the levels of inequities with regards to the varying levels of services available in the Fairfield local government area—with 130 service groups available to support women but only six service groups available to support men. This is a truly alarming statistic. One local organisation that strives towards helping men is the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. Although the Men's Shed gets guys to come together and work on projects, it is much more than that. It is a support network where men can come together and talk about issues that are impacting on their lives. The Bonnyrigg Men's Shed gives men the opportunity to talk openly and freely without any persecution. In the Men's Shed, they have broken down the barriers. This is something that truly needs to happen across the board.

*A Male's Tale* is a story about an unfortunate man who was the subject of domestic violence. It highlighted the issues he faced at home, a victim to the onslaught of physical and psychological abuse inflicted on him by his wife. It was gut wrenching to find out that throughout the course of his struggles and all the abuse he faced nobody would take him seriously. When he sought professional help, he was treated as though he was the cause of the problem. Unfortunately, the standard mould where men are expected to fit in today's modern society meant that his abuse was treated as a joke. I am incredibly proud of the Parks Community Network Inc. for all its efforts working with local community groups and for helping those in need. Further, I commend and congratulate the Parks Community Network Inc. on the successful launch of its DVD and its ongoing work promoting men's health in the Fairfield local government area while engaging with the local community.

## **LIVERPOOL HOSPITAL ENDOSCOPY UNIT**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Holsworthy) [6.20 p.m.]: A fortnight ago I had the pleasure of opening the third new Endoscopy Suite at Liverpool Hospital. Expanding on the hospital's already state-of-the-art endoscopy facility, this latest addition includes a third procedure room and features the very 007-type Spy Glass digital technology, a fascinating and helpful new tool for doctors to use. The opening of this new suite also makes Liverpool Hospital home to one of the largest and busiest endoscopy centres in New South Wales. For those not familiar with the procedure, an endoscopy enables doctors to see the inside of the body without performing major surgery. I joined Endoscopy Director Dr David Abi-Hanna to open the new unit. Dr Abi-Hanna is well respected in the local community and, if the Facebook comments on Liverpool Hospital's page are to be believed, he is a fantastic clinician.

Liverpool Hospital is one of only three hospitals in the State to perform the Spy Glass procedures which are used in complex cases, with doctors seeing patients not just from the district but from across New South Wales. The technology in this field is incredible. The Spy Glass allows a doctor to view live images inside a patient's bile duct without the need for invasive surgery. Before Spy Glass came along, doctors had to rely on taking X-rays and injecting patients with dye to show issues in the bile duct. According to Dr Abi-Hanna, the addition of the spy glass system means they are able to get a more precise image, which is very useful in diagnosing and treating serious and complex conditions.

While I was at the hospital for the official opening of the new procedure room and the unveiling of this new technology, I was told about a woman who came to Liverpool Hospital after having gone through three different procedures in her hometown, and with the help of the Spy Glass machine they were able to take a look at her and fix it straight away. I am told that this technology is only in use in a few hospitals in New South Wales and is highly sought after because of its high level of accuracy.

Patients are being referred to the unit from all over the State because of the state-of-the-art technology available. The new technology will make it easier for staff to perform procedures and the addition of the new procedure room and upgrade of equipment ensures the service continues to meet the needs of south-western Sydney and of the State. The expansion of the unit has also made it possible to see at least 30 more patients per week with a potential of seeing up to 200 patients a week. This is a great outcome for the community.

One of the great things about the creation of the endoscopy suite in 2013, which I was there to open, was that it was opened as a stand-alone service. This meant that patients undergoing endoscopic procedures could start and finish their journey in the one location. This system has helped to improve the efficiency and convenience of patients and medical staff alike. One of the great features of this unit is that patients are given a copy of their report and doctors can also access patient reports electronically. They are accessible on any home computer or from the specialist's computer.

Since it opened in 2013, more than 15,000 patients have been treated in the endoscopy suite. Some of the procedures performed include the removal of gallstones with no external cuts and the removal of large pre-cancerous tissue from the colon. Other procedures also include the placement of stents inside the digestive system for a range of blockages, usually related to the treatment of advanced cancer. This amazing facility changes the lives of people in such a positive way. Liverpool Hospital is an incredible institution and is fast becoming one of the leading hospitals in New South Wales. The opening of the latest expansion of the Endoscopy Unit and the new Spy Glass machine is yet another fantastic addition to the high level of care now expected from and performed at Liverpool Hospital. I thank all the doctors, nurses and staff at the hospital for all they do.

## **ACTIVE TRANSPORT**

**Ms JO HAYLEN** (Summer Hill) [6.25 p.m.]: Active transport is the way of the future. More and more people are embracing active transport for their daily commute, especially cycling and walking to work, recognising that it combats some of our greatest challenges. Active transport reduces emissions and mitigates climate change. It promotes exercise and healthy living. It helps connect people and fosters community. Most importantly, it motivates us to abandon our obsession with cars. One thing is clear: the challenge of building a truly global, functioning city is only possible with greater investment in active transport. It is disappointing that the Baird Government has not stepped up to this challenge. Instead it has often chosen chaos and complexity.

Rather than investing in cycleways and bike lanes, Minister Gay is tearing them up and debating with himself whether to license cyclists. Rather than working towards an integrated network to make cycling safer, the Minister is investing in multi-million dollar white elephants like the Tibby Cotter walkway. Rather than promoting healthy, clean transport, the Minister builds expensive, polluting toll roads through our greenest and most beautiful suburbs. Planning to meet the challenges of the future requires bold and visionary thinking. This Minister clearly is not up to it. Thankfully, however, others have filled the void that the Minister has created.

The Amy Gillette Foundation has done great work with its "A Metre Matters" campaign, calling for laws to ensure motorists leave at least one metre when passing a cyclist. Local councils have done great work, investing in cycleways and patching together a workable network in the absence of State Government leadership. Community groups like the Bicycle Network have led the way and shown cycling to be a viable mode of transport. Cyclists have taken to the streets to protest. The community has looked to this Minister for vision and leadership and has been left wanting. Instead, it has been given just rhetoric, which only widens the divide between cyclists and motorists. It should not be an either/or debate.



The Government's ideological obsession is not helping anyone. The fact is if you build more roads, you get more cars. Other global cities show us how it can work. Look at Tokyo or Amsterdam where cyclists, pedestrians and cars share roads. Despite its benefits, cycling is still not safe in Sydney. Four cyclists have died in New South Wales so far this year and eight died last year. Our roads are not built for cyclists. Poor planning has forced them to fend for themselves. Bike paths are often non-existent or do not connect, forcing riders onto the road or onto footpaths. Motorists and cyclists are still learning how to share the road.

Research has shown that the greatest protection for cyclists is more cyclists. We will only achieve a critical mass when we invest in the infrastructure that makes cycling safe, such as the GreenWay Project. The GreenWay is an urban green corridor winding through the inner west to connect cyclists and walkers from the Cooks River to Iron Cove and beyond. The GreenWay is a bold and visionary project that puts active transport at the front of the agenda. It puts people first. The GreenWay was to be built alongside the inner west light rail extension—a forward-thinking plan unfortunately deferred by this Government. Faced with the Government's short-sightedness, the GreenWay community fought on and found alternative routes. They have sat down with local councils and done the hard work of consulting with the community. They have the community's support, they have Labor's support, and they have my support.

The challenges of the future require forward thinking, but the Minister for Roads is unfortunately a man of the past. He is committed to keeping Sydneysiders in their cars when more and more of us could be out on our bikes or walking to work. People want to be healthy, they want to belong to and feel part of a community, they want to lower emissions, and they want to do their bit for a better world. It is our job in this place to make that a safe and more appealing proposition. It will take real leadership, consultation and listening to what the community wants to achieve that, and it will take considered investment in projects like the GreenWay. We all know that congestion in Sydney is bad, that there is a clear need for change, and that there is community desire for change. Now is the time to embrace active transport solutions for the future.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.30 p.m.]: I share the concerns of the member for Summer Hill about cyclists and motorists sharing our roads, which were not built with cyclists in mind. However, I draw her attention to the fact that the Baird Government is leading the way with a green group pilot study in Parramatta, which is modelled on a London strategy. I commend Parramatta City Council for its innovative cyclist strategy, which has been developed in coordination with the Transport for NSW statewide strategy. I encourage the member for Summer Hill to examine the strategy to see how excellence in cycling is achieved.

### **SYDNEY CAMEL RACING CARNIVAL**

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [6.31 p.m.]: On Wednesday 29 July I had the pleasure of attending Sydney's only organised camel racing event at the harness racing track at Bankstown Paceway. The three-day carnival saw camel races return to the Sydney metropolitan area, and I am proud that that happened in my electorate. I will provide members with a few interesting facts about camel racing. One-humped dromedary camels are ridden by camel jockeys, who are formally known as "cameleers". The event consisted of four races a day with six camels in each race. Racegoers were also treated to Christmas in July themed entertainment, with a Santa, an Elvis impersonator, Allen McDonald and comedian Al Showman from The Burning Log Comedy Theatre Restaurant, plus a Christmas-themed lunch.

Camel racing is popular in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Mongolia and Australia. Like horseracing, camel racing can be both a wagering event and a tourist attraction. Camels can run at up to 65 kilometres an hour in short sprints and can maintain a speed of 40 kilometres an hour for an hour. Camel racing in Australia started more as a tourist attraction than as a professional sport, and it usually takes place at outback racetracks. Camel races in Sydney were held at the former Harold Park Paceway at Glebe in 2007 during the horse influenza crisis, which prevented many horseraces being held.

In July 2013 the inaugural Sydney Camel Racing Carnival was held at Bankstown Paceway. It was held

for a second time in July last year and a third time last month. Australian camel jockeys are primarily women, unlike in the Middle East where boy jockeys are the norm. Camel races are sprints rather than long-distance races. Camels were first brought to Australia from Afghanistan in the early 1800s to help in the construction of major railways and telegraph lines in the outback. They were also used extensively for exploration and as pack animals. By 1895 the Australian camel population had increased to approximately 6,000 head, and today it is estimated to be more than one million animals. I acknowledge the hard work and commitment of Andrew Hoe and Megan Lavander from the Bankstown Paceway. I also thank the local community groups who turn out to support the paceway.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.36 p.m. until  
Tuesday 11 August 2015 at 12 noon.**

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