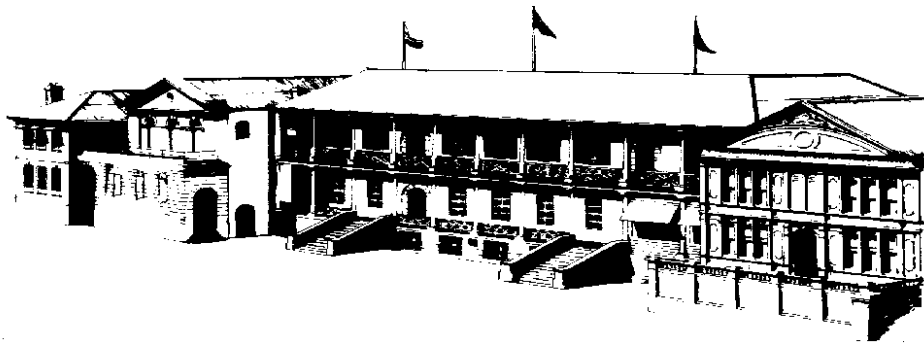




NEW SOUTH WALES



Legislative Assembly

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
THIRD SESSION**

OFFICIAL HANSARD

Thursday, 2 April 1998

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 2 April 1998

Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Henry Murray) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

M5 EAST MOTORWAY BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 October 1997.

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [10.02 a.m.]: My second reading speech on the M5 East Motorway Bill has been interrupted by the Christmas parliamentary recess. It is fortuitous that the speech is not complete because many significant financial and environmental developments of direct relevance to the M5 East have occurred in that time. The people in the suburbs of Arncliffe, Bardwell Park, Bexley, Canterbury, Earlwood, Hurstville, Kingsgrove, Rockdale and Turrella need to be consulted in relation to the developments.

I shall recap on some of the points I made last year. The coalition is particularly concerned about the environmental issue of air pollution. The project involves a long tunnel. Originally three chimneys directly above the tunnel were planned for ventilation. The previous environmental impact statement found that, depending on weather conditions and wind patterns, on some days air quality below the World Health Organisation standard would result. The Government subsequently put forward the startling proposal to build one large chimney stack—25 metres high by 15 metres wide—to deal with the raw exhaust gases from the M5 East tunnel. The chimney is not to be directly above the tunnel but to be connected with the roadway by three tunnels with a total length of 900 metres.

The concentration of hot exhaust gases into one tunnel could be expected to breach World Health guidelines on more days than the three-chimney proposal would have—possibly a majority of days. Air quality problems have escalated. Local residents are even more concerned following the decision of the Minister for Roads to proceed with the single-chimney project. A new environmental

impact statement is needed for the project. The first EIS is now many years old. It was completed with the technology of the time, particularly in respect of exhaust treatments. It was based on a totally different route, the 47-year road reservation through Wolli Creek. The supplementary EIS, the only other one that has been done, which was launched in November 1996—a surprise launch—changed the route completely. A new or supplementary EIS is required to deal with the radically changed chimney proposals.

The cost of the project has escalated from \$520 million to \$620 million because of the design change. The 20 per cent increase in cost—particularly when it relates to air quality and the chimneys—justifies a new or supplementary EIS. But this has not occurred. The process has been conducted predominantly in secret and bureaucratically. It has hardly been at arm's length: it has been virtually at the sole discretion of one Minister, under marching orders from the Premier, to ensure that the latest proposal is approved by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning under laws available to him.

The previously trusted processes of conducting environmental assessments before approving projects have collapsed. How can anybody have confidence in the Government following its disregard of environmental assessment in relation to undoubtedly the most significant roadway project in suburban Sydney? It is unique because it will go through and under a residential area. The increase in cost means that the project will now involve about a billion dollars—much more than the cost of the M2 or the Eastern Distributor. A brief process conducted within the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at the sole discretion of the Minister hardly satisfies the requirements of proper environmental assessment. The coalition agrees with the residents who are still fighting the proposal and calling for a new EIS. We await the result of a court challenge in respect of the environmental assessment processes.

A press release issued very quietly at 5.00 p.m. last Friday, to ensure that the weekend media was unable to take any interest in it, stated that the M5 East will not be finished until 2002—an extension of two years. That is quite interesting

because the Opposition had pursued the Government about the timetable for the M5, especially because it was supposed to be completed in time for the Olympics. An earlier press release issued under the name of the Hon. Carl Scully, Minister for Roads—

Mr E. T. Page: Over the name.

Mr SOURIS: Well, over or under. The Minister should wait until I read the press release before he determines whether it is over or under the tunnel. The press release stated:

The Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, today dismissed comments by Opposition Roads spokesman George Souris that the project would not be completed until 30 September 2000.

The Minister dismissed these comments. The press release continued:

"When the Government announced the project in November last year, we said we intended to complete it in July 2000 so that it would be ready before the Olympic Games," Mr Scully said.

"That remains the timetable".

Unfortunately about nine or 10 months later, in the quietness of a Friday night, the Minister for Roads released a press release, which stated:

"The M5 East will not be ready in time for the Olympic Games," Mr Scully said. "It is not necessary for the success of the Games, nor has it ever been an Olympic project".

What an incredible statement. It now seems that Sydney's most important trans-urban road—the vital missing link between the Hume Highway, the M5 and the Eastern Distributor and the route northwards to Newcastle and Brisbane—is now not vital for Sydney's road network and will not be completed in time for the Olympic Games. Sydney will have a huge construction zone through that area during the Olympic Games. However, according to the press release we have nothing to worry about because the Government has announced that Victoria Road is to become the most important Olympic road. Therefore, it is no longer imperative for Sydney's most important trans-urban link to be completed; it is no longer an important Olympic project.

That announcement fools absolutely no-one. The M5 East is closely related to the Olympic Games and is of importance to them. The huge construction zone will be viewed by millions of people worldwide, who will gain the impression that the Government cannot complete one important Olympic-related road project on time, even though it had four years of a six- or seven-year lead time in which to do so. However, the Labor Party will not

be in office this time next year but it will have wasted that four-year lead time by dithering, mucking about and mismanaging this project. The Government, the Minister, and the former Minister for Roads, the Hon. Michael Knight, stand condemned for the procrastination and mismanagement of what should have been Sydney's most important Olympic-related road project, which should have been completed in time.

I wonder what went wrong. The Minister arrogantly intervened, changed the design and made it a personal project. Whenever the Minister speaks to the media I hear him say, "I this, my that, my money, my road, I will deliver, I will do everything, I will be the champion." It is time for him to say, "I have failed the people of Sydney and the people of New South Wales. I will give them an Olympic disaster. I certainly will not give them the most important road Sydney requires as part of its major trans-urban link in time." This project has blown out from \$520 million in the 1996 budget and from \$620 million in the subsequent 1997 budget to more than \$800 million. How can a project be so mismanaged?

The three remaining tenderers do not know what is going on. They have been told to sign protocols so that the existing tender, in which they have invested millions of dollars, will end. That process has collapsed because there is a new timetable and set of guidelines. The tenderers have been asked to retender and in about one month the Government will decide whether it can select a preferred tenderer, finalise the process and start the project. I want to know the answer to one question: when does the Government propose to start the project? I cannot tell from the press release issued last Friday night whether it will start in October this year or after the next election. I cannot tell when it will finish, although the press release said that it will finish in 2000. A newspaper article that appeared on Saturday morning said that the project would not be started until after the next election.

Ms Ficarra: I wonder why.

Mr SOURIS: Indeed, I wonder why the electorates of Canterbury, Rockdale and Kogarah, and their respective members, are shaken to their foundations over this totally mismanaged project. Has anyone ever seen such a concentration of opposition from people who are normally law abiding—and still are?

Mr E. T. Page: Why impugn their credibility?

Mr SOURIS: The Minister for Local Government does not need to indicate exactly how

sensitive this issue is. The residents from Bardwell Park, Arncliffe, Bexley, Canterbury, Earlwood, Hurstville, Kingsgrove, Rockdale and Turrella do not demonstrate every other week. They are not activists of this type, they do not fight governments. However, they have suddenly united. I attended a huge rally of 3,000 people and was interested to see a vacant chair on the stage intended for the honourable member for Rockdale. People's lives have been destroyed and their property values have collapsed. They have been told that they will have a split valuation, a split title. They will have a title for the surface of their land and a title for the subsurface, which will be valued at nil. Therefore, they will receive no compensation. The landowners are confused and real estate agents have said that property values have decreased.

On many occasions the Government has said that the road will go ahead in a certain way, have chimney stacks, et cetera. The latest announcement, which delays it for two years, merely delays the visual impact of the project until after the election. Such a delay is the best way the Government can reduce and ameliorate the political impacts of this disgraceful decision and the disgraceful way in which it has dealt with innocent people. The residents are aggrieved about this and I agree with them. Although they are not normally prone to participating in demonstrations they have taken to the streets and the parks about this matter.

The coalition needs to know precisely what the Government intends. How much will this project cost? We need accountability and visibility. We are supposed to live in a democracy and people's homes and lives are at stake. The coalition wants to know the answers to some basic questions: what will the project cost? What is the construction period? What will be disrupted? What is the final design? The whole thing is up in the air. Why will it take an extra two years to complete? Is there a big design change? Is there a route change? We need this sort of information.

Mr E. T. Page: Use your written instructions.

Mr SOURIS: The Minister does not have a clue.

Mr E. T. Page: You haven't either, because you haven't read them yet.

Mr SOURIS: The Minister should just sit there and cop it, which the responsible Minister is not game enough to do. The Minister for Local

Government is the fall guy, the little pigeon, and he should just sit there and cop it. He can go back and say to his colleague, "Look, the heat is pretty high on this topic. Minister, we are in big trouble on this topic."

Mr E. T. Page: He is reading instructions now. He is checking with his Whip to see what he has to do.

Mr SOURIS: I am simply posing a question. However, it is pointless posing it to the Minister for Local Government, who is doing Chamber duty today.

Mr E. T. Page: I feel embarrassed for you, George. You have only 10 minutes to go.

Ms Nori : He is doing a bit of housekeeping.

Mr SOURIS: Yes, a little bit of housekeeping. Thanks to the Minister at the table, the stool pigeon, members of the Opposition have been afforded an opportunity to rearrange their tactics. We want to know the answers to some basic questions: what is the timetable? What is the big change? What has happened? What is the design? What is the route? What is going on here? Members of the Opposition are concerned and are entitled to more than a few brief paragraphs issued on a Friday night, and the Minister for Local Government should tell that to the Minister for Transport. Can he at least do that? God only knows. If this project is to be delayed, if it is to be such a disaster, I urge the Minister not to sign any contracts. I ask him not to commit or handcuff the next government—which will be elected in 11 months—to this disastrous project.

The Opposition wants this project to occur on the 47-year-old wide road reservation and it wants a tunnel all the way. That is the coalition's intention and that is what will be done when it resumes government. However, the coalition will not be able to do that if the Government commits the Crown to hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation and/or construction. The Opposition simply says to the Minister: if the project is not important to the Olympic Games do not cause a huge construction zone during the Games and do not tie the hands of the next government or the local community by signing a contract just before the next election. The Minister should leave it to the processes of a proper government to look after the needs of transport in the Sydney region in time for the Olympics.

Debate adjourned on motion by the Hon. E. T. Page.

**WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITIES
AMENDMENT (CENTRAL COAST WATER
AND SEWERAGE) BILL**

**Notice of motion called on, and postponed
by Mr Hartcher.**

**UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
AMENDMENT (ST GEORGE CAMPUS) BILL**

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr O'DOHERTY (Ku-ring-gai) [10.24 a.m.]:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am the New South Wales shadow minister for education and I represent the coalition—the Liberal and National parties—in this State. I represent the 700,000 people in the St George area, who are served by the University of New South Wales and who want to see leadership from the Minister for Education and Training and their local members, such as the honourable member for Kogarah, Brian Langton. The Labor Party has failed the 700,000 people of the St George region. People such as the honourable member for Georges River, the honourable member for Sutherland and her predecessor, Senator John Tierney and the Federal member for Hughes, Danna Vale, have pressed for the St George campus of the university to be retained as a public education facility to serve the people of the region. Who stands in the way? The Minister for Education and Training, despite statements to the House that he will support the transfer of that facility to the University of Wollongong. On 24 October 1996 the Minister said:

I give my pledge as Minister that if the University of New South Wales does not want the Oatley campus any longer, then I will be very happy to accommodate a change in legislation to annex that campus to the University of Wollongong.

In an interview with the *Sutherland Shire Leader* on 12 December 1996 he said:

The State would be happy to facilitate the transfer of the St George campus to the University of Wollongong, providing the Federal Government is prepared to cover the costs of keeping the campus running on an on-going basis.

I have also made this call of the Federal Government, which should be able to facilitate the retention of the St George campus for public education in the St George region. However, again,

the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training has stood in the way. In a media release of 24 February 1997 the Minister said:

The Federal Government needs to provide the necessary funding . . .

Yes, we know that. He continued:

I am keen to find such a solution—

that is, a solution that retains the campus for education purposes. In a letter to the vice-chancellor of the university, dated 13 January 1997, the Minister said:

With respect to higher education provision in the St George and Southern Sydney area, I would welcome the retention of a higher education presence at the site so that access currently provided to local residents and industry be maintained . . . I believe such a submission—

he was referring to the University of Wollongong submission—

is worthy of consideration and would like to see it accorded such attention by yourself and the University Council . . . I strongly support the retention of a tertiary facility on the site.

What did the then Minister for Transport, and Minister for Tourism say? On 7 November 1996 he said:

Any decision to close the only university facility in the St George area is short-sighted. I would like to place on record my support for your attempts to stop the closure of the Oatley campus.

BRIAN LANGTON MP
MEMBER FOR KOGARAH
MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND
MINISTER FOR TOURISM

The Opposition would like to place the word "temporary" after the Minister's portfolio description. The Labor Party has failed the people of St George. The Minister for Education and Training is in a position to stop the university from undertaking this course of action. The Minister has written to the university's vice-chancellor, who has snubbed his nose at him. The bill will allow the Labor Party to have absolutely no equivocation about its support for St George. If the Labor Party believes what has been placed on the record about the St George campus it will support the bill when it comes to the vote.

The purpose of the bill is simple and crystal clear: if this site is to be leased by the University of New South Wales it will require ministerial approval. When the Minister decides whether to grant a lease he will have to take into account

proposed section 17(3B), which deals with whether it is likely that the land could instead be used by a public university for the provision of teacher education. The bill does not require the Minister to make a specific decision; it puts the onus back onto the Minister. The bill gives the Labor Party the legislative teeth to do what it has been saying about the campus and makes it clear that it cannot hide behind the current legislation.

If there is any ambiguity about the intent of the current legislation, which provides that the Minister must approve the long-term lease or sale of the site, my bill makes it crystal clear that that ambiguity will be removed. The bill will enable the Minister to make decisions about the site; it will provide him with the power that he has been looking for to tell the university that it cannot lease the site because another university wants to use it for public education. Nothing could be clearer or simpler. Labor's course of action is clear: it must support this bill if it is to be honest in its support of the people of the St George region.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT (VOTER IDENTIFICATION) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 October 1997.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Port Macquarie) [10.30 a.m.]: I am pleased to continue my contribution to this debate after a four-month interruption. I wholeheartedly support the bill, which was introduced by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, the new National Party Whip. During the four-month break I racked my brain for reasons that the Government opposes this bill. I could not understand why the Government would oppose a positive step forward in the democratic process. When I read the provisions of the bill it dawned on me. The bill provides that people will need the following forms of identification on election day. Item [1] in schedule 1 states:

For the purpose of this Act, the following are examples of documents that may be used to establish the identity of a person:

- (a) a birth certificate or a certified copy, or an extract, of a birth certificate,
- (b) a citizenship certificate or a certified copy of a citizen certificate,

- (c) a current passport—

They are fine. The bill then has these further examples:

- (d) an expired passport, being a passport that was not cancelled and that was current within the preceding 2 years,
- (e) a marriage certificate or a certified extract of a marriage certificate,
- (f) a divorce decree,
- (g) a deed poll,
- (h) evidence of electoral enrolment issued under this Act, or under any Commonwealth Act,
- (i) a current motor vehicle driver's or rider's licence or permit held by the person . . .
- (j) a current Pensioner Health Benefits Card or Pensioner Transport Concession Card . . .
- (k) a current Medicare card . . .
- (l) a current credit card, savings account card, passbook or statement issued by a bank or other financial institution,
- (m) a "proof of age" card . . .
- (n) the most recent income tax assessment issued in relation to the person,
- (o) a certificate of identification or discharge papers issued by a branch of the armed services of the Commonwealth,
- (p) a rate notice issued under the *Local Government Act 1993*,
- (q) a valuation notice issued under the *Valuation of Land Act 1916*.

That makes sense. When reading that list I finally worked out why the Government opposes this bill. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour and honourable members who contributed to this debate may consider moving an amendment in Committee to include a death certificate as identification. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour forgot to include that. If people could provide a death certificate the Labor Party would be able to use the much talked about cemetery vote. We do not know whether the cemetery vote exists, but if it does this bill will deal with it. Taking this positive step to improve our democratic process makes sense. It is not a big ask. It does not challenge people's fundamental rights to ask them to provide identification.

I was astounded when, four months ago, the Minister, the honourable member for Auburn, the

honourable member for Hurstville and others argued that the bill somehow challenged people's fundamental human rights. I asked them to prove how the bill challenges the democratic right of people to vote. At that time I said that voting is not a right but a privilege and that people would be fulfilling that privilege when they produced identification. People will still have the right to vote, but they will no longer have the right to defraud the system. This bill will minimise voter fraud. If we are at the coalface of democracy, as we all argue, we need to do everything possible to prevent voter fraud.

Democracy depends on minimising discrepancies—and being seen to be minimising discrepancies—in the voting system. This bill will not only minimise discrepancies but, importantly—some would argue just as importantly; many would argue more importantly—it will be seen to be minimising discrepancies and making the voting system look clean. Honourable members have heard countless stories about voter fraud. All honourable members will be aware of the old Labor slogan: vote often and vote early. That is only one example. Everyone has heard the stories surrounding the cemetery vote. Accountability—visibly obvious accountability—is important to the voting system. This amending bill will provide the system with greater accountability and, just as importantly, highly visible accountability.

I am astounded that the Government is opposing this bill. All honourable members can think of places where basic identification is necessary. Over the break I made a list of some situations in which identification is needed: opening a bank account; obtaining a passport or visa; obtaining a driver's licence; Cash Converters; buying a drink in a pub, club or bottle shop; borrowing a library book; joining a club or organisation; applying for credit, social security, telephone connection or electricity connection; applying to be a Justice of the Peace; buying a car; hiring a video; and even presenting a cheque. It is ironic that electoral candidates must provide proof of identification but voters do not have the same requirement. That amazes and, to a large degree, frightens me. Theoretically, electoral candidates do not know who voted for them. Members of Parliament could then ask how on earth they are elected. We are supposedly at the coalface of democracy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Port Jackson will have the opportunity to contribute to debate at the appropriate time.

Mr OAKESHOTT: This Parliament has some of the loosest identification requirements of any formal organisation in the community. New South Wales is the home of parliament in Australia; yet for some strange reason voters are not required to produce identification. There is nothing in the present system to stop me or anyone else from turning up early, casting a vote in my name and then casting a vote in someone else's name. If I got my hands on an electoral roll, potentially I could cast votes in the names of many people who I know will be away on election day. Honourable members need to recognise that this bill is an important step in making the present system more accountable and, importantly, seen to be more accountable. The issue is about not only being more accountable but being seen to be more accountable. The H. S. Chapman Society is a positive organisation that wants to improve our voting system by recognising and addressing voter fraud across the board. Four months ago the Minister for Local Government said that electoral fraud is not an issue.

Ms Ficarra: It's not an issue to Ernie.

Mr OAKESHOTT: Not for the Minister! I will happily pass on the Minister's comments to the H. S. Chapman Society. I will encourage that society to invite the Minister for Local Government to put forward his views at its next meeting. Both parties have distinct views on this issue. The Government argues that there must be proof that voter fraud exists. That is a weak argument. The stronger coalition argument is that there should be proof that voter fraud does not exist. Under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act, which the Government supports, we cannot prove either that voter fraud exists or that it does not exist. The coalition has been unable to obtain appropriate statistics.

This bill is a significant step in helping to prove that voter fraud does not exist. In a strong and accountable democracy surely the aim should be to prove that voter fraud does not exist. The comments of Government members have been surprising. Obviously they defend a system that everyone acknowledges has holes. Improvements to the democratic system should be supported by everyone. Democracy is a somewhat selfish system, but it must be used to help improve democracy. The Government uses democracy to hinder democracy. That is unfair and wrong, and it will lead to future problems.

The purpose of the bill is to improve the voting system. The Government argues that voting is

a right; the coalition strongly argues that voting is a privilege and that the system must have built into it measures to prove the identity of voters. It is not a big ask to improve the present system. The coalition argues that the voting system must be accountable because in any democracy accountability is vitally important. I have referred to the identification documents listed in the bill and also to some occasions when personal identification would be required. It is astounding that more identification is needed to hire a video than is needed to vote under the New South Wales voting system, because people do not have to prove who they are when they vote! Theoretically, under the provisions of the Act, if an appropriate witness could be found to support the application, my dog could be placed on the electoral roll. That is crazy!

I support the H. S. Chapman Society in its attempts to address electoral fraud. I repeat that the distinct difference between the coalition and the Government is that the Government is all about trying to prove that voter fraud does not exist and that the coalition must prove otherwise. I throw that back at the Government: prove that voter fraud does not exist. The Government has not presented any statistics to support its contention and it cannot prove that voter fraud does not exist. Plenty of stories about voters float around the community. Everyone has heard the slogan: vote early and vote often. Everyone knows about the cemetery vote. The voting system must be improved and this bill provides the opportunity to make that improvement. Why are the Government and the Minister opposing this positive step forward for everyone that will ensure that voter fraud does not exist? Figures provided by the Government just do not support its argument.

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [10.45 a.m.]: Only the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party would seek credibility by opposing legislation that sought to tighten up the New South Wales voting system. Only members of that branch are experts in this country in voter fraud.

Mr E. T. Page: Get your grammar right.

Mr BROGDEN: I am pleased that the Minister has interjected. My colleague the honourable member for Eastwood pointed out earlier today that the Minister for Local Government is living proof of the cemetery vote. The Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment (Voter Identification) Bill introduced by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour is simple and harmless, yet the Labor Government has gone to great lengths to stop it being passed.

What credible arguments could be put forward to deny the passage of this legislation? What argument is there against placing responsibility on New South Wales voters to prove their identity when they vote? How can the Government deny that? Why would any respected Australian political party choose that approach? Indeed, the answer is that the ALP is not a respected Australian political party. The bill is straightforward: it offers a comprehensive series of identification documents. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour has put a great deal of work into presenting this bill. Anyone over 18 years in New South Wales would have access to any one or more of the documents mentioned in that comprehensive list. Item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill sets out the identification documents as follows:

- (a) a birth certificate or a certified copy, or an extract, of a birth certificate,
- (b) a citizenship certificate or a certified copy of a citizenship certificate; a current passport.

A current passport is an important issue for the Australian Labor Party. Is a passport needed to charter a plane from Port Macquarie to Sydney?

Mr Fraser: Well, we're not sure.

Mr BROGDEN: We are not sure. Perhaps warrants are required to travel from Port Macquarie to Sydney.

Mr Oakeshott: Depends who is on the flight.

Mr BROGDEN: It depends who is on the flight and depends who signed the warrant. I must consult the honourable member for Coffs Harbour to see whether he wants to add parliamentary travel warrants to the list.

Ms Ficarra: Non-transferable.

Mr BROGDEN: Non-transferable appears on the front in bold letters. Another permissible document of identification is an expired passport. The Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Emergency Services, Brian Langton, is about to be expired! An expired passport must not have been cancelled and must have been current within the preceding two years. The schedule also includes these documents:

- (e) a marriage certificate or a certified extract of a marriage certificate,
- (f) a divorce decree,
- (g) a deed poll,

- (h) evidence of electoral enrolment issued under this Act, or under any Commonwealth Act,
- (i) a current motor vehicle driver's or rider's licence or permit held by the person, being a licence or permit issued by the Roads and Traffic Authority or by the corresponding traffic authority of the Commonwealth, or of some other State or Territory,
- (j) a current Pensioner Health Benefits Card or Pensioner Transport Concession Card (issued on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health by the Commonwealth Department of Social Security or the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs),
- (k) a current Medicare card (issued by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health),
- (l) a current credit card, savings account card, passbook or statement issued by a bank or other financial institution,
- (m) a "proof of age" card, being a card issued by the Roads and Traffic Authority or by the corresponding traffic authority of the Commonwealth or of some other State or Territory,
- (n) the most recent income tax assessment issued in relation to the person,
- (o) a certificate of identification or discharge papers issued by a branch of the armed services of the Commonwealth,
- (p) a rate notice issued under the *Local Government Act 1993*,
- (q) a valuation notice under the *Valuation of Land Act 1916*.

Each and every New South Wales citizen would have access to one or more of those documents to prove his or her identity when he or she goes to the polling booth.

Mr Oakeshott: You forgot the death certificate.

Mr BROGDEN: The honourable member for Port Macquarie suggests that, as the ALP is so proficient with the cemetery vote, a death certificate should be included. Indeed, as Mr Speaker knows, the great joy of the Lowe electorate, which is a most notable Federal electorate that encompasses the State electorate of Drummoyne, is that Rookwood cemetery remains the source of a huge cemetery vote, even though it moves in and out of State electorates with each redistribution. It is very, very simple to vote in New South Wales. As the honourable member for Port Macquarie said, it is more difficult to join a video club than to vote. I am a member of video clubs at Mona Vale and Newport. In order to become a member and obtain membership cards I had to prove my identity by producing my driver's licence. I do not need to do that in order to vote. I can be whoever I want to be.

New South Wales citizens can be whoever they want to be when they turn up at a polling booth on election day. It would be possible for one person to cast a vote in a number of booths in a given electorate or in various electorates throughout the State.

Mr Markham: Vote early and often, as the saying goes.

Mr BROGDEN: Vote early and often, interjects the honourable member for Keira, and ain't that the truth! The Australian Labor Party says proudly: vote early and often. It is a disgrace that it is easier to vote than it is to join a video club. This would not be such a problem if Australia did not have compulsory voting and a political system which produces, as a matter of course, very close election results. A number of members of the Labor Party will be sitting on the opposition benches 12 months from now because they occupy marginal seats. You may be one of them, Mr Speaker. It would be easy to impersonate another person or to invent a bogus voter, register the name on the roll and then impersonate that bogus voter on polling day at every booth in any given electorate. In some country electorates that could be as many as 40 booths. One person could create an illegal persona, without having to provide identification, and then vote on several occasions in an electorate in which the result may be extremely close.

Mr Markham: Are you speaking from experience?

Mr BROGDEN: The honourable member asked if I was speaking from experience when I referred to electorates where the result is very close. Tragically, in the recent redistribution proposal the seat of Pittwater has dropped a massive 0.6 per cent; but that is not a problem for me.

Mr O'Farrell: You are getting closer.

Mr BROGDEN: The honourable member for Northcott, who will not have a seat at the rate he is going, says that I am getting closer. In a State where voting is compulsory and election results are often very close citizens should be required to prove their identity so there can be absolutely no cause for concern about the result, whether it be a large majority or a small majority for the successful candidate. The electors of New South Wales need to know that the party that forms the government in this Chamber has achieved that office through the most honest and accurate structures available. New South Wales citizens do not even have to prove their identity when they register to vote. Such a system

generates a level of fraud and corruption, as has been proved in many instances. I was pleased to hear the honourable member for Port Macquarie speak about the H. S. Chapman Society, and about the excellent work of Dr Amy McGrath, Charles Copeman and others involved in that society in bringing voter fraud to the attention of the Government and the people of New South Wales.

It is fair to say that there is nothing really sexy about voter fraud. Indeed, it is hard to believe that political parties would actively involve themselves in that sort of practice, but it has been proved that it happened and it will continue to happen as long as the legislation in New South Wales is so flexible as to allow people to vote without having to prove their identity. Australians are privileged to have a free, open and democratic society. They are privileged because from the age of 18 years they are eligible to vote. In some countries people are fighting and dying for the privilege to vote. In this country people treat the privilege with such disrespect that no legislation is in place to protect our right to vote. I am sure the 1998 rural youth achievers and the 1998 Royal Easter Show girls who have joined us in the gallery today as guests of the honourable member for Oxley, would agree that it is important that the legislation that governs all to do with voting should be beyond reproach.

I look forward to hearing the comments of the Minister for Local Government. Having almost lost the seat of Waverley in 1988 he well knows that in a number of electorates the results are often very close. Very often such electorates determine which party will govern the State. Members of the public should be able to have confidence in the result of any election and in the government that is formed following that election. They do not have that confidence at the moment because Government members will not support this very sensible bill introduced by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour. They will not support the proposed legislation because they are known to be great defrauders of the electoral system in this State. The Government will not support the bill because in 12 months time it will seek to use the loopholes in the existing legislation to guarantee a better chance of winning government.

When a government has to rely on poor legislation and loopholes in voting registration to retain office, it is a very sad day for the people of New South Wales. It is a sad day when a government will oppose a private member's bill which seeks to provide fairness, equity and a level of accountability in our voting system. As I said earlier, it is not a very exciting topic for the general

public to become involved in, but people must be aware of the following: it is harder to join a video club and hire a video than it is to register and to vote in New South Wales. As long as that system exists this State will have a very poor system of voting, one that is open to fraud and corruption. The system must be changed in order to give the people of New South Wales greater confidence in their electoral system.

Mr SPEAKER: Before I call on the next speaker I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of eight rural young achiever award recipients and the 15 regional winners in the Miss Showgirl competition. They are obviously in Sydney to attend the Royal Easter Show. For the first time the Royal Easter Show will be held this year at Homebush, which is in the prestigious electorate of Drummoyne. As the member who represents that electorate, it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the presence of these young people in the gallery. I wish them all the best in their endeavours. The people of Sydney are looking forward with great excitement to the Royal Easter Show being held at Homebush; I am sure it will be an outstanding success. More importantly, the names of the young people in the gallery will be etched in history as they will be the first to appear on the honour boards in the new facility.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [11.00 a.m.]: I endorse Mr Speaker's words to the Miss Showgirls. Honourable members may find this unbelievable, but my daughter was an entrant in the Miss Showgirl competition not so long ago—I am not all that old. She enjoyed participating in the process, and we attended a magnificent ball at the Harvey Lowe Pavilion, in the Baulkham Hills-Castle Hill area. Also, I have followed the progress of the Miss Showgirls and recognise some of them from their photographs in the *Land* newspaper. I hope this competition will continue.

Today I shall speak on a most important subject. The right to participate in a parliamentary election is a most treasured, cherished and fundamental right. It is a right that must be protected and preserved, and the Parliament must ensure that it is used fairly. That is what this bill is all about. The bill will maintain integrity, credibility and a correct process for the control of elections. The people of this country live in a democracy—one of the greatest democracies in the world. They do not live in a place where things are a little bit suss, where people wonder what is happening at the highest level of government because of the lack of integrity. Overall, the integrity of the parliamentary process, both Federal and State, is of the highest

order. I have only been speaking for about 30 seconds and the Miss Showgirls are leaving. Honourable members wish them and the young achievers all the best.

I return to the question of voting. The legislation is simple. It provides that to be eligible to vote one has to be able to prove one's identity. That is not asking too much. If honourable members were driving home and were apprehended by a man—or indeed a lady—driving a car with a flashing blue light, and did not produce a driving licence when requested to do so, they would be in trouble, because they would not be able to prove their identity or that they were qualified to drive a motor vehicle.

Voting is also a privilege that should require some proof of identity. This legislation would require people to provide evidence of their identity—nothing more, nothing less. It would not take away the right to vote; it would encourage voters to exercise that right correctly rather than fraudulently. Let me give a classic example of how that right can be abused. As most honourable members know, there are a number of polling booths in each electorate. Let us say there are 12 polling booths in a particular electorate. Some have less, but by and large there are more, depending on whether it is a State or Federal electorate.

If I were industrious I could get up at 5 o'clock in the morning—which, for a politician, would be particularly early; that is when many of us go to bed—and read the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Instead of reading the front page or the sports page I could read the deaths column and find the name of somebody who had unfortunately died. I could ascertain that person's address and run around to the 12 polling booths and vote in that person's name. No-one would be there to stop me. The only way I could get caught is if I were standing in front of or behind a neighbour or someone who knew the deceased. Then I would bolt for the door, go to another polling booth where my luck would be in, and nothing would happen.

That sounds bad, but it can be extended further by a bus load of people impersonating 12 or 24 people. By the time they have been to all the booths everything has multiplied. Some people would say, "So what; what are a few votes?" but history tells us that elections have been decided by a few marginal seats, and 190 votes can make a difference between being in government and being in opposition. Sometimes it gets down to 50 or even 20 votes in one electorate.

Mr Scully: Not in yours, Mr Eighty-five Per Cent.

Mr MERTON: And not in the electorate of the honourable member for Tamworth, and certainly not in the electorate of the Minister for Transport, but he is working to bring his down. Some Government members are trying to make their seats marginal, and they do not need the help of the electoral commissioners to do that.

Mr Scully: I heard that the honourable member moved out and his vote went up.

Mr MERTON: That is right. Nevertheless, there is absolutely no truth in the rumour that the Minister is seeking to have the cemetery included in his electorate. I understand he is not going to amend the submission in order to have the cemetery included. Notwithstanding that, the situation is that by travelling—

Mr Brogden: They don't call it Smithfield for nothing; look at all the Smiths in the cemetery.

Mr MERTON: That is right. This may be discussed in a humorous way but the result is far from humorous. Electorates can be manipulated so that fraudulent votes are counted and a member can be elected when, on the voting intentions of the people in an electorate, he or she should not have been elected. It is a simple message: when people go to vote they will be asked for identification. That could be a birth certificate; a citizenship certificate; a passport, even an expired passport; a marriage certificate, even a divorce decree—that is both sides of the coin; a deed poll; evidence of electoral enrolment; a current motor vehicle driver's licence or rider's licence; a pensioner health benefits card; a pensioner transport concession card; a current Medicare card; a bankcard, savings card or credit card; a statement issued by a bank or some other financial institution; a proof-of-age card—which, of course, I do not have to carry but some honourable members do; a certificate of identification; a tax assessment; discharge papers; a rate notice under the Local Government Act; a valuation notice; or any little scrap of paper which is evidence to show, for example, "Yes, this is Andrew Fraser; yes, this is Bruce MacCarthy." What is wrong with that? One may well ask why the stalwarts of democracy, the champions of the working class, the battlers for the underprivileged, oppose this. I do not know.

Mr Fraser: There is no death certificate.

Mr MERTON: There is no death certificate. The Opposition would even consider an amendment to enable a death certificate to be produced to prove one's identity, but it will not go so far as to allow a vote by seance.

Mr Scully: Who wrote this? The honourable member is quite funny.

Mr MERTON: When the Minister is in the Chamber I am encouraged to greater heights. The Opposition has a marvellous opportunity to present legislation that will help the people of New South Wales. When the votes are counted everyone will know that those who voted were those who were entitled to vote—one vote, one value; not vote early and vote often.

Mr MacCarthy: One person, one vote.

Mr MERTON: One person, one vote. We are simply saying that in a democratic system the right to vote is fundamental. Earlier an honourable member who contributed to the debate said that people have fought and died for the right to vote. We have seen pictures on the television of people who have queued for two days in conditions that can only be described as dreadful and shocking. They have waited for days in very long queues just to cast their ballot papers—just to participate in the democratic process. In Australia we do not have to do that. But we do say, "Yes, you have the right to vote and you have the privilege of voting." Tragically there are a few—and it takes only a few in a marginal seat—who abuse the process. Actually, what they are doing, which is unfair to others in the electorate, is undermining other people's wishes. They are cheating, manipulating and depriving those people who have voted honestly and correctly. That element of deceit or dishonesty makes the voting process very distasteful.

As I said earlier, this legislation, which is very simple, states, "You are all entitled to vote. Everyone has a right to vote, but everyone requires some form of identification." Everyone needs a piece of paper stating, "Yes, I am Carl Scully", or whomever the person might be. I have great pleasure in supporting what I believe to be a defining piece of legislation. This legislation will enable people to vote and to participate in our democratic process. This legislation, which has as much significance as our Constitution, will give effect to people's wishes and desires without the worry of fraud, manipulation and deceit. I ask those Government members who are in the Chamber who know that we are on the right path to cross the floor and vote with the Opposition. For once they should stand up and be counted if they believe in our great democratic process. I say to Government members, "For once stand up for your convictions."

If some Government members are worried about all those Liberal voters going uptown and

hiring double-decker buses in the morning they should vote for this legislation. The voting process should be as simple as it is for one to hire a video. A person who hires a video is required to produce identification. A vote affects not only each person in Australia and his or her family; it affects the whole State and the nation. The decision that each person makes when voting remains in force for a period of four years. However, as I said earlier, no identification is required to be produced by anyone voting. I could vote a dozen times a day. I could wear a wig, pose as a woman and vote in another electorate. Anything could happen.

Our voting system is scandalously open to abuse. Dr Amy McGrath, a person who has devoted her life to electoral fraud, who knows all about our electoral system and who can quote statistics—a former member of the Labor Party until she had that glorious road-to-Damascus experience—now realises that this legislation is open to abuse and to fraud. Proof of identification will not cure or overcome all the problems in our electoral system. However, one fundamental problem will be resolved; we will know that Carl Scully or Wayne Merton are who they say they are, and not someone else. I support the legislation.

Mr CLOUGH (Bathurst) [11.15 a.m.]: I made a considerable sacrifice to take part in this debate. After watching a replay of yesterday's one-day cricket game I became so depressed that I switched to channel 4 and heard utter rubbish being spoken in the Chamber. I have the greatest respect for those Opposition members who have spoken in this debate, but I must point out that I became a member of Parliament many years before they did and I have a few tales of my own to tell. Back in the 1960s, at a postponed by-election, Syd Einfeld told the story—or at least he did before he died—

Mr MacCarthy: He is still telling it, is he?

Mr CLOUGH: No-one on the Opposition benches is in the same league as Syd Einfeld, so Opposition members should not get too excited. I am sure that the Hon. B. H. Vaughan, who just walked into the Chamber, would recall the story that I am about to relate. Syd walked into a polling booth in the Barwon electorate. It had been raining overnight but there were no tyre tracks in the yard. Syd said, "This will be okay; we will start from scratch." Thirty-two people had already voted but there was not one footprint or tyre track in the yard.

Mr Fraser: That is the reason we need the legislation.

Mr CLOUGH: It was a Country Party electorate. Syd asked the returning officer in charge of the polling booth, "When did these 32 people come through?" The returning officer said, "They all rang up and voted."

Mr Fraser: Let us fix it.

Mr CLOUGH: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour does not know what he is talking about. All the Country Party voters had rung up and cast their votes. I wish to refer to my own election to this Parliament. In 1976 I was elected as a member of Parliament with a majority of 235. When it was clear that I was in front on election night the local Liberal Party president ran up and asked the returning officer, "Where are the ballot boxes?" My scrutineers, who were smart, insisted that the ballot boxes go into the cells at Lithgow police station. They slept with the ballot boxes because they were accustomed to the way in which members of the Country Party and Liberal Party operated. We knew that they would attempt to tamper with the ballot boxes. In 1981 there was an electoral redistribution and I was opposed to a sitting member in the seat of Bathurst.

Mr Merton: He was a good member.

Mr CLOUGH: He was a person for whom I have the highest regard and I do not want in any way to sully his memory by what I am about to say. The election was very close indeed and there were an enormous number of irregularities. One hundred and fifty Portland subdivision absentee votes were not counted, but the envelopes were opened and the ballot papers were put into a container underneath the kitchen table where the returning officer was operating. I got 15 of those 150 votes but I got 82 per cent of the vote in the Portland subdivision. It does not take much to work out that somebody had been fooling around with the ballot papers that night. I assure honourable members that it was not anyone from the Labor Party.

Mr Fraser: Let us fix it.

Mr CLOUGH: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour is a smart alec, but I am prepared to overlook that. As the count progressed it became obvious that Labor was going to narrowly win the seat. A few days before the declaration of the poll the Country Party announced that 96 votes were coming in from two bus loads of people at Parkes. I was asked by the press how I felt about the 96 absentee votes from Parkes. I said that if 96 votes

came in from Parkes someone would go to gaol because I had an assurance from the Electoral Commissioner—in those days a Mr Cundy—that every absentee vote that had been cast in New South Wales, including Parkes, had been accounted for. Those 96 votes never turned up.

Mr Scully: What does that suggest?

Mr CLOUGH: It suggests that those 96 votes were shonky.

Mr Scully: No votes for Mick Clough.

Mr CLOUGH: No votes for Mick Clough in that lot. The Country Party then lodged an injunction to restrain the declaration of the poll. That injunction was delivered to the returning officer 15 minutes before the poll was to be declared. The declaration was deferred to the next Tuesday, by which time the Country Party had realised that if the matter went to the Court of Disputed Returns I would win, and win easily. That is not the only joust that the Australian Labor Party has had with the Country Party. In 1977, I think it was, the Hon. Jack Renshaw retired from the seat of Castlereagh. A by-election was held and Mr Jim Curran was the Australian Labor Party candidate. Knowing full well what was likely to happen, the Labor Party assigned a member to every polling booth in the district.

I introduced myself to the returning officer for the polling booth to which I was assigned and told her that I would be scrutineering on behalf of the Labor Party. I said I would be counting every vote that was lodged and would check my figures with her from time to time. At the previous election 49 votes had been counted at that polling booth. During the day I was invited to two morning teas, lunch and afternoon tea by the Country Party district president. As I was there to do a job I declined with thanks.

Mr O'Farrell: I would not have done that.

Mr CLOUGH: I know you would not have declined. The honourable member for Northcott and I have a trace of family relationship.

Mr O'Farrell: Oh no!

Mr CLOUGH: Oh yes. I have to admit it and I have to wear it. My grandmother was an O'Farrell and came from about the same area in Ireland as the family of the honourable member for Northcott. That automatically makes him a man of integrity.

Mr Scully: He is the biggest rorter on that side of the House.

Mr CLOUGH: I do not think so. He has the same traits that I have and is an honourable person. On the day of the Castlereagh by-election it was very hot. A man arrived to vote but sat in a car in front of the polling booth for at least two hours. Eventually I went over to the car and asked him why he had not voted. He said that he could not walk and he had been told that because I was present he probably would not be allowed to vote. I told the returning officer to take a ballot paper to that man and let him vote, and he did so. That day 24 votes were lodged at that polling booth, and there was a 50 per cent swing to the Labor Party. Instead of receiving two votes, we got three.

At five minutes to six I said to the returning officer that we would count the votes at 6 o'clock. She said that she normally counted the votes at her mother's place. We all know what happens at mum's place. During counting they would say, "Bill and Margaret have not voted", and they would lodge their votes for them, and so on. There was a swing to Labor at that booth because I was there to check the votes. The same thing happened throughout the electorate, and Jim Curran became the member for Castlereagh. The young members who support the bill have had very little experience in voting procedures, particularly in the bush in the days of the old Country Party—and I particularly refer to the Country Party because it represented country people, unlike the National Party. The aim of the bill is to deny Labor Party voters the right to vote. The Opposition would make certain that every one of its supporters who went to a polling booth would have proof of identification, but most Labor Party voters are working men and women.

Ms Ficarra: As are most Australians.

Mr CLOUGH: The honourable member for Georges River interrupts and says, "As are most Australians." In country New South Wales the pastoralist-grazier-squatter class rarely votes Labor. Those people would have identification with them, but the average working man who votes Labor—such as the fettler and the post office worker—would not. Nine out of 10 would come to the polling booth without proof of identification, and, having attended the polling booth, they would not come back. That is what this legislation is designed to achieve. The suggestion by Opposition members that the aim of the legislation is to tighten up polling in country New South Wales is the most

hypocritical statement I have heard in my long period as a member of Parliament.

Mr Oakeshott: Support the bill.

Mr CLOUGH: I would not support legislation that would deny Labor Party people the right to vote, and that is what this bill is all about. It concerns me that members who have been in Parliament five minutes tell us that the system is wrong.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills): Order! Members of the Opposition will have an opportunity to speak in the debate at the appropriate time. I ask them to cease interjecting.

Mr CLOUGH: I have been a member of Parliament since 1976, except for the period from 1988 to 1991, and I have had a great deal of experience with the Country Party. There have been instances in my electorate when voting has progressed reasonably well and then has doubled in an hour when my scrutineers have not been in attendance. The voting doubles because the Opposition has polling booths established in houses and on farms. I do not believe for one minute that the Opposition members are fair dinkum. I do not believe for one second that they should achieve their goal: to deny Labor Party supporters the right to vote. That is what the legislation is all about. The tales I have told this morning are only a fraction of my experiences at polling booths. The honourable member for Wyong, who lived in my electorate for some time, would support me. The Opposition has tried to rig elections and has tried to get its candidates into Parliament without a majority of votes, and it has failed.

Mr Oakeshott: What are you doing to fix it?

Mr CLOUGH: Whilst the current system has some drawbacks, the measures proposed in the bill are drastic. The Opposition wants the railway fettlers, council workers and post office workers to have proof of identification when they vote. Australia does not have standardised identity cards and the proposal would disadvantage Labor Party voters. Opposition members are a bunch of hypocrites for speaking in the way they have been, given the things that coalition parties—particularly the National Party and the old Country Party—have been up to in recent years, and suggesting a procedure that would deny Labor Party supporters the right to vote.

Mr MacCARTHY (Strathfield) [11.30 a.m.]: One detects a whiff of hypocrisy in the air when the honourable member for Bathurst talks about things that have gone wrong in elections yet chooses not to support a bill such as this, which is designed to correct just one element. Our system of elections is vital to democracy. Reference has been made this morning to countries in which people have fought and died for the right to vote. The democratic right to vote is all about one man or woman, one vote, one value. Anything that lessens that principle is an assault upon democracy. Anything that allows one person's vote to be undermined by fraudulent voting is an attack upon democracy. The honourable member for Bathurst reported at great length on alleged—

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

Debate resumed from 23 October 1997.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [11.31 a.m.], in reply: This motion condemns the Government for misleading the people of New South Wales into believing that there exists a surge in development in New South Wales solely through the efforts of the Labor Government. It recognises the efforts of the coalition Government in facilitating development and investment in this State prior to 25 March 1995. I thank all honourable members who have contributed to the debate: the honourable member for Port Jackson, the Minister for Public Works and Services and the honourable member for Coffs Harbour. I congratulate the honourable member for Coffs Harbour on the character of his presentation, the homework he had done and his recognition of the truth regarding development in New South Wales.

It is undeniable and unarguable that since March 1995 development in New South Wales has stagnated. It is stagnant because of government excesses in charges and government management. Already we have been advised of impending major budget overruns for this year. It has been acknowledged that there will be an overrun of well over \$500 million, although it has not been acknowledged that there will be other budget overruns that will be buried in government departments such as the Department of Health, the Department of Transport and the Department of Public Works and Services. I suspect that we will hear much more about budget overruns due to the Olympic Games. Although the Olympic Games may

be used as a whipping post, I suspect that they may also be contributing to budget overruns.

I gain no comfort in saying so, but it is undeniable that in terms of government imposition—taxes, fees and fines—New South Wales is the most expensive State to live in. This New South Wales Labor Government has its hands further in the pockets of its people than any other government in this country. The cost for someone to live in this State, with the hand of the Carr Government in one's pocket, is \$2,120; in Victoria it is \$1,867; in Queensland it is \$1,320; and in South Australia it is \$837. New South Wales people are disadvantaged purely because of the taxes and charges of the Carr Government. In addition, the Carr Government has whacked on a bed tax of 10 per cent and a poker machines tax of 33 per cent. Land tax—a tax that was supposed to affect only the silvertails—is increasing from 1.65 per cent to 1.85 per cent.

Honourable members would remember the rhetoric about that tax, yet now 85-year-old widows with less than \$10,000 per year disposable income have to pay this iniquitous land tax. The tax affects people across Sydney and up and down the coast of this State and we will shortly find that many people in rural areas will be caught by it. The Premier has as yet failed to recognise that the land tax is a de facto death tax. He has said that payment of the tax can be postponed during one's life and be paid by one's estate. A person does not have to be very smart to work out that the tax is a death tax—it is a tax payable after one's death. People leave to their children their gold watch and chain, the family photographs and Bible and a debt to be paid to the Premier of New South Wales. That is a disgrace.

Gambling revenue from 1994-95 to this year has increased by 30 per cent. In addition to having a hand directly in the pockets of New South Wales taxpayers, the Premier is managing to grab people at the newsagency, with a myriad of gambling devices aimed at taking their small change. It was proposed a few weeks ago that a hotel at the top of Oxford Street would set up a shop full of poker machines—Sydney, the Las Vegas of the South Pacific! There is widespread community concern at all socioeconomic levels, from charity groups right up to the top echelon of business, that gambling in this State has gone too far. We cannot afford the Premier's gambling devices, we cannot afford his tax devices and we cannot afford his failure to create any new jobs. The Premier talks about decentralisation and about jobs going to the bush but he has refused to decentralise. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 43

Mr Armstrong	Mr D. L. Page
Mr Beck	Mr Peacocke
Mr Blackmore	Mr Phillips
Mr Brogden	Mr Photios
Mr Chappell	Mr Rixon
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Rozzoli
Mr Cochran	Mr Schipp
Mr Cruickshank	Mr Schultz
Mr Debnam	Ms Seaton
Mr Ellis	Mrs Skinner
Ms Ficarra	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Glachan	Mr Small
Mr Hartcher	Mr Smith
Mr Hazzard	Mr Souris
Mr Jeffery	Mrs Stone
Dr Kernohan	Mr Tink
Mr MacCarthy	Mr J. H. Turner
Dr Macdonald	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Merton	Mr Windsor
Mr Oakeshott	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr O'Doherty	Mr Fraser
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Kerr

Noes, 48

Ms Allan	Mr Martin
Mr Amery	Ms Meagher
Mr Anderson	Mr Mills
Ms Andrews	Ms Moore
Mr Aquilina	Mr Moss
Mrs Beamer	Mr Nagle
Mr Carr	Mr Neilly
Mr Clough	Ms Nori
Mr Crittenden	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Debus	Mr Price
Mr Face	Dr Refshauge
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Rogan
Ms Hall	Mr Rumble
Mr Harrison	Mr Scully
Ms Harrison	Mr Shedden
Mr Hunter	Mr Stewart
Mr Iemma	Mr Sullivan
Mr Knight	Mr Tripodi
Mr Knowles	Mr Watkins
Mr Langton	Mr Whelan
Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Woods
Mr Lynch	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr McBride	Mr Beckroge
Mr McManus	Mr Thompson
Mr Markham	

Pairs

Mr Collins	Mr Gaudry
Mr Kinross	Mr Gibson
Mr Richardson	Mr Yeadon

Question so resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

Dr MACDONALD (Manly) [11.46 a.m.], by leave: I move the following motion, as amended:

That this House:

- (1) respect the proper process provided for under s.72E of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, and adopt the Standing Ethics Committee's code of conduct for members of the Legislative Assembly, either as tabled, or amended.
- (2) fully debate the Standing Ethics Committee's code of conduct for members of the Legislative Assembly, which is the result of two years' deliberations, and any amendments put forward by the Government, Opposition or any other member on Tuesday, 7 April at 7.30 p.m. with precedence over all other business.

The motion deals with the process of the debate on the Standing Ethics Committee's code of conduct and asks this House to respect the proper process. My call for a code of conduct goes back five years to 1993. In fact, it followed the debacle of the Packard affair involving listening devices in a car salesroom. On 30 August 1993 I held a public meeting in my electorate at Balgowlah Heights at which we debated the need for a code of conduct for members of Parliament. At the meeting Professor Elaine Thompson, a political scientist from the University of New South Wales, said:

Politicians hold positions of extraordinary power and there should be a mechanism in place, such as an ethics committee, to determine a code of conduct for MPs.

I agreed with that at the time. I called for it at the time. That was five years ago. We still do not have a code of conduct in this House. Between 1991 and 1995, when the coalition was in power, serious issues arose from the behaviour of a number of members of Parliament—Smiles, Morris and Griffiths. There are concerns in the House today about the issuing and use of travel warrants. In the Federal Parliament there are concerns about the behaviour of Senator Parer. In the community the debate about appropriate standards is raging. There is public disquiet, which will remain until the House adopts a code that has been prepared under proper process. The opportunity to legislate for the code

came in 1994 when there was a move by the coalition Government to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act, basically to deal with the appointment of Justice O'Keefe.

At that stage I sought agreement of the then Premier that a code of conduct should be developed, and that it should be included under part 9 as a documentary standard against which members of Parliament would be measured. Indeed, new provisions were drafted and supported by the House and they are clearly provided under part 7A of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. In accordance with that part, over two years the Standing Ethics Committee prepared a draft code of conduct for presentation to the Legislative Council. Section 72E clearly states that the committee must give public notice of the time and place the draft may be inspected, publicly exhibit it and specify in the notice the period during which submissions may be made.

All that was done by the committee set up under the amended Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The draft code was tabled in this House on 16 April 1997. The chairman of the committee, the honourable member for Auburn, spoke strongly in that debate, as I did. I indicated in my remarks that the committee worked well together, although it disagreed and argued. I indicated at the time that I wanted to see some strengthening of that draft code, but we found a balance between what one might call an aspirational component, which deals with ethics, and a prescriptive component, which deals with conduct.

The committee included three community members, who gave a lot of time to the preparation of the document, for which we are indebted. Those community members are very angry that there has been a delay of 12 months. That delay did not occur because of a difference between the two Houses, as may be argued today. If the Premier had been serious about getting the code dealt with and adopted, the differences between the two Houses could have been dealt with in five minutes. Any difference between a member of the Labor Party in the upper House and a member of the Labor Party in the lower House could have been dealt with, but there was an indifference. The community members are so angry that yesterday one of them resigned from the committee. Why the delays, why the indifference, and why the inaction?

The code should do three things. Firstly, it should create a culture of accountability, openness and honesty amongst members of Parliament. That is what the public would expect. Secondly, the code

should bring into play section 9(1)(d) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. In other words, it sets a bar on conduct of members of Parliament. That provision relates back to the days when Greiner in a Supreme Court ruling escaped the label of corrupt conduct because the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act did not cover members of Parliament. The Act was amended and now covers members of Parliament. The Act states that if in the case of the conduct of a Minister of the Crown or a member of a House of Parliament a substantial breach of an applicable code of conduct actually occurs, and is a serious breach, the member could be found guilty of corrupt conduct and appropriate sanctions would follow from that. Thirdly, the code should inspire public confidence.

I have some misgivings, which are on record. When this code is debated I will argue the case for some further inclusions, as all member will have a chance to do. At present public confidence is lacking, because members of Parliament do not have any code whatsoever. However, at a minute to midnight the Premier has picked up the public's mood of disquiet and, with no regard for due process, has announced his own code. Last weekend a secret process undertaken by Cabinet, by the Premier—or by someone totally unaccountable—resulted in the Premier announcing his own code. That secret process was in contrast to the process that the committee went through, which included community members, was open and accountable, received submissions and allowed proper exhibition of them.

The committee produced a code, which has been before this Parliament for one year but has not been dealt with. The Premier has blatantly abused due process. I am angry with the Premier because he had every opportunity in the past year to introduce the code, to list it on the business paper. He had that chance, because all the major parties were given a copy of the draft code at the appropriate time, more than a year ago, and they could have commented on it. The Premier is imposing his will on the Parliament. I object to the Executive Government seeking to impose its will on Parliament. Parliament has clearly set out the process of how the code will be prepared, drafted, and ultimately adopted. I reject attempts by the Premier or any other party to seek to impose their code and ignore due process.

I repeat what I said yesterday: I believe that the Premier has acted illegally. His attempt to bring in a Carr code is in breach of section 72E of the Act, to which I have referred. That section prescribes and sets out the proper process. I do not know why the Premier is taking this course. I will

be interested to hear what he has to say. I welcome the fact that he is in the Chamber and wants to speak on this matter. Does he want to look tough in the face of the conduct of members of his Government who are currently under scrutiny? Is it to gain a high moral ground in the face of his party's troubles? Or is it to delay the process further? There is no reason for delay. My amended motion seeks to have this matter dealt with on Tuesday night. If it is, the Premier is welcome to argue the case for elements of his code. I do not want this process delayed; I want it dealt with on Tuesday night. The Premier will have an opportunity to seek to amend the code, which should be debated next week, when every member should have a chance to speak.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills): I welcome to the public gallery members of the Probus Everglades Club of Umina Beach, who are the guests of the honourable member for Peats.

Mr CARR (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs) [11.56 a.m.]: The honourable member for Manly has been badly caught out, because when some weeks ago he heard me announce the Government would be proceeding with the code he assumed that I was talking about his committee's version of the code. On radio 2BL he said the following words, which I want honourable members to listen to carefully. He was talking about the code that emerged from the committee. He said:

And the heart's also not in the fact that the code is very wishy-washy.

That is the code that he is now saying ought to be adopted without an amendment moved by the Government.

Mr O'Farrell: Yours is only wishy.

Mr CARR: The honourable member for Northcott will get a chance to speak later. The honourable member for Manly said that his code is "very wishy-washy". He continued:

I have spoken out previously on this quite strongly, and quite frankly if anyone read the code it is such a lot of, we call it parenthood statements now. A lot of motherhood stuff that frankly, it's so general that it's so non specific. I am very disappointed in it.

That is what he said on radio station 2BL at 8.35 a.m. on Friday, 20 March 1998. He assumed, presumably, that no-one was listening and that no-one had kept a record of it. I was listening and I did

keep a record of it in my files. The honourable member for Manly is now proposing that this House should adopt the code without amendment, a code that, in his own words, is "wishy-washy . . . full of motherhood stuff . . . so general that it's non-specific", and one that he himself is disappointed in. I do not propose that we adopt a code that is wishy-washy, full of motherhood statements, and non-specific, a code that no less than the honourable member for Manly is disappointed in.

I propose that this House adopts a code that is much more specific, a code that sets out clearly and precisely these questions of behaviour. I want a code that is not subjected to constant litigation. I will give an example of what I am talking about and what the honourable member for Manly was talking about when he said "wishy-washy" and general non-specific statements. A draft code of conduct that emanated from the Legislative Council required members to be loyal to Australia and its people. Does the honourable member for Manly seriously propose the adoption of a code with such vague sentiments? Who then would determine whether the behaviour of a member of Parliament has demonstrated loyalty to Australia and its people? Ultimately, it would have to be determined by the Independent Commission Against Corruption or the courts, because it is precisely, no less, the language proposed by the honourable member for Manly: it is general, non-specific, disappointing, and contains motherhood statements.

Mr Amery: You would be expelled for buying a Sanyo TV.

Mr CARR: Exactly. As the Minister for Agriculture said, under that code a member would be expelled from Parliament for buying an imported television. Let us move from the Legislative Council version of the code to the draft that emerged from the Legislative Assembly committee, which is good in many respects. It requires members to endeavour to use their public office to advance the public interest. That is terrific, it is a great sentiment, but I agree with the honourable member for Manly, who says it is a motherhood statement; it is so general, it is non-specific. If we were to adopt a code containing such a clause, ICAC or the courts would have to determine whether the behaviour of a member of Parliament constituted a breach of commitment to advance the public interest. That is too vague. It would simply spawn a hundred court cases seeking to interpret the code. I move the following amendment to the motion moved by the honourable member for Manly:

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

- (1) requires that the Standing Ethics Committee constituted under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act consider the Code of Conduct for Members released by the Government and the Code of Conduct for Members released by the committee itself and report to the House within four weeks;
- (2) agrees that after the tabling of this report from the committee, the House will debate and vote on the adoption of a Code of Conduct for members; and
- (3) send a message to the Legislative Council requesting that the council institute action within a comparable time frame.

In other words, I propose full consultation and debate on this code. If, contrary to that, the Government were to debate this matter next week, it would be criticised for not consulting and not giving the upper House committees time to look at what the Government proposes. The committee's code would be subject to constant litigation on its interpretation. The code has to function as a legal document, and that will effectively enlarge the jurisdiction of ICAC to make findings of corrupt conduct by members of Parliament. It is therefore essential that the code of conduct relates only to matters of corruption and that it defines those matters with precision and clarity.

The draft codes of each House are wide and uncertain in scope—too wide and too uncertain to base the grounds for making a finding of corrupt conduct. This is understandable because the codes are drafted as general codes of ethics to guide members of Parliament. But the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act is not directed at guiding members in their behaviour; it is directed at making findings of corrupt conduct—that is its purpose. Therefore the code should be not a general guide but, rather, a strict set of rules that define the type of behaviour by members that is prohibited because it is corrupt. The requirement in the code that members should advance the public office—which the honourable member for Manly promotes now, but which he attacked on radio 2BL several days ago as a motherhood statement—bears out my point.

The Legislative Council code's requirement of loyalty to Australia would open a raft of litigation and require ICAC to somehow apply an absolutely subjective test. How do we know what interpretation would be drawn from a statement as general as that? The Government acknowledges what Commissioner O'Keefe said in evidence before the committee, and as I do not have time to quote it I simply refer

members to it. Although the code will be administered by the Parliament, it would be dangerous if it were broad and imprecise. We need a code that is short, simple to read and understand, and absolutely clear. The code I propose has been shortened and sharpened, and it focuses on corruption. The code must be drafted with a view to its use and interpretation, not only by the courts but ultimately by ICAC. But I do not have to linger on this. The case for the Government's approach—rather than the admirable draft produced by the committee—was made more eloquently than I can by none other than the honourable member for Manly when he said on radio 2BL that the committee's code was "a parenthood statement", "a lot of motherhood stuff", and "so general that it was non-specific", and concluded by saying he was very disappointed in it. I am now responding to his air of disappointment, I am responding to his criticisms, and I have a draft code that is precise and specific.

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the Leader of the Opposition to speak for 10 minutes.

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [12.07 p.m.]: I thank the Leader of the Government for moving my extension of time, and the House for its indulgence. This is an opportunity for me to comment on the draft code of conduct for members of the Legislative Assembly. A number of points must be made about this code, which is long overdue. Those points have been well made by the honourable member for Manly in the past couple of days. Members of this House have to ask themselves why it is that suddenly the Premier has involved himself in this matter. For the past three years a committee has done a great deal of work in drafting a code of conduct. I acknowledge the work done by the chairman of the committee, the honourable member for Auburn.

It is regrettable that the Premier is not present in the Chamber to hear what I am about to say and to acknowledge the work undertaken by the honourable member for Auburn and all members of that committee, which is dominated, as one would expect, by members of the Carr Government. Why is it that instead of proceeding in an orderly way to debate the committee's draft that the chairman of the committee has tabled, the Premier suddenly usurps the chairman by trying to take over the carriage of the code? That is for one single reason: to try to deflect concern from the woes of the Carr Government, which is under siege on all fronts and which has on its front bench a Minister who simply should not be there.

Coalitions members and, I trust, crossbench members are more than happy to constructively consider the code of conduct and the report brought down under the chairmanship of the honourable member for Auburn, and to try to entrench proper standards for all members of Parliament. We are more than happy to examine all the work that has gone into developing the code of conduct, but we must do so in an atmosphere of good faith. If ever there was legislation that demanded good faith from the outset, this is it. If ever there was something that required the complete and undivided support of all members of Parliament, regardless of faction or party, this is it.

Instead, the Premier is desperate to make it look like everything is under control and that his Government is not in crisis. The Premier grabbed hold of this document, rushed into the House and said, "We have a code of conduct. I stand for principle. I have standards." Where has the Premier been for the past three years? More to the point, what is the honourable member for Kogarah doing on his front bench? The Premier has available to him simple but dramatic and symbolic means of showing that he is fair dinkum about a code of conduct, and I invite him to use them. Honourable members and the citizens of New South Wales know that the Premier should remove the Minister for Fair Trading from the Government front bench as a precursor to the code of conduct being considered. If the Premier does that, all of us will know that he is committed to proper and sincere consideration of this code of conduct and this issue, which has been around for a long time.

Honourable members in this House have been talking about a code of conduct for probably the past seven or eight years. A lot of work has gone into preparing this document. Rather than the Premier using the code of conduct as a shield to deflect attention from his inability to set a standard for his ministry, honourable members should seriously consider and debate the code of conduct in an atmosphere of good faith. I hope that the code will be adopted by all members of Parliament. How can coalition members or, with respect, Government members treat the Premier seriously when he takes a document that has been under serious consideration for three years and makes changes to it? The honourable member for Auburn has spoken to me on more than one occasion to ensure that the code of conduct will be workable and have bipartisan support and that standards will be applied to members of this House?

How can this code of conduct be taken seriously and in good faith when the Premier has

begun the new session with a Minister who has admitted by his own tongue that he lied five times in answer to official inquiries—because it was expedient to do so? The Premier should not use this code of conduct as a shield if he is not prepared to act responsibly and lay down proper standards of credibility, integrity and honesty for his Ministers. If the Premier cannot ensure that proper standards of integrity and credibility are met in an area that is wholly his domain, that is, the appointment of Ministers, this code of conduct is a waste of time. Changes must begin at the top, with the Premier of New South Wales and his Cabinet.

Coalition members are prepared to examine all the work done by honourable members on this code of conduct, but let it be in an atmosphere of good faith, trust and determination to set a standard and to reassure the citizens of New South Wales that people in elevated positions of trust who lie, particularly those holding the rank of Minister in the Cabinet of the day, will be dealt with appropriately. Surely, the standard must start there. If we do not have a standard of integrity and honesty in Cabinet and a Premier who insists on honesty within Cabinet, all of this is a futile gesture.

The coalition will allow debate on the code of conduct to be brought on quickly. The honourable member for Manly said—and we support this—that this matter should be debated fully on the next sitting day, that is, next Tuesday. However, any earnest debate on the detail of a code of conduct that will bind us and future generations of parliamentarians in New South Wales should take place in a clear atmosphere which has not been compromised and for which a standard has been set. I say to the Premier: bring on the debate; do not delay it for weeks. But before the debate is brought on next Tuesday the Premier should tell the people of New South Wales that he is prepared to set proper standards of integrity and honesty. And, before the debate can begin in earnest, the Premier must sack the Minister for Fair Trading; then we will know that he is fair dinkum about a code of conduct for members of Parliament.

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [12.16 p.m.]: I thank Ronda, Helen, Stephanie, Tanya and David for their assistance during the preparation of the committee's report on the draft code of conduct. I also thank the committee members and the community members, Kim Wilson, Stan Hedges and Leonie Tye, for the great work they did. The code of conduct has been prepared in accordance with the Act and the committee's report. The Standing Ethics Committee has reported to the House and therefore it is *functus officio*. The Executive Government has decided to

amend the code and the Premier has rightly brought on the matter for debate. The Premier wants full consultation on the amendments to the code of conduct. As part of the consultation process the Standing Ethics Committee will be reinstituted to examine the proposals and decide whether the code should be adopted by the House. It has always been understood that the code of conduct and how it works will be the domain of this House, which is the ultimate debating chamber in New South Wales.

To be fair, the Premier has given the honourable member for Manly, who did good work on the committee; the honourable member for Northcott; the other committee members and the community members the opportunity to examine his proposal, debate it, and make a recommendation to the House. I support the process proposed by the Premier and I concur with his remarks on some aspects of the draft code, which I tabled in this House last October. The code should be referred back to the committee for further debate, and then to the upper House for its determination on whether it agrees with this House's draft. As chairman of the committee I support the Premier's amendment. I look forward in committee to hearing the contributions of the honourable member for Northcott and the honourable member for Manly on whether the code of conduct proposed by the Premier should be adopted by this House. I commend the motion and the amendment to the House.

Mr TINK (Eastwood) [12.20 p.m.]: The Government's draft code of conduct and the Premier's amendment are about one thing only: protecting the investment of the Minister for Police in hotels that are valued collectively at \$10 million. He has interests in the Orient Hotel, the Mercantile Hotel and the Hunters Hill Hotel, which are valued at \$4 million, \$2 million and \$3.3 million respectively. The Orient Hotel was described by the Bureau of Crime and Research Statistics as the number one crime hot spot in The Rocks. If it is not a conflict of interest for the New South Wales Minister for Police to have an interest in hotels—

Mr Nagle: On a point of order. The House is debating the motion of the honourable member for Manly and the amendment moved by the Premier. It is not relevant for the honourable member for Eastwood, who is the Opposition spokesman on police matters, to try to put on trial the Minister for Police. The honourable member and his colleagues are seeking to conduct a witch-hunt in an unrelated debate. He should speak to the report on the draft

code of conduct, the motion of the honourable member for Manly and the amendment moved by the Premier. I ask you to direct him to do that.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough): Order! I am somewhat puzzled by the remarks of the honourable member for Eastwood. The House is discussing a draft code of conduct and the honourable member should speak to the motion and the amendment.

Mr TINK: Paragraph 4 of the draft code of conduct states:

Members whose private financial interests give rise to a conflict with the public interest must take all reasonable steps to resolve that conflict.

That means—

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Eastwood may speak only to the motion and the amendment.

Mr TINK: Both the motion of the honourable member for Manly and the amendment of the Premier refer to the draft code of conduct about which I am talking. The code says that members must take all reasonable steps to resolve conflict; that such steps are to include, but not be limited to, the statement of the conflict. The Government's proposed code of conduct says simply that the statement of conflict is enough to constitute a reasonable step in the resolution. My point is that there is a glaring and dramatic difference between the two codes of conduct as to whether the mere statement that a conflict of interest exists is sufficient or whether all reasonable steps should be taken to resolve the conflict.

For that reason the committee's code of conduct is stronger. I agree with the honourable member for Manly that it is the only code that can reasonably and lawfully be considered by the Parliament under the Act. I would like to know whether the Premier's proposed code was considered by Cabinet and, if so, whether the Minister for Police took part in those discussions. If he did, there would be a double conflict, and he should disqualify himself from any further participation. It is pertinent for us to know the answers to those questions because the Premier wants the Parliament to consider his Government's draft code. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask whether proper procedures were followed in Cabinet regarding the declaration of any conflict of interest and the disqualification of individuals with a conflict.

Until those questions are answered, I will suspect that this draft code is tainted by a conflict of interest. I want to know absolutely and affirmatively that the Minister for Police was not involved in any discussions relating even to the consideration by the Parliament of this draft code of conduct. What the Commissioner of Police cannot do, the Minister for Police also should not be able to do. The Minister for Police has an interest in a hotel that is the number one crime hot spot at The Rocks. That is a manifest conflict of interest that requires no further elaboration. The committee's code requires that that conflict be resolved. The Premier's code would simply require the Minister for Police to state, as he does now, the conflict, and that would be the end of the matter. That is untenable and disgraceful.

Mr O'FARRELL (Northcott) [12.25 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to speak in this debate. The Leader of the Opposition made a germane point: where has the Premier been for the past three years? Towards the end of 1994 amendments were moved to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act to allow the development of a draft code of conduct. For three years, under the leadership of the honourable member for Auburn, the committee undertook substantial work in composing a draft code of conduct. As the honourable member for Manly said, the progress of that draft code of conduct was reported to this place a year ago. For the past 12 months the Premier has been silent.

I clearly recall conversations with the honourable member for Auburn last year in which he reported that the three party leaders—the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the National Party and the Leader of the Labor Party—had signed off, to use his words, on the Legislative Assembly's standing committee's draft code. Indeed, ICAC indicated its satisfaction with the committee's proposed code. Again I remind the House, as the honourable member for Auburn often does, that the Standing Ethics Committee was unique because three of its nine members were community representatives, and all of them agreed with this code.

The draft code that was tabled last year, which the Premier now seeks to overturn, was agreed to by the committee with only one dissenter—the honourable member for Manly. It ill behoves the Premier to take cheap shots at the honourable member for Manly because he endeavoured to toughen up the code. It should not be forgotten that six members of the Labor Party, representing both Labor factions, put their signatures to a document that was considered to be an appropriate code of

conduct that members must follow. The honourable member for Auburn could not address that issue and other Labor members of the committee have not dared to show their faces in this Chamber to address it.

The committee's code was an aspirational code and not a prescriptive code. The committee was critical of a prescriptive code. The honourable member for Cabramatta supported my concern about a prescriptive code because it would contain grey areas. Members of Parliament are human and humans are an inventive lot. If we want to circumvent rules, we can. Therefore, if specific rules are made, members will seek to act outside them. If the code is aspirational, the spotlight will be on each of us 24 hours a day in everything we do. The Premier's code is prescriptive and relates solely to five areas; and therefore there would be five spotlights. There would be black and grey areas between those spotlights, and that will get members of Parliament into trouble every time. That is why we should operate under the full glare of one huge spotlight.

As the honourable member for Eastwood said, if the beer that the Minister for Police sold in his hotels were as weak as this code he would lose his licence. Like a police force, a code cannot be effective unless those to whom it applies are supportive of it. The events of this week have shown that those at the highest levels on the other side of the House—and I exclude six members from this statement until they speak otherwise—have absolutely no commitment to an effective code of conduct. On Monday Cabinet was clearly corrupt and every member who was present at the Cabinet meeting was corrupt.

Mrs Lo Po': That is outrageous.

Mr O'FARRELL: You sought to reduce the influence of the Independent Commission Against Corruption upon your operations. That is clearly corrupt. Were the honourable member for Auburn and the other members of the committee parties to that conspiracy? On Monday Cabinet clearly sought to water down a code of conduct that would cause problems for the Government and the Executive Government. If that is not corruption, I have no idea what corruption is. Those at the highest levels on the other side of the House have no real commitment to a code of conduct or, as honourable members saw yesterday, to ICAC. Members on the other side of the House hate scrutiny. They love to get their hands on power and to misuse it, but they hate to have any checks imposed on that power. Those who do not believe me should look at the writings of Graham

Richardson, and at what Neville Wran said when the Independent Commission Against Corruption was established. This is a pea-and-thimble trick. Where has the Premier been for the past three years? Why was it good enough for him to agree to the code in his words last year but object to it now? I support the motion.

Dr MACDONALD (Manly) [12.30 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their contribution to the debate. It has become very clear that the amendment is an attempt by Executive Government to impose its will on Parliament and on proper parliamentary processes. The Premier began by attacking me about the remarks I had made on radio. It is no secret that I believe the code needs to be strengthened and made more specific. I have never sought to do other than declare my concern in that regard. I stand by remarks I made on radio. Honourable members who read the report of the committee, which was published in October, will see that it is scattered with references to me disagreeing in relation to this or that matter. I did not have the numbers and the members of the committee often did not support my view. I have made no secret of the fact that I want to table amendments. Indeed, on 8 April last year I tabled a series of amendments that will strengthen the code and make it more specific.

I have been a critic of the code. However, I am not a critic of the process. The process followed by the committee has been absolutely proper. The amendments have been on the business paper for 12 months. That is why I object to the Premier attacking me personally and arguing that in some way I am being hypocritical. The Premier would know that for 12 months I have been expressing my concern and that the amendments have been on the business paper for that length of time. I sought to have included in the preamble to the code a comment about members representing the views of their constituents and facilitating their participation in democratic decision making. I went a lot further than the committee in relation to conflict of interest. I argued that members who had a conflict of interest should resolve that conflict within six months. The committee did not agree with that and decided that the phrase "reasonable steps" was appropriate. The Premier has now watered that down even further.

I am clearly on the record as saying I want the code strengthened in relation to the so-called Metherell issue, that is, when a member seeks to vacate his seat in return for some reward. That was the subject of a recommendation by the ICAC commissioner but the committee rejected it. I am on the record as saying I want that recommendation

included. When the debate on this matter takes place I will put my arguments on the record as to why the code should be strengthened. If the Premier has difficulties with the code he should have attempted to have it strengthened at the appropriate time; he should not have attempted to usurp the process. My argument is supported by the Auditor-General, who wrote to the chairman of the committee in January, raising his concerns about omissions from the code, particularly transparency of decision making. I want to include in the preamble a statement about transparency of decision making. The Auditor-General linked that to the parliamentary superannuation debacle that occurred shortly before Christmas.

The amendment moved by the Premier is in clear conflict with the Act. Nothing in section 72E provides for the Standing Ethics Committee to meet again to consider the Government's code and the code that has been recommended by the committee. Section 72E(3) is specific about the process. The Act does not provide for the committee to be reconstituted to consider a code that has come from outfield. Why should it? Does that mean that any member of Parliament could introduce his or her own version of a code of conduct and insist that it be considered by the committee? No. Executive Government is seeking to take over the proper role of Parliament. The committee's job has been completed. There is no reason why it should be reconstituted, other than for matters such as education or to reconsider the code of conduct in two years and, if necessary, to review it.

If the amendment moved by the Premier is carried, the code will be in clear defiance of the law. I repeat that the Premier is seeking to usurp the role of the committee. He is seeking to force a committee on which Labor has the numbers to accept his watered-down code. I hope that the community members of the committee will vote against this amendment when the committee is reconstituted. This is not the proper process and the committee should not consider the Premier's code of conduct. If the Premier has something to say, let us have a robust debate on Tuesday night and if he has the numbers the amendment will be successful. A number of members on the Opposition side of the House have demonstrated precisely how the code has been watered down. The Premier's code contained nothing about honesty. The method of resolving conflict of interest has been watered down as well. I reject the amendment and I seek the support of the House for my motion.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.**Ayes, 47**

Ms Allan	Mr Markham
Mr Amery	Mr Martin
Mr Anderson	Ms Meagher
Ms Andrews	Mr Mills
Mr Aquilina	Mr Moss
Mrs Beamer	Mr Nagle
Mr Carr	Mr Neilly
Mr Clough	Ms Nori
Mr Crittenden	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Debus	Mr Price
Mr Face	Dr Refshauge
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Rogan
Ms Hall	Mr Rumble
Mr Harrison	Mr Scully
Ms Harrison	Mr Shedden
Mr Hunter	Mr Stewart
Mr Iemma	Mr Sullivan
Mr Knight	Mr Tripodi
Mr Knowles	Mr Watkins
Mr Langton	Mr Whelan
Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Woods
Mr Lynch	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr McBride	Mr Beckroge
Mr McManus	Mr Thompson

Noes, 45

Mr Armstrong	Mr O'Farrell
Mr Beck	Mr D. L. Page
Mr Blackmore	Mr Peacocke
Mr Brogden	Mr Phillips
Mr Chappell	Mr Photios
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Richardson
Mr Cochran	Mr Rixon
Mr Collins	Mr Rozzoli
Mr Ellis	Mr Schipp
Ms Ficarra	Ms Seaton
Mr Glachan	Mrs Skinner
Mr Hartcher	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Hazzard	Mr Small
Mr Humpherson	Mr Smith
Mr Jeffery	Mr Souris
Dr Kernohan	Mrs Stone
Mr Kinross	Mr Tink
Mr MacCarthy	Mr J. H. Turner
Dr Macdonald	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Merton	Mr Windsor
Ms Moore	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Oakeshott	Mr Fraser
Mr O'Doherty	Mr Kerr

Pairs

Mr Gaudry	Mr Cruickshank
Mr Gibson	Mr Debnam
Mr Yeadon	Mr Schultz

Question so resolved in the affirmative.**Amendment agreed to.****Motion as amended agreed to.****INFRASTRUCTURE ADVISORY BOARD****Notice of motion called on, and postponed by Mr Debnam.****SYDNEY SHOWGROUND LEASE DOCUMENTATION**

Ms FICARRA (Georges River) [12.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this House condemns the Premier's failure to surrender to the Auditor-General all documents relating to the showground lease and calls upon the Premier to do so forthwith.

My motion of condemnation relates to the Premier's failure to surrender to the Auditor-General all documents relating to the showground lease. Although the Auditor-General's report has been published, the motion is still important because the community has a right to be heard. Members of the public are incensed about the process that resulted in the lease of the showground. An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 December 1997 had this to say about the Auditor-General's report:

Sydney's historic Showground was delivered to Mr Rupert Murdoch's Fox Studios without competition or proper assessment of the economic benefit to the State and is expected to cost NSW taxpayers up to \$106.8 million . . . The NSW Auditor-General, Mr Tony Harris, says in the report that the State Government should have justified publicly not only why normal tender processes were suspended to give advantage to a "specific entity", but why this would have been in the State's best interests.

"Such a justification is of particular value when, as in this case, the recipient of the government advantage or a related entity is able to confer, and has in the past conferred, political benefits to governments and political parties.

"The truncation of any competitive process as a matter of government policy means there can be no assurances that the arrangements finalised in the one-to-one negotiations achieved the best arrangements for the State."

. . .

The 175-page report, tabled in State Parliament [on 8 December 1997] accepts that the redevelopment of the Showground into a film and television studio complex is "likely to provide a net economic benefit to NSW" but concludes that the bill to taxpayers will be considerably higher than Government assessments.

The audit found that the Government began the process to lease and redevelop the Showground on the premise that no

public funds be provided and that no "theme park activities" be allowed.

"In the event, a State Government subsidy of between \$84.8 million and \$106.8 million in net present value terms is to be provided for the development . . . "

"The area of the Showground to be leased to Fox was extended to comprise 24.3 hectares of the 28.8 hectare site to allow Fox also to develop a family entertainment park."

The audit revealed that State subsidies to Fox include:

Payment of payroll tax and land tax for Fox until 2005.

Payment of stamp duty and legal costs on the RAS leases.

Rent discounts estimated at \$18.1 million.

Engineering works on the Hordern Pavilion and Royal Hall of Industries.

The costs of relocating the RAS as well as temporary structures at Homebush Bay.

The report also found that Fox's unwillingness to compete in a tender, combined with the promise in 1994 by Mr Paul Keating to hand over the site to News Corporation, made the process "most difficult for the Government of NSW".

A number of significant players have been involved in this matter. The former Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating, played a significant role in setting up the parameters of government action in New South Wales. However, that is no excuse for the current Government, which worked hand in hand with Paul Keating in the formulation of all his wonderful plans. The article continued:

As well, the probity auditor appointed by the Government to oversee the Showground process advised the Audit Office that "he does not consider that he conducted a probity audit of the Expressions of Interest process, bearing in mind the limited scope of work performed and the duration of involvement".

So, the probity auditor is saying that even he was not given the opportunity to do his job properly. The whole process has been damning from beginning to end. Who would ever again trust the Government with any public asset or with the public purse strings? Thus far I have dealt only with the showground. What about Circular Quay and the mismanagement in various other portfolios? The list goes on and on. The editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 9 December stated:

It is not surprising then that the Premier has been quick to dismiss the more sensitive conclusions of the NSW Auditor-General, Mr Tony Harris, in his performance audit report on the leasing of the Sydney Showground, Moore Park, to Fox Studios Australia. These conclusions criticise the Government's decision to scrap the tender process and to deal directly with Mr Rupert Murdoch's company in choosing to lease the Showground to Fox. "This is the Auditor-General indulging himself by expressing personal opinions, personal political opinions," Mr Carr said. . .

What a joke! The lease of the showground has affected more than only those who live in the area that surrounds it. The showground site is an historical heritage site that belongs to everyone in New South Wales and, indeed, Australia. So, many people throughout the State were interested in the lease of the showground. Circular Quay is another such site. The people of New South Wales—environmentalists, those involved with heritage issues, and ordinary Australians, who thought the showground belonged to them and to their children—will not accept the way the showground was granted to Fox. Indeed, the Auditor-General found that Fox was the recipient of Government advantage. Mr Harris was critical of the way the Government conducted the negotiations leading to the decision to lease the showground to Fox. He found that the negotiations began on the basis that no government money would be provided, no theme park activities would be allowed, and no party would be placed above another. He found that process was flawed and the resulting deal was not necessarily the best outcome for the State. That was a strong and disturbing conclusion.

The showground site has a long and proud heritage. It was part of Governor Macquarie's 1811 bequest of 360 hectares of land for the benefit of the present and succeeding inhabitants of Sydney. Basically, the system was rorted. As I said, Paul Keating had his finger in the pie, as well as the Premier, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. The whole matter has been mishandled from the beginning. The public has learned that it cannot trust the Carr Government with public land or the heritage of this city or this State. The soul-destroying alienation of precious public land for private profit is another big nail in the coffin of the Carr Government.

It seems that we will not be able to fulfil Sir Henry Parkes' vision of incorporating the whole of Centennial Park, Moore Park, Queens Park and the showground into a grand recreational space for the people of Sydney. Such a vision would have had public support. However, the Carr Government has bequeathed to the nation this incredible entertainment-theme park that will yield little financial return to the people of New South Wales. The process was flawed. The manner in which it was conducted was probably on the verge of being corrupt. No public consultation took place. One should also remember the number of professional submissions received. I commend Kevin Gibbons, who represented the residents of Centennial Park in the High Court challenge. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 13 December said:

The Auditor-General has let the hounds out of the yard and with their keen noses, their prey will eventually be brought to ground.

This matter will not be forgotten. In the lead-up to the next election in March, this and other significant planning and heritage issues will be dealt with again. The heritage of the New South Wales was sold out to private interests with minimal return. It has now gone for ever. The people of New South Wales will not let the Government forget it. [*Time expired.*]

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Anderson.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mrs Lo Po' agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone consideration of Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) at this sitting.

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

ADOPTION PRACTICES

Ministerial Statement

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [2.15 p.m.]: I am pleased to advise the House that late yesterday afternoon I referred to the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues the following reference:

That the Standing Committee on Social Issues inquire into and report on the professional practices in the administration and delivery of adoption and related services, particularly those services relating to the taking of consents, offered to birth parents and children in New South Wales from 1950 to 1988.

Whether adoption practices during this time involved unethical and unlawful practices and/or practices that denied birth parents access to non adoption alternatives for their child; and

If so, what measures would assist persons experiencing distress due to such adoption practices.

I advise the House that shortly after I assumed this portfolio I agreed to meet a delegation of individuals and members of Parliament who had raised concerns about this issue. I found their stories both harrowing and moving. I do not wish to pre-empt the inquiry; however, I, and plainly other members of this House, have been approached and impressed by the depth of feeling that these women have for this

issue. I will not take the time of the House now to relate a cross-section of their stories, which appropriately will be the subject of the committee inquiry, but it certainly seems as though these are not isolated incidents. I have been told that many hundreds, if not thousands, of women are to this day experiencing emotional distress as a result of their experiences.

It is incumbent on governments to deal with this important matter. These people approached the Commonwealth and other State governments appealing for an inquiry but their pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Consequently, I agreed to their request for an inquiry into all matters surrounding the alleged removal of children during the adoption process. This is a further example of the Carr Government listening to people. It will give many of these women the chance for the first time to air their grievances publicly or in private, according to their individual preference, and to be heard and acknowledged by a parliamentary committee.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [2.18 p.m.]: Stolen white babies is an important social issue. Those on whom it impacted came from diverse social, economic and religious backgrounds, but they have all suffered in their own way. These children were not only taken from their families; in the process they lost their rights as individuals. It not only affected the children; it affected the mothers who were forced to sign adoption papers to give up their children. During the period when this occurred—from 1965 to 1973—women who had their children taken were offered no information on adoption. The mothers did not give informed consent and were not offered alternatives or financial assistance. Some mothers were even forced to sign adoption papers when they were in a drugged state. The coalition supports the inquiry by the Standing Committee on Social Issues into stolen white babies.

AUSTRALIAN SHEARERS HALL OF FAME

Ministerial Statement

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Rural Affairs) [2.20 p.m.]: Earlier today I met with Mr Rod McCully, a member of the Australian Shearers Hall of Fame Committee. The committee proposes to establish an international tourist attraction and working museum at Hay which will recognise the shearing profession and the historic role played by the wool industry. On Tuesday this week I was pleased to announce that the Government will help to fund the feasibility study of that proposal. Hay,

which lies in the heart of Australian merino country, is considered an ideal location to pay tribute to shearers, past and present. The hall of fame will include working displays and static exhibitions of woolsheds and shearing equipment, and host memorabilia incorporating associated aspects such as sheep husbandry, droving, and wool broking and marketing. It will also look to market wool-related products. After my meeting with Mr McCully today I am pleased to say that I support the hall of fame concept.

The potential benefits of the hall of fame would be significant. Committee members have been speaking to operators of the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach, which will serve as a model for the proposal at Hay. The Stockman's Hall of Fame averages 65,000 visitors annually from 350,000 passing travellers. Hay is known as the Riverina's gateway to the outback and has 675,000 people passing through it annually. On any reasonable comparison with Longreach the shearers hall of fame has the capacity to attract 100,000 visitors a year. The hall of fame's obvious benefits are jobs, investment and income for the region. On 11 March the Leader of the National Party said that the project was "going begging" because I would not fund the feasibility study. He knew that the application was being assessed but he launched his tawdry attack anyway and, once again, he was wrong.

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [2.21 p.m.]: As the grandson of a shearer—

[Interruption]

The Government members who are laughing are denigrating my family. They are a pack of hypocrites; they are grubs. My grandfather was a shearer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is entitled to the same respect as other members when he replies to a ministerial statement. Members of the Government should extend to Opposition members the same degree of courtesy as they expect to receive.

Mr COLLINS: As the proud grandson of a shearer, I support the establishment of the Australian Shearers Hall of Fame. The Leader of the National Party kick-started the Government into action when he raised the matter in a media release on 11 March. Otherwise, the Government would never have done anything about it because, as all honourable members know, it is busy opening offices around the State. Obviously, Government members are slow learners because they have taken a long time to

respond and to support this project. The Opposition supports the project. I lend my support to it as Leader of the Opposition and in the proud memory of my grandfather. [*Time expired.*]

MINISTRY

Mr CARR: I advise the House that during the absence of the Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Forestry, Minister for Ports, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney questions relating to his portfolios will be answered by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order.

PETITIONS

Governor of New South Wales

Petitions praying that the office of Governor of New South Wales not be downgraded, and that the role, duties and future of the office be determined by a referendum, received from **Mr Blackmore, Mr Brogden, Mrs Chikarovski, Mr Collins, Mr Debnam, Ms Ficarra, Mr Glachan, Mr Hartcher, Mr Hazzard, Mr Humpherson, Dr Kernohan, Mr Kerr, Mr MacCarthy, Mr Merton, Mr Oakeshott, Mr O'Doherty, Mr O'Farrell, Mr Photios, Mr Richardson, Mr Rozzoli, Mr Schipp, Mr Shultz, Ms Seaton, Mrs Skinner, Mr Smith and Mr Tink.**

Wagga Wagga and Albury Radiotherapy Clinics

Petition praying that the Minister for Health endorse the Patspur Pty Ltd proposal to establish radiotherapy clinics at Wagga Wagga and Albury, received from **Mr Schipp.**

Ryde Hospital

Petition praying that Ryde Hospital and its services be retained, received from **Mr Tink.**

Lakes Way Link Road

Petition praying that the Government reinstate its commitment to the construction of the link road from the new Bulahdelah Mountain bypass to the Lakes Way, received from **Mr J. H. Turner.**

Coffs Harbour Jetty

Petition praying that a platform be constructed on Coffs Harbour jetty for the purposes of jetty jumping, received from **Mr Fraser.**

Pig Hunting

Petitions praying against proposed changes to legislation to ban the use of dogs in pig hunting, received from **Mr Blackmore, Dr Kernohan** and **Mr Schipp**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION LOUIS BAYEH INVESTIGATION

Mr COLLINS: My question is directed to the Premier. As the Minister responsible for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, does he support statements made by the honourable member for Londonderry in the House yesterday that ICAC is "casting an intimidatory shadow over this Parliament"? Given that 20 per cent of his lower House members are now before ICAC, will he tell the House whether he supports ICAC or the honourable member for Londonderry?

Mr CARR: "The ICAC is a mechanism whereby the innocent have become the guilty and people of integrity have become perceived as crooked." Who said those words? Oh, yes, honourable members realise that I am quoting someone. It was Michael Yabsley who said that, on 26 June 1992. I have a pile of such quotations attacking ICAC from the coalition.

Mr Collins: On a point of order. I asked the Premier for his view about whether he supports ICAC—

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

Mr CARR: I support ICAC and I always have, and I have always expressed that support—not least in the past week. There is a pile of quotations from me in support of ICAC. It is no wonder that Nick Greiner and the rest—Yabsley, for example—attacked ICAC, because according to Government records 13 of them at different times were summonsed down there.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Pittwater to order.

Mr CARR: The Government could not catch up with the coalition for improprieties—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Pittwater to order for the second time.

Mr CARR: There is a coalition list that runs almost from A to Z. The improprieties under the previous Government run from Beck to Zammit—a conga line of coalition corruption.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr CARR: It is the magic mile of misbehaviour.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the National Party to order.

Mr CARR: The Government carried out a little research this morning. The Leader of the Opposition, defending Greiner and Moore's right not only to attack ICAC but to go to court challenging ICAC, said, "It is not for me or, I suggest, for any of us here present—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Southern Highlands to order.

Mr CARR: —to intrude too deeply into those matters before the court." He went on to say, "I can say that both the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai", that is, Greiner, "and the honourable member for Gordon", also known as Moore, "like any citizen aggrieved by the findings of a statutory tribunal, are perfectly entitled to test those findings."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ermington to order.

Mr CARR: The Leader of the Opposition speaks about allegations made against the Minister for Fair Trading before ICAC. Government research reveals that none other than the coalition's shadow minister for lands was before ICAC and accused before ICAC and before ICAC changed his earlier testimony.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Vaucluse to order. I call the honourable member for Davidson to order.

Mr CARR: He amended his earlier evidence that he had arranged ministerial meetings for "an alleged graft bagman", saying that he now believed that he had only intended to arrange the meetings. The coalition has rewarded him. That information is contained in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 22 November 1989.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Wakehurst on two calls to order.

Mr Hartcher: On a point of order. The quotation of newspapers is covered by the standing orders, as you are aware. The Premier is required to vouch not only for the source of a quotation, which he did, but also for its accuracy, which he has not done. I request that you ask the Premier to vouch for the veracity and accuracy of the quotation he has just made.

Mr CARR: I verify the accuracy of the report. In all the reports contained in what is to us a journal of record, illuminating our lives on a daily basis, I am able to vouch in particular for the accuracy of this report because, as Leader of the Opposition of the time, I took a keen interest in it.

Mr Cochran: On a point of order.

Mr CARR: I seek leave to table the report.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I shall first hear the point of order the honourable member for Monaro wishes to raise.

Mr Cochran: Mr Speaker, yesterday you spoke quite correctly about the integrity of this House. This is a serious matter before the House. The Premier is trivialising things, to the great discredit of the House.

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

Mr CARR: I shall give a final example, also from the ICAC inquiry into north coast land deals in 1989. It is no wonder that coalition members are getting uncomfortable; the bloke implicated was made shadow minister for lands by them.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Davidson to order for the second time.

Mr CARR: During that inquiry the Minister for—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! All members who have been called to order are now on three calls to order.

Mr CARR: During that inquiry the Minister for Natural Resources, Mr Causley, had tendered "untrue" evidence that was "plainly wrong" to ICAC, according to the senior counsel assisting the commission. That was the Minister of the day.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A moment ago I placed all members who had been called to order on

three calls to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition then immediately interrupted deliberately. I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him from the Chamber.

[The honourable member for Miranda left the Chamber, accompanied by the Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mr Hartcher: Mr Speaker, would you read out the names of those members who were—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gosford is entitled to make a request of the Chair, although the Chair will not necessarily accede to any such request. If a member interjects, he or she should listen immediately for a call to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition had been called to order earlier in question time. In the past the practice has always been for the Whip to approach the Chair, ask which members have been called to order and then inform those members of that fact. It is not for the Chair to undertake the role normally performed by the Whip.

Mr CARR: My consistent support for ICAC since the legislation establishing it in 1998 is well known. It stands in vivid contrast to the welter of criticisms of ICAC that emerged from the coalition side of politics immediately after the decision of ICAC in the Metherell affair, and even before that in the case of the inquiry into corruption in north coast land deals. I again make the point that the Leader of the Opposition has given ministerial responsibility for lands to the person in this House today who was implicated the most in those inquiries.

Mr O'Doherty: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, it is a well-established principle of this House that if the Premier or any other member wants to make an attack on a member he does so not in answer to a question but by way of a substantive motion so that the member attacked can respond. The Premier has made the attack twice during his answer to a question. I ask you to uphold the principles of this House as they relate to the privileges of members which you are sworn to protect.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kuring-gai knows that any member who feels aggrieved by the statement of a Minister or any other member may seek leave at the conclusion of question time to make a personal explanation. That has been the practice since I became a member of this Chamber.

DRINK-DRIVING

Mr HARRISON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Police. What is the Government doing to tackle the problem of drink-drivers?

Mr WHELAN: Over the past two days the Premier and I have outlined how the Government and the Police Service are working together to make our community safer. The Government's plan is comprehensive. It is designed to deliver more police to provide better protection, to remove dangerous weapons from our community, to get the Police Service back to basics—

Mr Hartcher: On a point of order. The Minister is outlining to the House a plan by the Government to undertake—

Mr Harrison: He is answering my question.

Mr Hartcher: In response to a question from the honourable member for Kiama; that is not denied. But the fact is that the Minister's answer constitutes a statement of Government policy which, under the standing orders, clearly falls within the province of a ministerial statement, which would allow the excellent shadow minister for police to reply. The Minister should have the courage to make a ministerial statement and allow a reply. He should not hide behind a question from the honourable member for Kiama.

Mr Harrison: On the point of order. I asked a specific question about what Government action has been taken on the subject of drink-drivers. I am totally satisfied with the response that I am receiving from the Minister for Police.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that the question, which seeks precise details, was, "What is the Government doing to tackle the problem of drink-drivers?" The answer given thus far by the Minister is in accordance with the standing orders.

Mr WHELAN: As I said, the Government's plan is comprehensive. It is designed: to deliver more police to provide better protection; to remove dangerous weapons from our community; to get the Police Service back to basics; and to use effective smart policing strategies to target crime problems. Part of our plan involves introducing smarter techniques to solve difficult problems. Since 1995 the road toll has steadily declined. In 1995 there were 620 fatalities, in 1996 there were 581, and last

year there were 576—still far too many. That is why this Government believes that it can still try harder to make our roads safer. Last week media reports highlighted the case of a doctor who failed three random breath tests in one night. After failing a breath test at Silverwater he failed another at Padstow and then a third at Alford's Point. Police warned the motorist not to drive but unfortunately he ignored this good advice. Luckily, the driver in question did not injure or kill himself or others.

Honourable members will also recall the case last year in which five drink-drivers were caught driving the same car. During Operation Backroads police on the northern tablelands stopped one car five times in 20 hours. Each time a different person was charged with drink-driving. Again, it was pure chance that a tragedy did not result. However, I am afraid that drink-driving tragedies are still too frequent. Random breath testing has been an extremely effective anti-drink-driving strategy. In 1997 the Police Service conducted nearly 2.5 million random breath tests and 17,994 drink-driving charges were laid. Tragically, 100 people still died on our roads in alcohol-related accidents.

To complement RBT the Police Service needs smarter options to reduce drink-driving deaths on the roads. That is why I asked the Police Service to advise me on what we could do to save drink-drivers from themselves. A simple yet effective proposal was put forward to give police the power to confiscate the car keys of a person impaired by drugs or alcohol. That was supported by the Police Service. The Police Service and the RTA are currently preparing legislation to make this proposal law. The message is simple: if you drink and drive you are putting yourself and others at risk. If you drink and drive you will face a hefty penalty, will probably lose your licence and could end up in gaol. If you drink and drive, police can take your car keys to protect other road users—and to protect you from yourself.

The new law will mean that a police officer will have more options to deal with drink-drivers, including forbidding a person to drive a vehicle, requiring a person to hand over his or her car keys and giving the car keys to another person who is capable of driving the vehicle. Police will be able to keep the car keys only for as long as necessary to protect the driver from himself or herself. Similar laws already exist in Tasmania and Victoria. Those laws are being examined in the preparation of New South Wales legislation to ensure that the New South Wales laws are comprehensive and effective. In fact, car key confiscation laws have been in place

for over 30 years in those two States. Neither State has indicated any problem with the laws. Both have advised that the laws are acceptable to the public and to the police. That is why I was surprised to learn from the Police Service traffic services branch that the former Government rejected this proposal. It was "too hard". It was "too much trouble". The Government believes that it should take all possible steps to make our roads safer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Lane Cove to order for the second time.

Mr WHELAN: That is why we have passed anti-hoon legislation to take drag racers off our roads, made road rage a crime, doubled demerit points over certain long weekends and given police new technology such as laser speed detection devices and new breath testing equipment and ensured police conduct a range of ongoing and one-off road safety operations. The Government has made safety on our roads a priority. Today's announcement fulfils yet another commitment to the people of New South Wales. My colleague the Minister for Roads and I are working together to ensure that police and the RTA have an effective, comprehensive road safety strategy in place.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION LOUIS BAYEH INVESTIGATION

Mr ARMSTRONG: As the Premier has refused to give an answer twice already, will he now tell the House when he was told that the honourable member for Londonderry was being investigated by ICAC over his links with the crime figure Louis Bayeh? Was he lying on Saturday when he said that he did not know who was being investigated?

Mr CARR: I stand absolutely by the answer I gave in this House on 31 March.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION MINISTER FOR FAIR TRADING INVESTIGATION

Mr J. H. TURNER: I address my question to the Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Emergency Services. How does the Minister explain his hypocrisy in attacking a company for lying, issuing false invoices and false billing just three weeks before he admitted to ICAC that he lied five times about his travel claims? Can the Minister give an honest answer to this question?

Mr LANGTON: I stand by the answer that I gave to this House yesterday.

K-6 ENGLISH SYLLABUS

Mr STEWART: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs. What is the Government doing to lift literacy standards and to improve the teaching of English?

Mr AQUILINA: Today the Premier and I had much pleasure in launching the new English syllabus for kindergarten to year six. This K-6 English syllabus represents a major element of the Government's approach to improving literacy standards for all children in the State. The release of the syllabus complements the placement of 400 reading resource teachers and the additional \$110 million funding for literacy over the past two years. The English syllabus is also firm evidence of the Government's commitment to high-quality primary education.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Earlier this week I ordered the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Ku-ring-gai from the Chamber. His continual interruptions invite me to repeat that order. I place him on three calls to order.

Mr AQUILINA: The honourable member for Ku-ring-gai raised the issue of school report cards. I put to him that at least the Government is doing something positive about school report cards, unlike the confused approach by the Opposition. In this Chamber on 11 November 1997 the honourable member said, "The coalition does not want to produce league tables, and it never did when it was in government." His colleague the honourable member for The Hills said, "The former Government resiled from publishing . . . league tables." And today the Leader of the Opposition said that a coalition government would consider a reporting system which ranked schools on the basis of their performance. In other words, the Leader of the Opposition wants league tables and his shadow minister does not. What a confused approach!

Earlier this week the coalition adopted a flip-flop, waffling approach to the back-to-school allowance and indicated that it did not know whether it would scrap it, keep it or change it. Today we have seen another division between the Leader of the Opposition and his shadow minister about the annual school reports. The Leader of the Opposition wants league tables, the shadow minister does not. The honourable member for Ku-ring-gai is shaking his head in confirmation. They need to talk to one

another, because the Leader of the Opposition obviously does not know what the shadow minister's attitude is.

The revised English syllabus includes the return of traditional grammar, an increased focus on spelling, writing, listening and talking, and a new emphasis on computer technology in English. As a result of this syllabus students will learn traditional grammar: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, terms that many in the community will recognise. They will learn grammar so that it can be used as a tool to achieve their purpose. Students will learn not only about language but also how to use it. For teachers the syllabus offers a strong framework on which to build teaching strategies, and for students it will provide a firm grounding in reading and writing, and talking and listening.

The syllabus uses clear and concise language that enables teachers to know exactly what they need to teach and what their students should be able to achieve within the year. The syllabus has an emphasis on quality literature, learning about how language works in different contexts and learning to use language for different purposes and different audiences. Computer literacy has become an important skill in our society and the Government is committed to ensuring that our schools equip students for an ever-changing work environment. This means giving students access to the tools of the modern workplace.

In today's world English literacy and computer literacy go hand in hand. The attention in this syllabus to the use of computers to create and read texts is consistent with the Government's huge investment in computers and technology for our schools. The performance standards set out in the syllabus are consistent with material developed to support State and national initiatives in literacy. By the time students have completed primary school it will be easy to determine how they have progressed through the stages and the skills they have acquired.

The success of any document in schools relies on the skill and commitment of the teachers. The Government is about ensuring that teachers have the support they need to make real gains in the teaching of their students. To really improve general literacy levels requires a whole-school approach. As well as providing direction for the teaching of English, the syllabus and support documents provide a strong basis for enhancing literacy in other subjects. The English syllabus seeks to encourage in students an enjoyment of language and all its riches, as a motivation to a further study of literature.

The revised English K-6 syllabus is a powerful document for teachers in our primary schools. It blends new research on leading ways to teach language with what we have already learned from best classroom practice. This syllabus will equip students to use and understand language in different contexts. It is a resource for making meaning out of language. Students will develop skills and an understanding of the English language and literature. They will learn how to speak confidently in classroom discussions, to listen strategically, to read with comprehension and to write well-structured texts. They will learn to create and interpret literary, factual and media texts. They will also learn about the structure and grammar of those texts and how language is used to position the reader.

The Premier and I witnessed that today. We saw young students in year 5 doing work which only a decade or two ago would not have been attempted until about year 8 or year 9. That is the high standard we have today in some of our primary schools. For teachers the syllabus provides a cohesive strategy for teaching English from kindergarten right through to year 6. The terminology is clear, unlike the terminology introduced by the former Government which included lexicons and other terms which no-one understood and no-one knows the meaning of. The Government has reintroduced clear terminology—nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. That is the terminology that parents are familiar with and that young people will be familiar with and be able to use.

Mr Photios: What about adverbs?

Mr AQUILINA: I said adverbs. The terminology is clear and concise. The honourable member for Ermington knows nothing about grammar. He knows about invective but he does not know about grammar. The support documents provide the practical information that teachers need to implement the syllabus requirements. The work modules contain teaching notes, annotated texts and a range of suggested learning experiences that can be used by teachers. Student work samples have been developed to assist teachers in monitoring student progress. They illustrate what students can do at each stage as they progress towards the syllabus outcomes.

The outcomes outline the intended results of effective teaching and learning and give clear statements of the skills and knowledge most students should have acquired by the end of each stage. Suggestions for adapting and modifying activities

and learning experiences to cater for the diverse range of students in our schools are also included. Teachers are provided with information on the implications of teaching English to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to students learning English as a second language and to students with special education needs. Also, there is a detailed parents' package which gives information to support their child's learning at home. That is something new and is indicative of the fact that the Government regards the teaching of children in our schools as a partnership between schools and parents. That package will assist parents who teach English within the home environment.

The Government is hearing from teachers and school communities that, as a result of extensive consultation, this syllabus provides teachers with the necessary information and support to teach students the skills they need to understand language and literature, to make it work for them and to appreciate the pleasure it can offer. In conclusion, once again we have a syllabus which has been developed in consultation with teachers. This is different from what occurred under the previous Government when a syllabus was dropped on schools and teachers were taken by surprise. Teachers have played a hand in developing this syllabus and that is why it will be successful and why teachers welcome it with open arms.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION MINISTER FOR FAIR TRADING INVESTIGATION

Mr PHOTIOS: My question without notice is directed to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. Is the Minister for Fair Trading stupid?

Mr CARR: My attention has been drawn to an interesting article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 9 October 1989. If one is looking for statesmanship in a Leader of the Opposition, this bloke deserves an equestrian statue in a niche of this House because this is what one Robert John Carr said in the middle of an ICAC inquiry—

Mr Hartcher: On a point of order. While the Premier is entitled to make preliminary remarks, he is certainly not entitled to quote himself as an authority in this House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved.

Mr CARR: Faced with the choice of sources, I could not think of a better source. What did this

bloke say? There he is, the Leader of the Opposition when there is a raging ICAC inquiry. One of my colleagues, none less than my old friend the member for Auburn, strayed into public print—interestingly the *Sun-Herald*—venturing the opinion that the Ministers implicated in that ICAC inquiry should step down during the inquiry. It was a test of statesmanship. What then did the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Photios: On a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I anticipate the point of order and I do not uphold it.

Mr CARR: There is only one question. What did Robert John Carr say? From the age of Cicero to that of Lincoln I think there are few responses to compete or compare with what I am about to read. Honourable members should listen.

Mr Photios: On a point of order. I draw your attention, in the light of the answer, to the Premier's irrelevance. I have asked the Premier whether the Minister for Fair Trading is stupid.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I recall the question, and it is for the Chair to rule whether the answer is relevant. In this instance I rule that the Premier's answer is relevant.

Mr CARR: I will interpose with my own answer that if stupidity is a test of frontbench promotion, I rest my case. The time machine has taken us back to 9 October 1989 when an errant member for Auburn transgressed. What did R. J. Carr say? According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* he said:

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Carr, has gagged all Labor Party MPs from making further public statements on evidence tabled before the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption . . .

According to Labor Party sources—

and this will amuse the honourable member—

Mr Nagle's comments greatly upset Mr Carr, who called the backbencher at home yesterday morning to "rebuke" him.

Mr Carr said later that the shadow Cabinet had agreed some time ago not to make any "running commentaries" on the workings of the ICAC or on evidence tabled before it.

"That decision applies not only to shadow ministers but to backbenchers as well, and I made this very clear to Mr Nagle," he said.

Pity Mr Nagle; poor Mr Nagle. I further stated:

I firmly adhere to the position that neither side of politics should be making public comments on the ICAC and its inquiries until all the evidence is in.

I must say, however, that even before the ICAC was contemplated, I warned that the Premier had given the National Party control over public lands along the coast, and I warned that the consequences of this would be disastrous.

All I can say is this: what a statement!

Mr Cochran: On a point of order. This is a serious matter and the Premier continues to trivialise it. It brings no credit on this establishment—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. The member will resume his seat.

ROYAL EASTER SHOW

Mr NAGLE: I direct my question without notice to the Minister for the Olympics. What is the progress of preparations for this year's Royal Easter Show at its new home in the electorates of Auburn and Drummoyne?

Mr KNIGHT: I join with all my colleagues in applauding the rehabilitation of the honourable member for Auburn and his great interest in Olympic and show matters. Today is an historic day for all citizens of New South Wales, especially for country people. It is the day of the opening of the new showground at Olympic Park at Homebush. It is the beginning of a new, proud tradition, something long sought by the Royal Agricultural Society and country people in general. It is something that this Government has worked very hard to deliver—modern premises in the demographic heart of the Sydney metropolitan area.

As the badges handed out at last year's show at Moore Park said, "Homebush, a new home for the bush." There will be many traditional elements. The show will still sound the same, smell the same and have the same magnificent displays of produce, animals, rural skill and determination. It will have the same carnivals, entertainment and show bags. But now it will have equally magnificent buildings. The first sod was turned in April 1996 and in just under two years this Government has brought the project to fruition. It has been an outstanding effort by all involved. In particular I wish to pay tribute to the Olympic Co-ordination Authority, to David Richmond, the Director-General, Bob Leece, the head of construction, and John Kent, the head of the showground project, and all their team.

I pay tribute also to the Royal Agricultural Society which, after many years of frustration, found

a government that would work with it to bring this project to fruition. It has worked hand in hand with the Government. In particular I thank the President of the Royal Agricultural Society, Arthur Bragg; the Chief Executive Officer, Roger Perkins; and his predecessor, Colin Sanders, who was integrally involved in the project. The architects have done an absolutely outstanding job—Phillip Cox and the Peddle Thorpe partnership and Ken Woolley and the pavilion architects. I commend also the construction managers: Australian Pacific Projects as the project manager and John Hollands as the managing contractor. Ten principal contractors and 100 subcontractors deserve a mention.

Mr Jeffery: Name them.

Mr KNIGHT: The honourable member for Oxley asked me to name them. I just happen to have the list with me. But, in deference to the shortness of time, so that those people can be duly recognised I seek leave to table the list and incorporate it in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

10 Principal Contractors

A. W. Edwards
Boulderstone Hornibrook
Balmadar
Bona
Cordukes
Concrete Constructions
Daracon
Hansen and Yunken
Lahey Constructions
McConnell Dowell
St Hilliers
Theiss
Transfield

Thank you to Showground Contracts and Sub-Contractors

Some 100 companies and consultants worked under contract to build the new Sydney Showground. These companies, based in Sydney and in regional areas of New South Wales, as well as interstate, are listed below. Not listed here, but just as vital to the project, are the hundreds of sub-contractors who worked on the Showground.

A. W. Edwards Pty Ltd
Abigroup Pty Ltd
ACC Technologies
Alexander Tzannes
Alfasi Construction Pty Ltd
Allied Lighting
Ancher Mortlock & Woolley
Andreasens Pty Ltd
Australia Pacific Projects

Australian Portable Buildings
 Australian Wharf and Bridge
 Barnwell Cambridge
 Barry Webb & Assoc
 Baulderstone Hornibrook Pty Ltd
 Belmadar Constructions Pty Ltd
 Bentley Safes and Security
 Beta Shelving and Wire Products
 Bona Builders Pty Ltd
 BTR Hufcor
 Camden Engineering
 Campac
 Central Signs Pty Ltd
 Chameleon Touring Systems
 Channon Refrigeration
 Clive Craven, Clayton Utz
 CLM Excavations
 Coffey Partners International Pty Ltd
 Concrete Constructions Group Limited
 Context Landscape Design
 Conybeare Morrison, Peddle Thorpe & Cox Richardson
 Cordukes Limited
 Craft Fibreglass Pty Ltd
 Daracon Engineering Pty Ltd
 Denton Corker Marshall
 Emery Vincent Design
 Energy Australia
 Ericsson Australia
 Gadsen Signs
 Gledhill Construction
 Group 4 TNT
 H. W. Williams & Sons Pty Ltd
 Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd
 Hard & Forrester Pty Ltd
 Hargraves & Associates
 Hassell Group
 Hill Thalys
 Hosking Landscapes
 J. W. Constructions
 Jeffery and Katauskas Pty Ltd
 John Holland Construction & Engineering
 Kell & Rigby
 Knox and Partners
 KWA Design
 Lahey Constructions Pty Ltd
 Landis & Staefa
 Lawrence Neild & Partners
 Leighton Contractors
 Matildas Canteen
 Maunsell
 Maunsell Pty Ltd
 McConnell Dowell Constructors (Aust) Pty Ltd
 Metalcorp Steel
 Metropolitan Demolitions
 Mike Collins, Mike Collins & Associates
 Nick Morris, Morris Consulting Co.
 Noel, Bell, Ridley, Smith & Partners
 P. L. Crew Pty Ltd
 Pavilion Architects Pty Ltd including Scott Carver
 Playsafe Fencing
 Qualturf
 R. M. Lee
 R. T. Johnson
 Rider Hunt Sydney Pty Ltd
 Riverton
 S. K. Design
 Scafform Australia
 Sebel
 Shade Structure Pacific Pty Ltd
 Sielox Security System

SJPH Design Partnership
 SMEC
 Specialty Hardware
 St George Steel and Fabrication
 St Hilliers Pty Ltd
 Street and Garden
 Street Furniture International
 Structural Concrete Industries (Aust) Pty Ltd
 Sulo MGB
 Sylvania Lighting
 TAM Terazo
 Tasman Storey
 Thiess Contractors Pty Ltd
 Thompson Loughorn
 Timothy Court & Company
 Tonkin Zulaikha
 Tony Pollard
 Total Image Interiors
 Tracy Brunstrom Hammond Pty Ltd
 Transfield Constructions - NSW
 Transplant Industries Pty Ltd
 Walker Civil Engineering
 Waste Services
 We-ef Lighting
 Westbus
 Westpac Banking Corp
 WGE Pty Ltd

Mr KNIGHT: The new showground site works were completed on time and on budget. That was due largely to the work of the individual workers on that site. The Labor Council and the unions co-operated magnificently. Minimal industrial disputation occurred, and when problems arose those problems were solved quickly and effectively. That is a tribute to the maturity of the unions, the workers and the companies involved. Tonight the official opening of the showground will take place. The event will not be simply a formal ceremony; it will be an opportunity to thank the workers. The Government has invited each and every person who worked on the construction site to attend tonight's celebration to be thanked for their work—something that is unprecedented in the history of New South Wales.

Mr Hazzard: What about the coalition, which started it all?

Mr KNIGHT: Let me give credit where it is due. It is true that the former coalition Government said it would move the showground. Of course, as we all know, talk is cheap—and talk from members of the coalition is particularly cheap. The coalition did nothing to deliver that promise. Indeed, when the Labor Party came to office it found no master plan for the Homebush site and no design work for the showground. It had a cockamamie idea that it would not have a show ring, and that you could put the animals into the Olympic stadium between football matches. That was the Opposition's brilliant

idea. But the problem faced by this Government was even harder to overcome. I said earlier that talk is cheap. Action is expensive—and action is expensive when a government has to overcome a former government's problems.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bligh will cease interjecting.

Mr KNIGHT: Right smack bang in the middle of the site of the new showground was a sausage factory which was run by the Primo smallgoods company. That company had a lease, signed by the former Government, that was originally due to expire in September 1995. It would have been nice if it had expired in September 1995, considering construction was commenced in April 1996. The only problem was that in 1989, long after provisional planning had taken place to hold an Olympics at Homebush, the then Minister for Agriculture extended the lease to the year 2036. Can honourable members guess who was the Minister for Agriculture at that time? It was Ian Armstrong. It will cost the taxpayers of this State millions of dollars more to buy that lease out and move the Primo factory to another site.

Mr Collins: Tell the truth!

Mr KNIGHT: The Leader of the Opposition should not say "Tell the truth." I have got a folder of his lies on record.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I urge members to cease interjecting. The last interjection has led to the Minister taking an additional 10 minutes to answer the question.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair has been tolerant towards the member for Bligh. I hope she appreciates that tolerance and will cease interjecting.

Mr KNIGHT: Tomorrow the first Royal Easter Show at Homebush will open to the general public. It will be by far the biggest event to be held at Homebush Bay. Until now the biggest crowd at the site was the 12,000 people who attended a little athletics carnival. The Government and the Royal Agricultural Society anticipate that approximately 160,000 people will visit the show on Good Friday this year, and that between 1.2 million and 1.5 million will attend the show over the 16 days.

[Interruption]

Mr KNIGHT: Like the bulk of Sydneysiders, I will be getting there by public transport.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that seven or eight of their number have been called to order three times. I do not want to repeat the action I took in relation to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I ask members to refrain from interjecting during the remaining two questions and answers.

Mr KNIGHT: It is a new show. There will be a new way to get there. Some people may feel some nostalgia for the old days, when the show was held at Moore Park, but none will be nostalgic about the transport shemozzle that they experienced at Moore Park. Honourable members will remember those days. There was no direct public transport link, there were huge queues at bus interchanges like Central and Circular Quay, and buses crawled through traffic jams. There will be a high-capacity railway station at Homebush, direct services to the site and a railway station 150 metres from the showground entrance. Imagine what it would have been like at Moore Park if there had been a railway station next to the showground entrance. Homebush will also have eight new regional bus routes, three taxi drop-off areas and two taxi pick-up areas.

The Government acknowledges that transport arrangements for the Royal Easter Show at Homebush will not be absolutely perfect on the first day. The community will be learning how to get to a site that they have never been to, and the Government will be learning how to run transport facilities. It is important for the show, it is important for the environment, and it is important for future Homebush events that we get transport arrangements as close to perfect as we can. Of course, it is the first Olympic transport test event—something that has never been done in any other host city in the world. It is important that we learn from this experience. Many organisations are working hard to organise transport arrangements. The Government expects the odd glitch, but it will certainly be considerably better than it was at Moore Park.

This show will be special: it will be the first show in the new buildings, the first at Homebush, the first at the Olympic site. It joins a select group of occasions, such as the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the opening of the Glebe Island bridge, and the bicentennial celebrations. It will be an occasion not to be missed. It will be something for the people of this State to share with their children and tell their grandchildren about. I urge all

honourable members to take the opportunity to attend this year's Royal Easter Show.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr PRICE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. Where can the public obtain information about the Pacific Highway upgrade?

Mr SCULLY: Three years ago, when this Government was elected, the Pacific Highway was a neglected national disgrace. The former coalition Government should have been ashamed of its condition. It took two Labor governments, both State and Federal, to secure the 10-year funding necessary to improve the Pacific Highway to the extent necessary because of the former coalition Government's pathetic funding. The upgrade is a \$2.2 billion, 10-year project, which will be the largest civil engineering works to be carried out since the Snowy Mountains Scheme. Why is the Government carrying out this upgrade? Simply because 40 deaths per year are unacceptable.

The Government is concentrating on the areas of most need in terms of road safety: around Coffs Harbour, south of the Tweed and north of Newcastle. Twelve projects are under way, and 19 projects are planned. Two projects that come to mind are the Raleigh deviation, which will be open mid-year, and the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook project, which will be open next year. Twelve people have died on that route in the past five years.

Public consultation on major road projects is important to this Government, and it is very important in relation to the Pacific Highway. Given the magnitude of the project, it is essential that the Roads and Traffic Authority involve the community as much as possible. For the benefit of honourable members I shall detail the public consultation in which the Government has engaged. Over the past two years more than 60 public meetings have been held in relation to 31 projects. We have met residents, local councils, business groups and environmental groups, informing them of the 31 projects, learning their views and giving them information. Further consultation on the cumulative impact statement is under way.

About 70 newsletters have been distributed free of charge. That is 60 public meetings with local communities free of charge and 70 newsletters distributed free of charge. What is the coalition Government's record? Where do the Liberal and National parties stand on the Pacific Highway project? The coalition Government invested a

pittance in the Pacific Highway—and coalition members are supposed to represent the north coast electorates. It took a Labor government to double the amount of the Liberal-National Government's investment. And the Federal Labor Government's commitment of \$60 million per annum increases the amount to three times the pittance invested in the Pacific Highway by the coalition Government. That is three times the insult. The coalition then added salt to the wound.

The coalition's solution was to make the people on the north coast pay a toll. I say no. The Minister for the Olympics said no, the Premier said no and Laurie Brereton said no. Labor has a 10-year funding agreement because it treats the people of the north coast decently, it does not insult them. The coalition's pitiful investment was an insult and then it imposed a toll. How much more salt can be added to the wounds of the people on the north coast? Do you want to hear? With the free consultation, information and pamphlets, guess who is charging for information? Do you want to hear who is charging for information?

Mr Photios: On a point of order. I am a great upholder of decorum in this House. The Minister is deliberately encouraging members who have been called to order three times to participate in debate. When he asks questions he invites interjections. He is not addressing his questions through the Chair. Mr Speaker, you have been very strong and stern about this today. We have maintained discipline. It is incumbent on the Minister not to flout your rulings and encourage and incite interjections.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. Members representing electorates on the north shore have not interjected, so it would seem that there is no problem.

Mr SCULLY: Do you remember the Bega tea party? Remember that bloke from Eden-Monaro who charged people \$2 for information about the Federal Government lopping into the elderly on nursing homes! What did the National members representing the north coast do on Saturday, 28 March 1998? They held a public luncheon to raise funds. For the benefit of honourable members, the leaflet for the fundraising event stated:

LYNE ELECTORATE
COUNCIL

INVITES YOU TO ATTEND A PUBLIC LUNCHEON AT

MOORLAND HALL

WITH

MARK VAILE MP

The leaflet then lists two people whom I shall name shortly. The leaflet further stated:

TOPICS OF INTEREST—MOORLAND & COOPERNOOK
BYPASSES
FEES & ACCESS TO NATIONAL PARKS

COST \$10 PER HEAD
RSVP BY 24TH MARCH 1998

People were invited to pay \$10 per head for publicly available information about this Government's project. That would not be so bad if it was a project of the Federal Government or the coalition Government, but members opposite charged people for information about a Labor Government project which we are providing free. Who are the two people listed on the leaflet? They are the honourable member for Port Macquarie and the honourable member for Myall Lakes. At least the people of Bega had scones and biscuits. These miserable sods did not even give people scones and biscuits; they should be ashamed of themselves. Can I say to the honourable member for Port Macquarie and the honourable member for Myall Lakes—

Mr Photios: On a point of order. The Minister cannot seek leave to ask the honourable members a question. He said directly to the members, "Can I ask you".

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved.

Mr SCULLY: For the edification of the honourable member for Port Macquarie, the honourable member for Myall Lakes and other Liberal and National members who attempt to raise party funds from freely available public information—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SCULLY: The honourable member for Port Macquarie and the honourable member for Myall Lakes should inscribe on their foreheads the toll free number—1800 653 092—that their constituents can ring for information, instead of asking them to pay \$10. Did you offer a pensioner discount?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SCULLY: I have good news about the Pacific Highway in relation to the Royal Easter

Show. People who come and enjoy the show will be able to obtain pamphlets about the Government's plans for the Pacific Highway. The people of Port Macquarie and Myall Lakes should save their \$10 and spend it on the show.

Mr PHUONG NGO HEALTH BOARD APPOINTMENT

Mrs SKINNER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Why does the Minister consider Phuong Ngo to be a fit and proper person to sit on the South West Sydney Area Health Service board when he was found not to be a fit and proper person to sit on the board of a registered or licensed club? Why was he appointed to this key financial position when the Mekong Club, which he founded—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked two questions. I will permit her to rephrase the question.

NEW SOUTH WALES AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms HALL: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. What is the Government doing to improve the New South Wales Ambulance Service?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I thank the honourable member for her question and for her continued interest in health matters, including the Ambulance Service. The Carr Government is upgrading and modernising the ambulance fleet. This financial year a record number of ambulance vehicles will be purchased. Of course, a new vehicle fleet will lead to quicker response times. The Carr Government provided an extra \$5.4 million in funds specifically to upgrade the ambulance fleet by purchasing approximately 133 new ambulances and patient transport vehicles. When the Carr Government came to office the Ambulance Service had suffered seven years of coalition neglect.

In March 1995 the coalition's ambulance fleet was in an appalling state. Almost half the vehicles in the fleet were more than eight years old. By the end of this financial year the number of vehicles older than eight years will have been reduced to just 12 per cent. This dramatic injection of funds by the Carr Government will buy 40 Toyota four-wheel drive ambulances to handle rough terrain. Those vehicles are being built in Tamworth and are due for delivery by September, together with 60 Volkswagen ambulances. In addition, a further 10 patient

transport vehicles will be on the road by the middle of the year. These vehicles are in addition to the extra 20 ambulances and two retrieval paramedics ambulances that were already planned.

The purchase of 133 new ambulances this year is a record for any year. The new ambulances will help ensure faster response times and the best possible service for patients across the State. Ambulance officers helped to design the layout of the new vehicles to make them as efficient and effective as possible. The Government is committed to helping those ambulance officers provide the highest standard of patient care. The Government's commitment to the Ambulance Service is further highlighted by the introduction of patient transport officers. A four-week training course has been organised for 20 patient transport officers. It is anticipated that those officers will be active by the middle of the year. This new service will be trialled initially in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Patient transport officers will be responsible for transporting routine and non-emergency cases. For example, they will take patients for day treatment and transfer stable patients between hospitals. This initiative will mean that more ambulance crews will be free to respond to urgent and emergency cases. It is interesting to note that fewer ambulance officers were available at the end of the coalition's seven years in office than at the beginning of that period. In the short time that the Carr Government has been in office the number of ambulance officers has increased by more than 240. The Carr Government has employed more ambulance officers; the coalition, when in government, reduced numbers. That should not surprise anyone because the views of the Opposition spokesperson on health regarding ambulances are clear: "If you have a sick child, don't call an ambulance."

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the honourable member for North Shore on three calls to order.

Dr REFSHAUGE: That is the most irresponsible advice to give patients. It flies in the face of international evidence that in an emergency the best chance a patient has of survival is if an ambulance is called. The Opposition policy is not to call an ambulance. No wonder the coalition cut the number of ambulance officers and had an ambulance fleet with half its vehicles more than eight years old! The coalition was competing with Garuda airlines. Morale among ambulance officers employed by the

Carr Government is high. The Government is expanding their opportunities and improving the ambulance fleet.

It is not surprising that when those officers are called to an emergency they do a great job, just as they did during the Thredbo disaster. That is yet another reminder of the fine tradition and service by this State's ambulance officers. The Carr Government is committed to supporting and building up the Ambulance Service. The dedicated and professional ambulance officers of this State are a source of great pride for its members. This Government supports them, and will continue to do so.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Georges River.

Mr PHUONG NGO HEALTH BOARD APPOINTMENT

Mrs SKINNER: I address my question without notice to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Health. Why was Phuong Ngo appointed to the South-western Sydney Area Health Service Board, carrying with it key financial responsibilities, when the Mekong Club he founded went into receivership six months earlier on the eve of a Licensing Court investigation sought by the late John Newman?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question was directed to the Minister, not to the Opposition.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Phuong Ngo was appointed to the South-western Sydney Area Health Service before the Licensing Court decision was handed down. As the Premier said, Mr Greiner appointed him to the Ethnic Affairs Commission. If the honourable member wants to know more, she should ask her Liberal mates: Nick Greiner, John Hannaford, Ted Pickering and Philip Ruddock.

Questions without notice concluded.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIONS

Personal Explanation

Mr D. L. PAGE, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Earlier this afternoon the Premier sought to impugn my reputation by referring to certain comments in a newspaper report in regard to the Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation some eight years ago. I advise

honourable members that all those matters were thoroughly investigated by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which found that I had no case to answer. Indeed, the DPP used words to the effect that I had acted in accordance with my responsibility as a member of Parliament. The Director of Public Prosecutions stated:

There is nothing to prove that Mr Page did other than carry out his party's platform after the election.

I was cleared; I had no case to answer. The Premier's selective and misleading use of material reveals him to be a person who has no regard for innocent people.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ruled earlier on the relevance of the Premier's answer.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Personal Explanation

Mr J. H. TURNER, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Earlier today the Minister for Roads alleged that I was present at a meeting. I was not at that meeting, or luncheon.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Child-care Funding Cuts

Mrs BEAMER (Badgerys Creek) [3.36 p.m.]: I raise for urgent consideration my motion to condemn the Howard Government for its massive cuts to child-care funding. This motion is urgent because child-care centres throughout New South Wales have either closed or face closure. Children are being deprived of quality child care. These funding cuts are totally callous. This House should call the Federal Government to order. This decision is forcing women out of the work force. It is for those reasons that the motion is urgent and deserves the attention of this House.

Investment Contracts

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [3.37 p.m.]: My motion is urgent because since the Carr Government was elected more than three years ago, New South Wales has stumbled from one economic crisis to another. Despite the massive infrastructure investment in facilities related to the Olympics, this State is the second-worst performing State when it comes to attracting investment. Senior executives from Intel, the world's largest computer chip manufacturing company, are deciding whether to give Australia a

facility worth \$6 billion. Like most multinational companies, Intel must be convinced that the decision is in the best interests of their shareholders and customers. The Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett, has courted Intel and encouraged it to locate its proposed facility not in New South Wales where we want it, but in Victoria.

In stark contrast this State Government, true to form, has done virtually nothing to position this State to win. Labor is doing nothing for this State. Because of its indifference to these issues Foxtel moved its national customer headquarters to Melbourne, a move that cost the State 1,000 jobs; Westpac Banking Corporation moved its national loan centre to South Australia, which cost New South Wales another 1,000 jobs and \$200 million a year; Netscape moved its Internet software facility to Melbourne; and the list goes on. The Labor Party and its Premier are doing nothing.

New South Wales has lost British Telecom and Boeing, and a long list of sporting events. The only thing the Premier has not lost is his Minister for Fair Trading! The coalition believes the Government must use the Hunter Advantage Fund. I will give the Government a clue, the key to this debate: use the Hunter Advantage Fund to attract the Intel contract to the Hunter. The Government has repeatedly failed the bush: it has repeatedly failed every area of the State except some areas of Sydney, mostly in electorates held by Government members. The Government has failed the people of regional New South Wales by not delivering jobs where they are needed. This is the Government's chance. The Intel contract is a lifeline for the Hunter Valley, the chance of a generation. It is a chance for the Government to get back on track and remedy three years of neglect, and to give the Hunter a future.

Mr Blackmore: The Hunter has lost 2,500 jobs.

Mr COLLINS: The honourable member for Maitland interjected to say that the Hunter has suffered the loss of 2,500 jobs. This motion is urgent because New South Wales has to go after this contract. It is worth \$6 billion and the Premier has to go out and chase the contract, chase the jobs, bring them to New South Wales and locate them in the Hunter where, as the honourable member for Maitland said, more than 2,000 jobs have disappeared since the Carr Government came to office. Why the Hunter region? Despite the fact that there is no electoral advantage to the coalition in the Hunter region, we care for the people of the Hunter more than the Labor Party cares for them. We want to ensure that the Hunter gets the contract. The

region already has information technology strength, especially at the University of Newcastle and at Newcastle TAFE. In other words, the Hunter has the infrastructure and the know-how.

The sad thing is that although the Hunter community has elected Labor members to this House, the Labor Government is not prepared to go out, chase jobs and bring that investment to the Hunter region and to Newcastle. The Government has taken its eye off the ball. The Government's eye is on Redfern and not on the Hunter Valley. The Government is distracted by what is happening in downtown Sydney, at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The Labor Government is in crisis. Let us have no more crocodile tears for the Hunter from this cynical Premier, who is now absent from the Chamber. He does not want to hear whether he should consider creating jobs for the Hunter. The Premier has walked out because he does not care. On behalf of the people of the Hunter we on this side of the House at least say: no more crocodile tears. We want action for the Hunter and action now. We want jobs for the Hunter Valley.

Question—That the motion for urgent consideration of the honourable member for Badgerys Creek be proceeded with—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

Ms Allan	Mr Markham
Mr Amery	Mr Martin
Mr Anderson	Ms Meagher
Ms Andrews	Mr Mills
Mr Aquilina	Mr Moss
Mrs Beamer	Mr Nagle
Mr Carr	Mr Neilly
Mr Clough	Ms Nori
Mr Crittenden	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Debus	Mr Price
Mr Face	Dr Refshauge
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Rogan
Ms Hall	Mr Rumble
Mr Harrison	Mr Scully
Ms Harrison	Mr Shedden
Mr Hunter	Mr Stewart
Mr Iemma	Mr Sullivan
Mr Knight	Mr Tripodi
Mr Knowles	Mr Watkins
Mr Langton	Mr Whelan
Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Woods
Mr Lynch	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr McBride	Mr Beckroge
Mr McManus	Mr Thompson

Noes, 42

Mr Beck	Mr Peacocke
Mr Blackmore	Mr Photios
Mr Brogden	Mr Richardson
Mr Chappell	Mr Rixon
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Rozzoli
Mr Collins	Mr Schipp
Mr Debnam	Mr Schultz
Mr Ellis	Ms Seaton
Ms Ficarra	Mrs Skinner
Mr Glachan	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Hartcher	Mr Small
Mr Hazzard	Mr Smith
Mr Humpherson	Mr Souris
Mr Jeffery	Mrs Stone
Dr Kernohan	Mr Tink
Mr Kinross	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr MacCarthy	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Merton	Mr Windsor
Mr Oakeshott	
Mr O'Doherty	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr O'Farrell	Mr Fraser
Mr D. L. Page	Mr Kerr

Pairs

Mr Gaudry	Mr Armstrong
Mr Gibson	Mr Cochran
Mr Yeadon	Mr Cruickshank

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Motion, by leave, by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone private members' statements until after the conclusion of the motion for urgent consideration.

CHILD-CARE FUNDING CUTS

Urgent Motion

Mrs BEAMER (Badgerys Creek) [3.51 p.m.]:

That this House condemns the Howard Government for its massive cuts to child-care funding which are forcing women and men from the work force and causing hardship to families throughout New South Wales.

I wish to speak about the effects of massive cuts in child-care funding to New South Wales on parents seeking child care for their youngsters. Penrith City Council, with whom I have had a long involvement, prides itself on providing best-practice child care,

but the quality of that child care is under threat as a result of funding cuts. The council made a damning submission to the Senate Standing Committee inquiry about the effects of child-care funding cuts in western Sydney, particularly in the Penrith council area. Council submitted that the funding cuts threatened the quality of child-care services, that children were spending fewer days at child-care centres, and were being withdrawn from child-care centres completely. This House should condemn the Federal Government for its funding cuts.

On 1 April Jackie Kelly, the Federal member for Lindsay, said in Federal Parliament that Penrith City Council was using Federal money and local government money to compete against private centres that are providing an adequate service. Perhaps it was an April Fool's Day joke! People who put their children into child care know that adequate is not good enough, adequate is not what they want. Best-practice child care is what they want. The Penrith City Council report highlights the fact that child-care services are inadequate. What impact are the funding cuts having on centres? What have centres had to do to remain viable? Child-care centres have had to reduce expenditure on food and children's equipment, and have had to increase expenditure to promote their services and administer for new intakes of children.

There is less time for child-care programs because centres are now responsible for a greater number of children. Penrith City Council is one of the largest providers of child care in Australia. The report states that children are entitled to a quality of care that supports physical, emotional, social and cognitive development that enables them to reach their full potential. Quality of care has been threatened as cuts to service provisions are made in an attempt to ensure the viability of centres. Low-income families in western Sydney are withdrawing their children from child-care services altogether. Research shows that many lower and middle-income families can no longer afford centre-based long day care because the operational subsidy is being withdrawn.

Many single parents have reduced the number of days they work or have withdrawn from the work force altogether because they cannot afford to pay increased child-care fees. Those families will have less income, but single parents cannot afford to work if they have to pay increased child-care fees. In an effort to lower staff costs, Penrith City Council has reduced by 10 per cent the number of people it employs, and has had to reduce the qualification level required of the people it employs. It is absolutely disgraceful that a Federal member

should say that child-care centres operating under those conditions are competing against adequate services. When it comes to child care, adequate is just not good enough. When the honourable member for Lindsay said that the people of her electorate—which includes my electorate—are in no way disadvantaged with child care, she was turning a blind eye to the truth.

Child-care centres are closing down. Parents are being deprived of quality child care, and women are being forced out of the work force. The honourable member for Lindsay said that there is an oversupply of child care in my electorate. The demand for child care in Badgerys Creek was high until fees were increased and people could no longer afford to pay them. Some centres are having real problems with attendance. The number of children attending child-care centres has dropped significantly in one year. Withdrawal of operational funding and increased fees have resulted in an oversupply of child-care facilities. If child care is priced out of the market, vacancies in centres will not be filled.

The families who have reduced the number of days that their children attend a child-care centre come from priority groups. Funding cuts and increased fees are affecting lower and middle-income families. People in my electorate say that it is becoming more difficult to pay increased fees, but the real impact is the negative change in the quality of care. Child-care centres should be regarded as precious places in which young children develop. Centres are performing a monumental task for our children and for our future. I have two children in child care two days a week. I want the standard of the centre to be absolutely impeccable. I want to know that my children are receiving best-practice child care. No parent wants a child-care centre that is merely adequate or just meets minimum needs.

Penrith City Council is not a Labor council; Labor is in the minority. The council unanimously endorsed the submission to the Senate inquiry to highlight that something must be done for children in day care and for their parents, who need fee relief. Penrith council has had to substantially reduce its children's services work force. Another opportunity for people to gain experience in the industry has been lost. One of the biggest child-care providers is no longer able to train staff because it can no longer run these centres. One 40-place day care centre will incur about a \$43,000 per year operational subsidy loss. Penrith City Council faces an operational loss of \$738,000.

Council centres set the benchmark by which private institutions run their centres. Private

institutions look at council centres and what goes into them because they know that is the market in which they are competing. If centres can no longer compete in that market, and have difficulty keeping their doors open, the quality of care provided will be downgraded. Children should receive the best quality care. It is imperative that the Howard Government be reminded that these funding cuts affect the future of a generation of Australian children. It is laughable for members opposite to say that it is not in the best interests of New South Wales to have operational subsidies in place. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [4.01 p.m.]: One could be forgiven for thinking that the honourable member for Badgerys Creek is practising for opposition. Her speech, directed entirely against the Federal Government, was that of a member of an opposition. The honourable member is wise to be practising how to behave in opposition, because in 12 months time that is where she will be.

The coalition supports absolutely provision of the highest quality child care. Child-care provision enticed and encouraged me to enter politics. I was concerned about the provision of child care and early childhood services, and about issues affecting older children. It is interesting how one's interests change—particularly when one is a mother, I suspect—with the ageing of one's children. I was one of those who established the first occasional child-care centre in my local community. It was a real battle. We had to go to market days and make and sell jams and pickles to raise money to establish the centre. The Minister for Energy laughs. I suspect he has never done that sort of thing to support children, but that is what we did.

I was very proud to work with one of our former Ministers to develop child-care policy in New South Wales. The honourable member for Badgerys Creek should know that this is the New South Wales Parliament, not the Commonwealth Parliament. I am proud of what was done for child care by the former coalition Government of New South Wales. I am proud that it established and encouraged employers to establish workplace child care. That Government worked in partnership with business to establish 68 employer-sponsored child-care places in New South Wales. If honourable members on the Government side are so concerned, they should get their ministerial colleagues to do something about it. That coalition Government was the first to introduce guidelines to help employees juggle their family and work responsibilities, such as working from home, job sharing, career breaks and overtime breaks. The honourable member should be

negotiating those ideas with her colleagues on the front bench if she is genuinely interested in child care. I share the honourable member's concern about access to the best possible child care for people across New South Wales and Australia, as do my colleagues on this side of the House.

I read with great interest the child-care task force report by EPAC—the Environment Planning Advisory Commission—and the recommendations it made. This task force comprised Patricia Faulkner, Bruce Hartnett, Wendy McCarthy and Glenn Withers—well-known and respected people. The task force was established by the former Federal Labor Government in August 1995. Its job was to report on future demand for child care, how to make the provision of child care efficient and equitable, and the links between the provision of child care and other children's and family services. I turn now to some of the recommendations and comments in this report. Talking about fee relief for child-care services, it says:

...subsidising services may encourage inefficient operations ... administration of price subsidies tends to be costly.

The report states, under "General observations on the current system":

The system is not transparent: the overall distributional impacts are not clear.

A recommendation in the report suggests:

Subsidising the demand for child care services generally meets objectives better than subsidising the supply of services.

That is exactly what the Commonwealth Government has done. I am sorry if honourable members on the Government side do not agree with this report of a committee appointed by their former colleagues. The recommendations in that report are the basis for the present system. The Commonwealth Government will spend \$4.9 billion on child care over the next four years. That provision is to be found in the Commonwealth budget. Honourable members may look at it, it is no secret. The annual child-care allocation will increase from the \$1 billion spent last year to \$1.3 billion by the year 2000-2001. I have not plucked these figures out of the air, they are in the Commonwealth budget. I can provide honourable members with the papers if they wish. This funding increase means that child-care places will grow by 25 per cent over four years. Honourable members may not like the way it is being done.

Mr McBride: That's right.

Mrs SKINNER: The honourable member may not like it, but the motion refers to a cut in funding. The honourable member is wrong, he has made a mistake. The motion also refers to a cut in places. That also is wrong, a mistake. The honourable member should admit he has made a mistake. There are no cuts in funding to child care and no cuts in places. The number of child-care places will grow by 25 per cent.

Mr McBride: Tell that to the mothers out there.

Mrs SKINNER: I am doing that. The honourable member might disagree with this Labor committee report, but this is the truth. Reality hurts. It hurts members of the Government to admit they have made a mistake. This funding increase will provide 83,000 additional child-care places and 39,000 new community-based places, involving a mix of long day care, family day care and out-of-school-hours care. There will be 44,000 new private centre places. With all these additional places, 140,000 additional children will gain access to child care. This is an 18 per cent increase in funding compared to the allocation made the last year that Labor was in office.

I turn to the reforms instituted by the Commonwealth in adopting the new mechanisms for funding of child care, and what they mean. These reforms have focused on a more equitable funding distribution so that families who are hardest off, the poorest, those who are finding it most difficult to make ends meet, now have increased opportunities to access child care.

Mr Debus: I don't think they believe you.

Mrs SKINNER: That is a recommendation in this report, and it has been adopted. The Government in Canberra has initiated a special needs subsidy scheme to support access for children with high additional needs, particularly children with disabilities. It is focused on trying to get resources to those who need them most. It is a shift in resources, rather like the introduction by the coalition in New South Wales of the health resource allocation formula. Some residents in established population areas do not like the idea of resources being shifted from their suburbs, but the Opposition is basing its policies on equity and on a fair distribution of resources. The former coalition Government in New South Wales was shifting health money out to the population growth areas—Nepean and Penrith—and to build Liverpool Hospital

Mr Debus: You are supposed to be talking about child care.

Mrs SKINNER: This is exactly the same principle: getting resources to those who need them the most. The coalition Government in Canberra, unlike the former Labor Government, initiated child-care reforms that ensure fair and reasonable access to funded child-care places for more families. Under the coalition Government in Canberra the participation in the work force of women with dependent children has remained constant since January 1996—at around 59 per cent. So Government members are telling me something that is not borne out by the statistics. Work force participation by women has remained constant. Government members are not telling the truth. If they backed up their arguments with substantiating evidence someone might listen to them. They do not have the facts and they are not telling the truth.

Honourable members might recall that in September 1995 Premier Carr received a report on a site for child-care facilities for members and staff of the Parliament. I would have thought that the honourable member for Badgerys Creek would be interested in this matter, but she has been silent. I would like to know when the Premier will honour his promise to provide appropriate high-quality care facilities in this building for the honourable member for Badgerys Creek and other members and staff of the Parliament and the staff in Parliament House. Members of the Government should take up this matter and ask the Government to put its money where its mouth is.

Mr WATKINS (Gladesville) [4.11 p.m.]: We can all throw figures around and members of the Opposition can hide behind statistics, but the Prime Minister need look no further than his own electorate to see the reality of child-care cuts. In 1975 the Prime Minister opened a 0 to 5 years child-care centre in his electorate at North Ryde, which is also my electorate, and it has very been very popular. Twenty-five years after the Prime Minister opened that child-care centre his decisions are now strangling it. Before the last election it had a full complement of children and healthy waiting lists; it now has a 60 per cent occupancy rate. Fortunately, it has a lifeline; with the assistance of the State Government it will move to the grounds of a local high school and will be able to expand its 0 to 2 years component and thereby soak up some of that need. Unfortunately, many other child-care centres across the State and nation do not have that lifeline.

Before I became a member of Parliament I was a member of the Ryde child-care task force. Three women who were the founding members of that task force—Susan Lister, Moira Henerbry and Diana Waring—and I met with the Prime Minister at a meeting of the task force, and we remember very clearly that he explained his vision of child care and what he hoped to achieve. None of the people present at that meeting expected his all-out attack on child care. The Howard Government in its last two budgets has cut more than \$800 million dollars from child care, and that has meant that New South Wales taxpayers have had to fund an additional \$300 million. The Howard Government has succeeded in wreaking in child care the same havoc and concern that has been wrought in aged-care services. We need only look at the media to find documentation of the fact that the Howard Government's changes are having a serious impact on the security and care of children. Child-care centres are closing across Sydney. On Tuesday night an operator of a child-care centre told me that an inner-west centre had closed. Parents have to meet higher charges and, because of the closure of some centres and the increasing costs of child care, they are not enrolling their children in adequately staffed and funded child-care centres.

Until the election of the Howard Government both State and Federal governments supported parents who were concerned about the care and welfare of the children in their local communities and established affordable and quality preschool child care, after-school care and vacation care services. Because of the Howard Government's ruthless determination to drive women out of the paid work force it has attacked child-care centres. It well knows that if women can no longer afford child care, more often than not they will leave paid employment. Unfortunately, that is happening. Even privately owned child-care centres have been placed at risk and some of those are in danger of closing because of the new 20-hour limit on non-work-related child-care assistance, which has forced many women who are attending TAFE or universities with a view to enhancing their careers and prospects to withdraw from courses, or withdraw their children from services and return them to confinement at home or to inappropriate child-care locations.

The result is a lower standard of child care and an increased impact on the grandparents of this State. Surveys have shown that family members pick up the extra child-care responsibility. Grandparents are already carrying an overwhelming burden of non-centre-based child-care in New South Wales. Over the past couple of years the percentage of child

care being provided by relatives and, in particular, grandparents, has continued to increase. Many parents who have cared for their own children and who are now at an age at which they should be able to enjoy their retirement are having to assist their children to care for young babies and children. Grandparents embrace the chance to assist their children but in many ways that is inappropriate because in the past we had high-quality child care. Those child-care options are now diminishing.

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [4.16 p.m.]: The New South Wales Liberal Party has a proud record with child care, and I am happy to defend it. However, before I do so, and before I compare that record with the record of the previous Government, I shall refer to the final comment by the honourable member for Gladesville. He expressed concern about grandparents becoming involved in the welfare of their grandchildren. If I recall correctly he was talking about retired people having once again to look after children. It is ironic that the honourable member for Gladesville referred to that issue, because his Government is victimising those people by increasing the land tax payable on their homes. People who should be able to enjoy their retirement are being affected by this Government's land tax.

The New South Wales Liberal Party is proud of its record of achievement in government from 1988 to 1995. Under the children's services program the Liberal-National Government increased child-care places by 43,000 in 1,800 funded services. In the period 1990 to 1995 funding for children's services increased by 80 per cent. The national child-care strategy implemented in that period by the Liberal Party provided some 10,000 new child-care places. The Liberal-National coalition Government played a leading role in ensuring that workplaces in New South Wales had sufficient flexibility to enable employees to balance their work and family responsibilities. This motion is not about figures or about throwing figures back and forth; it is about the ongoing ambition of the honourable member for Badgery's Creek. It is a predictable and boring tactic of the Government every afternoon to move a motion and to embark on a wet lettuce leaf attack on the Federal Government.

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for Swansea is clocking up another one for her party by attempting to take on members of the Opposition. We quake in our boots in anticipation of the daily attack from the honourable member for Swansea. Every afternoon the Opposition Whip distributes heart pills as we wait with fear and trepidation for yet another of her

predictable and boring attacks. If the Government had any pride in its child-care programs it would promote them. Government members should be able to inform the House about the Government's child-care achievements but, sadly, they would not have enough to say to fill their allotted five minutes.

I noted the comments of the honourable member for North Shore, an excellent shadow minister for health and youth affairs. Once again she brought to the attention of the Chamber the Labor Government's failure to provide child-care facilities at Parliament House. It is appalling that members of Parliament, such as the honourable member for Badgerys Creek, who is a mother of six, does not have adequate child-care services at her place of work. That is of greater concern than the matters referred to in the motion. Liberal-National governments have a proud record in the provision of child-care services in New South Wales. We have shown great concern for that matter and will seek to address it in detail and with compassion when in less than 12 months we sit on the government benches. We will deliver a clearer and better child-care service to the people of New South Wales. I warn Hansard to brace themselves for the daily withering attack on the Federal Government from the honourable member for Swansea.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [4.21 p.m.]: I cannot let the contribution of the honourable member for Pittwater pass without comment. The previous member for Pittwater was an outstanding Minister for Community Services who showed compassion for the individual. This honourable member for Pittwater continues to interrupt. If he has something to say, he should approach the table. In a debate on child care the honourable member for Pittwater dealt with the impact of land taxes on expensive homes. He perceived that the impact of taxes on wealthy people who own expensive homes is a major child-care issue in his electorate. He then attacked the honourable member for Badgerys Creek and said that the motion was merely an opportunity for her to push her barrow for re-election. The honourable member for Pittwater also said that he wanted to talk about the Liberal Party's record and the proud heritage he had inherited as a Liberal member of Parliament. He spoke for less than 50 seconds about the proud record of previous Liberal-National governments in this State—he was able to encapsulate its record in 50 seconds. The motion refers to the attacks on child-care services by the Federal Government.

Mrs Skinner: But this is a State government.

Mr McBRIDE: The honourable member for North Shore should know that child-care services are provided by joint Federal-State funding.

Mrs Skinner: Then talk about State funding.

Mr McBRIDE: I will refer to State Government funding. The Carr Labor Government has contributed an extra \$33 million to child-care services in this State. It has targeted 7,000 new places by 1999, in addition to the 5,000 places it has already created.

Mrs Skinner: That number is minuscule.

Mr McBRIDE: It may be minuscule in your view, but not in the view of the people of New South Wales. If the honourable member moved out of Mosman and went to western Sydney or the central coast, a major growth centre of New South Wales, she would see the number of young couples with young children. A subtle change is occurring on the central coast.

Mr Brogden: The change is that people are voting Liberal.

Mr McBRIDE: The honourable member for Pittwater interjects continuously. In his contribution to this debate he could speak for only 50 seconds about the Liberal-National party policies and achievements in child-care services in New South Wales.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Pittwater has made his contribution. He will remain silent.

Mr McBRIDE: The major change on the central coast is that the population is dominated by young people. Reductions have been made to operational subsidies provided to public child-care facilities by the Federal and State governments. But information from the Wyong Shire Council shows that the Federal Government has reduced its child-care budget by \$371,000 per annum in that shire. The demographics of that area show that it has many low-income and working-class families—and that is where the cuts have been targeted. There are no problems in Mosman or Sutherland, but the central coast has problems and \$371,000 has been cut from its child-care budget.

That equates to \$40,000 per annum per centre, or \$1,000 per annum per placement in public child-care facilities that service ordinary working people.

It also means a weekly fee increase of \$24 to \$30 for those ordinary working people. That is how those people, many of whom are on a basic wage, are treated by the Federal Government. The Carr Labor Government has made a commitment to put an extra \$33 million into child care. It is providing an additional 7,000 places, on top of the 5,000 places it has already provided. I give credit to Wyong Shire Council for subsidising two-thirds—that is \$16 per week—of the increase in fees. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs BEAMER (Badgerys Creek) [4.26 p.m.], in reply: I do not want to talk about the grave attempt by the Opposition to refer to the Federal Government's record on child care. I want to talk about what is happening with child care in western Sydney and why we must send a message to Canberra about the decline in our child-care services. I was asked about the effect of the reduction in funding for women in western Sydney. The survey that I referred to earlier highlights that effect. Because of the rise in fees some women have had to withdraw their children from child-care centres and in other cases their budgets have been thrown way out. Some have reduced the number of days they work and others have completely withdrawn from the work force. At one centre five women decided they could no longer continue their studies because the increase in fees meant they could not afford to send their children to child care.

Honourable members can use all the rhetoric in the world, but the real issue is that child-care centres in western Sydney are being pushed to the limit. Councils, which are the biggest providers of child-care centres, have called the reduction in funding a total disaster. Studies undertaken by the Penrith City Council between July and September, when the increases were introduced, reveal a downgrading of child-care services and the withdrawal of 181 families from child-care centres because they can no longer afford to use them. The Federal member for Lindsay has said that is all right because other adequate services are available. The terrible thing about that statement is that we do not want adequate services, we want best practice services. We are not getting best practice services and we will not get them in the future. As a result of the withdrawal of children the centres do not receive enough income and have to carefully plan their budgets and daily menus and reduce the amount of money spent on equipment. So we are talking about a downgrading of the quality of care.

All parents who send their children to child-care centres want the best quality of care there is, and they know what is best. When we talk about

people withdrawing from the services, we are talking about low-income families from western Sydney. The highest level withdrawal from child-care centres has been from families that earn less than \$27,000 a year, and their level of withdrawal is more than twice that of those who earn more. Many women are unable to take a place in the work force because of massive hikes in child-care fees. Some fees have increased by more than 20 per cent—a 20 per cent increase in the amount parents have to spend each day for their child to attend a community-based child-care centre in my local area. The guts are being ripped out of child care in New South Wales.

It is important that the Federal Government be made aware that child care must be got right, and now. We need to tell women that they should be able to progress. My constituents on lower levels of income are those who are withdrawing their children from child care. They are being denied the employment opportunities they seek. When women are denied employment opportunities they are deprived of their right to economic benefit. The papers recently carried the story of a woman who said that she recently had to reduce the number of days she worked in this area. I commend her for doing that. It is important to note that the withdrawal of families from child care throughout western Sydney has meant that many child-care centres now provide only an adequate service, and that is not good enough. No mother or father is asking for care that is adequate; we want the best child care we can get.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Mr LES SAVAGE INQUIRY

Ms HALL (Swansea) [4.32 p.m.]: This evening I ask the Minister for Police to request the Lake Macquarie local area commander of the Police Service to reopen the case against Mr Les Savage, a Newcastle businessman, and to authorise a full inquiry into this matter. It is essential that the matter be reinvestigated, as that is the only means of ensuring justice. The Court of Appeal in New South Wales recently ruled in favour of the Lunn family of Swansea in its long-running legal battle over the ownership of the former Cardiff Coal Company and land at Green Point near Belmont. The land at Green Point has been referred to often in this House. The land is now owned by Lake Macquarie City Council. McCloys Pty Ltd and the Government have invested some \$1.5 million in its rehabilitation and

restoration, making it a park accessible to the people of the Swansea electorate.

The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by Mr Les Savage, who had appealed against a decision of Justice Hulme in the New South Wales Supreme Court that ruled in effect that the Lunn family was a shareholder in the Cardiff Coal Company and that the names should be reinstated on the share register. The case of the Lunn family was based on the assertion that documents relating to the Cardiff Coal Company were forgeries. The Lunn family argued that records of the Cardiff Coal Company showing 100 shares transferred first to Ludovic Blackwood and later the Cardiff Coal Company entailed a forgery. The Cardiff Coal Company was purchased by Mr Les Savage in 1972.

Justice Hulme found in the Supreme Court that the forgeries occurred in either 1939 at the instigation of Arthur Allen, a solicitor working for the coal company at that time, or in 1976 at the instigation of Mr Savage, which was the more probable. In 1996 a charge was laid against Mr Savage that he had perverted the course of justice. That matter was dismissed after it was found that there were inconsistencies in evidence from a United States handwriting expert. Two lesser charges of making false and misleading statements with intent to gain financial advantage were also dismissed. Since the appeal has been upheld, as it had been demonstrated at both hearings that forgery was involved, surely the issue now at hand is whether that should be followed through to determine who is responsible for the forgery.

The Lunn family has spent more than \$750,000 on this matter. The Lunn family are pensioners and, until a few weeks ago, they did not know whether they would have to sell their homes. All the time they were being pushed through the court system in the hope that they would run out of money and lose the case. One of my reasons for making this request is that strong evidence has been put forward in both cases that Mr Savage has conducted himself in a manner that confirms that changes to documents can be proved. Mr Savage was considered to be a respectable businessman yet all the evidence suggests that he has changed documents and in so doing has sought to cheat a family out of what is rightfully theirs.

It is beholden on the police to investigate this case. It is very important that we get to the bottom of this issue. Until the matter has been fully investigated, charges have been laid and the matter has reached a conclusion we cannot say that the issues relating to Green Point in the Swansea

electorate have been resolved. There are many aspects that need to be investigated. If we walk away from this matter and do not ensure its investigation, we will not only do the Lunn family an injustice but leave land in public ownership under the shadow of a question mark.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.37 p.m.]: I shall refer this matter to the Minister for Police for consideration and further inquiries. As the honourable member for Swansea has said, this matter has drawn out over a long period. Correspondence relating to the matter has reached my desk on at least one occasion during my time in this Parliament. To my recollection, it was not in exactly the same vein as that referred to by the honourable member; it related to the original title. This is a very complex case. Some of the original title suggests that there were probably concerns with the parcel of land long before the incident concerning the Lunn family. On one occasion it was sent off for legal examination. The Lunn family and various other people will not rest until the matter is at least given some inquiry and brought to a conclusion.

PROOF OF IDENTITY

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.39 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Gaming and Racing for attending the Chamber to respond to my statement this evening. One of my constituents, Mrs Coghlan, has a daughter aged 27 who is disabled and whose only means of identification is an identity card that was issued to her some years ago when she was under 25. She is in poor circumstances, would not use a passport and cannot afford one. She has a disability so she cannot get a driver's licence. Her only identification, therefore, is the ID card. She is a young looking person and is frequently challenged as to her age when she goes to hotels and clubs.

Recently her purse, in which the ID card was kept, was stolen. As she is over the age of 25 she is no longer eligible to obtain that type of card. She sought the assistance of the police, but they could not assist her and referred her to the Roads and Traffic Authority, which is the body which issues the cards, but it issues the cards on behalf of the Department of Gaming and Racing. When she contacted the Department of Gaming and Racing she was told that as she was over 25 the department could no longer be of assistance.

People need identification now to open bank accounts, join clubs, obtain library cards from municipal libraries, and hire videos. Identification

has become an essential part of our way of life. Those who lack a licence or a passport have found the identification card issued under the authority of the Department of Gaming and Racing essential. While I understand that the department issues the cards to ensure that people under the age of 18 comply with the Liquor Act and are not admitted to hotels and clubs—they are also used in relation to tobacco licensing laws—I ask the State Government to recognise that the cards are the only means of identification some people can get in a society that now requires identification. This is especially so in the case of disabled people such as Miss Coghlan.

Tragically, the Coghlan family has two disabled children: the daughter 27 years old and a son of 23. The husband commutes every day from the central coast to Sydney and Mrs Coghlan drives both children to work each morning. The daughter is able to catch the bus home but the son uses a wheelchair and has to be picked up each afternoon. When at home he must use a walking frame. As the son suffers from serious health problems, at times Mrs Coghlan has to take him to Sydney for hospital treatment. They are people in necessitous circumstances. I appreciate the exigencies upon government. The card was originally intended for certain purposes relating to the Liquor Act. When formulated it was not intended for use as a form of general identification. I ask the Government to reconsider the matter, especially in relation to people in impecunious circumstances and people who have a disability which prevents their gaining an alternative form of identification such as a driver's licence.

In recent years the world has changed dramatically. There are few circumstances in which one can now undertake any commercial activity without some form of identification. Indeed, a patient who has not previously attended the doctor being consulted needs identification to prove that a Medicare card belonging to another person is not used. Under a recent amendment to the Pawnbrokers Act introduced by the Government identification is required by people dealing with pawnbrokers. Right across the board people need identification. Yet in the case I have raised a person has not been able to get identification. I ask the Minister to reassess the general policy. I also ask him to instruct the department to consider the case of Miss Coghlan and allow her to regain her identity card.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.44 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Gosford for giving me at least a little notice of his remarks this

afternoon. With more notice I might have had a better answer. This subject has been under review, but I cannot make an exception for the young lady in question. The Minister for Disability Services has been considering many cases referred to her involving people more than 25 years old and with disabilities needing identification to enter licensed premises.

Back when the Federal Government proposed the issuing of the Australia Card there was a public outcry and the idea was pooh-poohed. The remarks of the honourable member for Gosford today clearly show that there would have been community benefits from the introduction of some form of general identity card. Since then the card issued under the authority of the Department of Gaming and Racing has become a de facto general identity card. The number of cards issued by the department has increased enormously in the previous 12 months, with some people making second and third applications after losing cards. A cost is involved in each case.

I do not want to make the matter political but I warned a previous Chief Secretary when the card was introduced without a fee—there was mutual agreement in the Parliament on the issuing of a proof-of-age card—that the matter would come back to haunt a future government. And it has. Optus and Harvey Norman use the card as a form of identification for transactions, including hire purchase, for people who do not have a passport or licence. A proof-of-age card has become an accepted form of identification but the State Government is taking over what should be a national responsibility. Because of the age restrictions in relation to tobacco use the card also is used for the purchase of tobacco products. I will look into the matter to see whether there is a way around the problem. The case raised by the honourable member for Gosford involves people with disabilities and I will reply to him later on that matter.

CABRAMATTA PLACE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Ms MEAGHER (Cabramatta) [4.46 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to give the House an update on the important work that has been undertaken by the Cabramatta place management project. Honourable members will remember that in April last year the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, announced in this place a \$4 million rehabilitation plan to deal with the many challenges confronted by the Cabramatta community. The idea of place management is to deliver a whole-of-government approach to those challenges. So instead of focusing

just on initiatives in policing we are making a serious attempt to go to the heart of the problem. While the community has enjoyed the benefits of increased police dollars and high-profile police operations, there has been concerted development in other areas such as health. In technical and further education better assistance is being provided to school leavers to enable them to make the transition from the education system into vocational training. On Friday morning in my electorate I will launch an employment initiative that is being undertaken with the Retail Traders Association. Young people will be given the opportunity of traineeships with job certainty. By dealing with health, policing and education we are going to the heart of the problem and offering young people opportunities and jobs.

The turnaround in the Cabramatta community is quite remarkable. It has been assisted by the efforts of Fairfield City Council, which has formed a very constructive partnership with the State Government in the place management project. The council has committed more than \$250,000 to improving town amenities to make sure that Cabramatta is a more user-friendly place where public space is accessible by honest and hard-working people as well as visitors. This brings me to the initiative that I would like to detail. Several weeks ago I met with Tourism New South Wales and secured a grant of \$15,000 for the project to engage a tourism marketing consultant. I chaired the subcommittee on tourism action in the Cabramatta project. The committee met last week and appointed the consultants to be charged with the responsibility of developing a tourism authority within New South Wales as well as a marketing plan.

Nicole Sheridan and Associates is the firm appointed. It has a very impressive curriculum vitae. It has extensive experience not only in place management projects but also in broader marketing. It has worked with the Darling Harbour Authority, Taronga Zoo, Sydney City Council and the fish marketing authority. I am sure that the company's expertise will help in developing a comprehensive marketing plan for Cabramatta. The company also works in conjunction with Regalia Strategic Solutions, so we got two for the price of one. The consultants have been charged with the responsibility of bringing daytrippers back to Cabramatta. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the Cabramatta community enjoyed extensive tourism because it provided a unique experience for visitors to western Sydney.

Cabramatta has a rich Indochinese culture. Because of a great deal of negative media coverage following the death of John Newman and a high-

profile demonisation of the community by tabloid media, tourism numbers have dropped off. The tourism marketing plan presents an opportunity to attract visitors back to Cabramatta and renew the economic buoyancy of the local community. It will also enable the community to market itself to broader New South Wales. By doing so it will restore its reputation as a desirable place to visit and to live. Obviously I will work very closely with the local council. The consultants are expected to provide their report at the end of June, which will coincide with the Sydney Food and Wine Festival in which Cabramatta will feature prominently for the first time. During the festival private firms will run coach loads of visitors, many of whom will be food and wine writers, to Cabramatta. Cabramatta has an opportunity to turn its reputation around through its natural community assets. When the plan is developed obviously I will lobby the Treasurer for main-street funding for a tourism officer for Fairfield City Council to implement the plan.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.51 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Cabramatta for her continued support for the Cabramatta rehabilitation program. Place management is certainly a blueprint for a great many things that can be done for the community, certainly in relation to policing and health services. The main-street feature that the honourable member has been pushing for some time has great merit. She can be proud of the project, which can be used as a blueprint for other areas in the State.

URALLA POLICE NUMBERS

Mr CHAPPELL (Northern Tablelands) [4.52 p.m.]: I refer to effective policing numbers in my electorate. Last week Uralla Shire Council was advised by the local area commander that one of the town's four police officers is to be permanently transferred to another town: I do not mean only the person, I mean the position. Therefore, a four-person station will be reduced to a three-person station. To give a little of the background, in September last year I alerted the community to the fact that as a result of the police royal commission a number of policing positions had been recategorised and taken out of the ranks of general duties policing. On 1 September last year I wrote to the Minister.

For example, as a result of the police royal commission a number of police officers have been reclassified as duty officers, community safety officers, district antitheft squad officers, and drug unit officers. There are all sorts of new positions.

When those positions were announced I checked with the local area commander and contacted the Minister's office to make sure that these new positions would be additional and would not be filled at the expense of general duties police officers. The first advice I received was that general duties police numbers would not be reduced in any community, but in fact that is what happened. Consequently, the Uralla position was shunted to Tamworth, where the officer and the position have been attached to the drug unit that services the region. I am not complaining about that. I understand why specialist units are needed in the Police Service.

However, as the honourable member for Bathurst, who is in the Chair, would well know, country communities as well as city and suburban communities need general duty police officers who can respond to domestic violence calls, break and enters and traffic accidents. Officers are needed who can do community policing work, but they are not available. As a consequence of these decisions it is difficult for regional and local area commanders to staff their patrols. I know they are doing their best, but they are gravely worried about the position.

Individual police officers at the local level do their best to cope. If they are asked after a heavy weekend why it took so long to respond to a certain call, they will say they cannot be in three or four places at once. They say that sometimes it takes the rest of the shift and a large part of the next shift to mop up after a particular incident, that is, finish the paperwork and look after the villains that they have apprehended. Consequently, not enough police are available to do the normal jobs. Officers who have been promoted to those new positions tend to work from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Because they are no longer attached to the general duties list; they go home to their families when they have finished their shifts. That leaves the patrols short. There are simply not enough police to walk the beat or respond to car accidents or other incidents.

In addition, the northern area command has a particular problem. Of all the police districts in the State the northern area command has the highest number of officers on long-term sick leave. At present the occupants of more than 50 positions are on long-term sick leave. Therefore, those officers are not available. When that number of officers is taken out of the police stations across the region, which are already seriously pressed for manpower, there are simply not enough police officers to go around. Those stations may be able to operate under those constraints for a certain period but they cannot continue indefinitely. The result of the decision to

create these newfangled police positions, important as they may be, is that at the end of the day towns such as Uralla cop it in the neck. They simply do not have enough police to do the job. In fact, while Uralla still had the four positions, police from Uralla and Guyra were called to Armidale. I know officers from smaller towns are also called in to Dubbo and Moree and all the major towns. The simple fact of the matter is that there are not enough officers to do what general duties police are supposed to do: serve the community.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.56 p.m.]: I take on board what the honourable member for Northern Tablelands has said, and I will refer his remarks to the Minister for Police.

EAST FAIRFIELD HOUSING ESTATE

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [4.57 p.m.]: I commend the action taken by the Government to demolish the east Fairfield housing estate. I firmly believe that this decision is the best decision that could have been made in relation to the east Fairfield area. The decision clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment to increase the standard of public housing in western Sydney. Residents of the east Fairfield housing estate repeatedly asked for relief from the chronic and longstanding problems of the estate and an improvement in the deteriorating living conditions that they had been subjected to for many years. Threats to public safety for residents of the estate were rife, with the inappropriate design and deteriorating housing conditions serving to compound the problem.

Constituents have approached me in an attempt to be relocated from the estate as a matter of urgency due to both verbal and physical harassment. Others have recounted incidents where their car windows have been smashed for no apparent reason and their homes sprayed with vulgar graffiti. The estate was a haven for criminals and a major centre for the distribution of drugs in that area: essentially it was run by criminal elements. Following completion of the demolition, residents in the vicinity of the estate will be given substantial relief from the disturbance, crime and torment generated from within and around parts of the east Fairfield housing estate.

The Government, in its decision-making process, considered all elements of the problems that existed on the estate. The serious economic, social and unemployment problems could not possibly have been overlooked by a government seeking to

make a responsible decision for the resident of the east Fairfield area. However, a performance audit conducted by the Audit Office raises a number of concerns about the decision-making process and the decision itself. Whilst the Audit Office recognised that there are substantial problems at the east Fairfield estate, it stated that other public housing estates experience many of the same problems.

The problems of the east Fairfield housing estate were quite unique and not experienced to such an extent on other public housing estates. The estate had serious problems associated with gangs and crime involving drugs and violence. That was highlighted by the widely reported attacks on police, fire brigade officers and members of the press in January 1996. This serious public disorder brought to the surface problems that had been manifest for some time. The community was in crisis and urgent action was required to resolve the problem. Media headlines referring to the estate as the Bronx and the city of doom have given it a reputation that is arguably worse than that of any other estate.

Gang activity and drug dealing flourished on the estate despite the best efforts of police to put a stop to such activities. Crime, and the fear of crime, was at the forefront of the minds of residents of the estate, who held genuine fears for their safety. Random acts of violence meant that they no longer felt safe in their own homes. Even the efforts of the Department of Housing to provide support services for residents were halted when the department's office on the estate was vandalised, firebombed and eventually completely destroyed. Staff received death threats and, for safety reasons, were advised by the police to work off the estate.

In 1996 the department commissioned consultants to examine longer term options for the estate. The consultants concluded that the current design would never work and that no amount of refurbishment could result in a neighbourhood that would provide safety, security and a level of amenity comparable with other urban areas. As such, in July 1997 the department announced that the estate would be demolished and the site redeveloped. Whilst the Audit Office believes that the complete redevelopment of the east Fairfield housing estate could be regarded as a dramatic and expensive solution to the problem, I firmly stand by the Government's decision and believe that demolition was the only solution. There was no acceptable alternative.

The economic appraisal of the Audit Office of the action chosen indicated that costs exceeded benefits. But what cost can possibly be placed on a

standard of living and quality of life? Many residents were kept virtual prisoners in their own homes, a way of life that impacted on their health and general wellbeing. The Government has often expressed concern about the Auditor-General making decisions and assessments of a subjective and policy nature. Decisions relating to the quality of life and standard of living that people enjoy in their homes should be made by the Government, not by the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General argues that the east Fairfield housing estate was an asset that had not been properly managed by the Government. In fact, it was not an asset but a liability for the Government. It was extremely expensive to maintain and, more important, it did not provide services. It created more problems than it solved. It is ludicrous to argue that the estate was an asset that was being improperly managed. The Government bit the bullet and disposed of what was essentially a liability, not an asset.

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [5.02 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to respond to the honourable member for Fairfield and acknowledge the points he has made. I commend him for his efforts to have the chronic problems in the east Fairfield housing estate dealt with. It seems that the Auditor-General and the honourable member for Vacluse are the only two people in the State who find fault with the decision the Government has made. The Government has received congratulatory comments and recognition not only from around Australia but from overseas about its efforts to demolish what has been regarded as one of the poorest housing estates anywhere in the world. The failure to deal with these longstanding problems is an indictment of previous governments, and the Government should be commended for taking what most people would regard as a drastic step.

I reiterate that only the honourable member for Vacluse finds absolute fault with the Government's decision. The Auditor-General did not criticise the decision. He had concerns about the process leading to the decision but, at the end of the day, he acknowledged that the only viable decision was the decision I took. I stand proudly by that decision. The Government's neighbourhood improvement programs and its overall attempts to repair, bring back to life and maintain the \$13 billion worth of public housing assets in New South Wales are long overdue. The Government's efforts through the neighbourhood improvement programs are well understood by the overwhelming majority of the community. I make the point, and I will make it again and again, that when it is decided, because of chronic design problems, that it is a waste of

resources to spend more money on public housing estates, the Government will repeat the decision to pull them down and start again, as it did with east Fairfield.

FEDERAL-STATE DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Mr SMALL (Murray) [5.04 p.m.]: I am concerned about the lack of assistance available to rural lands protection boards across New South Wales at a time of severe drought. The rural lands protection board offices in my electorate at Corowa, Urana, and Jerilderie have now been amalgamated. The offices at Deniliquin and Moulamein have also been amalgamated, and there are offices at Hay, Balranald and Wentworth. The problem is that an area must be declared as drought affected before the farmers are eligible to apply for exceptional circumstances drought assistance. Rainfall has an enormous influence on whether an area qualifies for exceptional circumstances assistance. Small differences in rainfall can affect whether otherwise comparable areas qualify for that assistance. I appeal to the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Richard Amery, and the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, the Hon. John Anderson, to liaise and examine the drought conditions in New South Wales and many other parts of Australia.

The rural lands protection boards normally identify areas that are drought affected. The 50 per cent subsidy, which had previously been available to assist primary producers and graziers, has now been removed for stock, hay and water movements. On behalf of the land-holders within my electorate and across the State of New South Wales I request that the subsidy be reinstated. When an area is drought declared farmers are able to have their stock agisted until the drought has broken and a 50 per cent subsidy was provided to enable hay used for fodder to be brought from other areas to feed starving stock. One need only drive around country New South Wales to witness water being carted because the dams are dry. This is a costly measure. Also, a large project is under way to clean out silt in farm water storage. Farmers are concerned at the significant costs they are incurring because they have been denied subsidies and I do not know how they will cope if the drought continues.

One should not have to lose stock because financial assistance has not been forthcoming to primary producers. Booligal is drought declared under exceptional circumstances but the rest of the area covered by the rural lands protection board has not been so declared. Rain may fall in summer and

it is lost because of the dry conditions, whereas rain that falls in winter may be beneficial. However, rainfall has been light and there is little fodder anywhere within my electorate. Even irrigators have now run out of water and are unable to water their pastures. I ask the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy to assist farmers in New South Wales who produce fodder for our nation and upon whom their local economies depend. They are hurting. I urge the Government to reinstate the 50 per cent subsidies.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.09 p.m.]: I have taken on board the comments of the honourable member for Murray about rural assistance and rural lands protection boards. I shall refer the matter to the Minister for Agriculture.

ASHCROFT PUBLIC SCHOOL COVERED OUTDOOR LEARNING AREA

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.09 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a matter of considerable concern to me and to many of my constituents, particularly their children. I refer to the need and request for a covered outdoor learning area—a COLA—at Ashcroft Public School. The school is located in Sheriff Street, Ashcroft, and runs classes from kindergarten to year 6. It has a committed staff and school council, who are concerned about the absence of a shade area at the school. I have visited the school on a number of occasions over the years, although not necessarily in my capacity as the local member, and I share the concerns of the staff and council. I recently received a letter dated 10 March from the president of the school council, Christine Pearce. The letter reads in part:

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you on behalf of Ashcroft Public School council. Our school has approached the Department of Education school unit on a number of occasions seeking funding to provide a much needed shelter area for our students.

In term 2/3 last year, the school principal made an application for funding for a shelter very similar to what other schools in the area have been provided eg. Busby, Green Valley and Harrington St, Fairfield. The school was advised that we would be placed on top of the waiting list with a view to having the shelter erected in early 1998. We have since been told this year that no funding can be guaranteed.

Unfortunately the unacceptable situation still exists where our students have a total lack of shelter in the school playground. We feel the Department of Education has "duty of care" to provide such facilities for the students!

I am familiar with the school grounds and the comments about the lack of shelter are correct. The school has requested that the shade area have a gable-style roof with a skillion to cover a small stage area. It is proposed that the shelter measure 15 metres by 18 metres, and that the skillion measure four metres by 7.5 metres. I understand that three quotations have been obtained for the proposed structure, two for \$21,000 and one for \$27,000. The arguments put to me by the school community to justify the provision of a shade area are persuasive. At present there is simply nowhere for students to obtain shelter from the sun when they are outside the classrooms.

The school has no hall in which the school community can meet and there are no awnings or walkways that could be used as alternative shelter. The school is committed to a sun-safe policy—as, clearly, it ought to be—and is acutely aware of promoting a healthy lifestyle and behaviour, including avoiding exposure to the sun. The problem is faced by many schools, particularly those in western Sydney. The hot weather Sydney has experienced this year is of concern in situations such as this. The Ashcroft school council sent me an extract from the parents and citizens journal from term one of 1998. In an article entitled "Importance of Sun Protection" a number of points are made about students being exposed to the sun and ultraviolet radiation. The school council highlighted the following point:

The duty of care of schools means they must mind the health and welfare of students. This includes protecting students from ultraviolet radiation exposure. So it is important all outdoor activities are scheduled outside peak ultraviolet irradiation times. If this is not possible then shaded areas and indoor venues should be used.

I urge the Minister for Education and Training to provide funding for the shade covering. On many occasions in this House I have spoken about the needs of schools in my electorate. While my electorate has many excellent and new facilities, such as the new Hinchinbrook Public School, an enormous backlog exists to upgrade existing facilities. There has been an historic inadequacy in the provision of educational facilities in the western suburbs, and I have certainly noted an acute inadequacy in my electorate.

I note that the Minister for Education and Training is well aware of the problem. At the opening of the new Hinchinbrook Public School the Minister spoke at some length and with feeling about the problem. In response to a previous private member's statement in relation to Hoxton Park Public School he said that he was endeavouring to

meet the backlog to upgrade facilities, and certainly over the past couple of years significant improvements have taken place at some of the schools in my electorate. I look forward to the Minister for Education and Training continuing to address the needs of schools, particularly those of Ashcroft Public School in relation to the provision of a shade area. I ask the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development to convey my sentiments to him.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.14 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Liverpool for his contribution and for drawing the attention of the House to the need for a shade area at Ashcroft Public School. The schools in the Liverpool electorate were constructed approximately 30 years ago and many of them—including Bonnyrigg, Miller and Ashcroft—would not have been provided with shade areas. Of course, when those schools were constructed we were not aware of the need for shade and we tended to roast ourselves in the sun. I shall refer the matter to the Minister for Education and Training.

SYDNEY WATER PLUMBING REGULATIONS

Mr MacCARTHY (Strathfield) [5.15 p.m.]: I refer to Sydney Water's plumbing regulations and the way in which they affect my constituents. I thank the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing for coming into the Chamber this afternoon to listen to what I have to say and to respond to it. I was contacted by Mrs B. Liepens, of the Latvian community aged-care group, which provides a variety of services to its aged community. Among other things, the group utilises the services of the Bankstown Home Maintenance Service for minor household repairs. The Bankstown Home Maintenance Service is a community-based group that receives home and community care—HACC—funding for its work.

Mrs Liepens' problem is that the Bankstown Home Maintenance Service is unable to carry out minor plumbing repairs—such as replacing washers, fixing leaking toilet cisterns and the like—because only licensed plumbers may be employed to carry out such jobs. I am sure that many honourable members would agree with me that fixing a leaking tap is not a great problem. I have done that sort of job many times since I was a little boy living with my parents. However, I cannot remember the last occasion on which I did so—it was a few years ago. It is an easy task; it certainly does not require a lot

of skill. It seems unreasonable to expect the elderly and pensioners to engage a licensed plumber to do such minor work, particularly when a community group can do the work for them at little or no cost.

I wrote to Sydney Water to try to ascertain the solution to this problem and to obtain the relevant regulation. Sydney Water replied and enclosed a copy of the relevant regulation—the Sydney Water Corporation Limited (Plumbing and Drainage) Regulation 1995, which was promulgated in August of that year—and highlighted the relevant sections. The regulation would be difficult for a lay person to understand. I had to read it several times and I am still not certain whether I understood it. The regulation contains circular definitions. Clearly, the requirement is that a person is not permitted to do plumbing or drainage work if he does not have a permit authorising him to do the work. The regulation provides that "plumbing or drainage work" includes work comprising or affecting, among other things, a water supply service pipe. The regulation defines "water supply service pipe" as a pipe connecting premises to a water main and includes the fittings connected to the pipe. The regulation defines "fitting" as any pipe, apparatus or fixture used for plumbing or drainage work, which takes us back to the first definition.

The regulation provides an exception in relation to an unlicensed person doing such work. It provides that an unlicensed person can do such work in an emergency to prevent waste of water. I suppose fixing a slowly dripping tap prevents waste of water, but I am not sure whether that would be classified as an emergency. Even if a person assumes that he is allowed to do the work, and that the leaking tap or leaking toilet cistern is an emergency, the regulation provides that the person doing the work must supply the corporation with a certificate of compliance after completion of the work. That seems to be a lot of legalese and complication for a simple task that any handyman—in fact, just about anyone—can do.

The regulation means that the average member of the community cannot do such work. Some people may decide to take the risk and say, "I will do it anyway; no-one will ever know", but the elderly or disabled may have to call in someone else. Clearly, the Bankstown Home Maintenance Service is concerned that it cannot do the work, and it has been told that it faces problems with Sydney Water, WorkCover and others. A simple exclusion should be provided in the regulation to allow people to do this kind of work. Alternatively, a particular kind of licence should be given to home handymen to enable them to do such work. As I read the

regulation, a lot of red tape is preventing simple work from being done. I look forward to hearing what the Minister may be able to do to resolve the problem.

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [5.20 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Strathfield for being courteous and telling me that he had the problem to which he referred. The regulations and codes that are provided would seem, at face value, particularly for lay people such as the honourable member and me, to be overregulation, but no doubt there are reasons for having them. Indeed, these matters are covered by no less than three separate regulatory structures: the New South Wales Code of Practice Plumbing and Drainage, the National Plumbing and Drainage Code AS3500 and, most particularly, the Sydney Water Corporation Limited (Plumbing and Drainage) Regulation 1995. I understand that the Sydney Water regulation was developed in the context of the corporatisation of Sydney Water. Without making any further comment, I must say that it was part of the previous Government's regulatory regime which saw Sydney Water become a corporatised entity on 1 January 1995.

Two courses of action can be taken: either the Bankstown Home Maintenance Service can attach to it someone with appropriate qualifications to provide supervision or, alternatively, the regulation can be reviewed. I cannot do anything about the form of the regulation. However, I am happy for the honourable member to write to me and, indeed, to the Regulation Review Committee asking it to examine the regulation as part of its ongoing review. It is legitimate and appropriate for members of Parliament to take that action when representing their constituents, and I commend that course of action. In the mean time I shall continue to work with the honourable member for Strathfield to try to resolve this problem on behalf of his constituents.

TORONTO YMCA

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [5.22 p.m.]: The battle by Toronto YMCA to keep its doors open has been won. However, it faces a battle with Lake Macquarie City Council to obtain land on which it can re-establish its facilities. In the second half of last year the incoming board and new treasurer, Alex Anderson, found that the YMCA had accumulated large debts for a number of reasons that I will not detail here. Alex Anderson and other YMCA representatives approached me as patron of the YMCA and as their local MP to see if I could help. As a result I arranged a meeting with all the

local registered clubs to be held in my office on Melbourne Cup Day last year. I was amazed when at least two representatives of every club attended that meeting, as Melbourne Cup Day is one of the busiest days in the year for registered clubs. At the meeting all the representatives pledged to support and help the YMCA.

At a subsequent meeting a committee to save the YMCA was established and I was elected convenor. Over the past five months we have worked very hard to save the YMCA and, as I said, we have been successful. I congratulate the Minister for Police on providing a grant of \$5,000 to keep the YMCA doors open; it will ensure the continuation of the valuable youth programs provided by the YMCA. Toronto Country Club has made a donation and all the other clubs in the area, including the yacht club, the RSL club and the workers club, are planning fundraising events. Women's Rotary is planning a fundraising event for 2 May and the Newcastle-Lake Macquarie Clay Target Club has set aside two days in August for a major fundraising event. So matters are in hand. All the funds raised will be used to construct a new facility on a site to be determined.

On 29 January this year I had a meeting with the mayor of Lake Macquarie, Lake Macquarie city council officers and YMCA representatives to discuss the provision of council land on which to build a new facility. The YMCA has exchanged contracts and secured a 12-month lease on its current premises. However, it will be forced to move premises when the lease expires. The YMCA will use the balance of the proceeds from the sale after eliminating its crippling debts—a few hundred thousand dollars—to build a new state-of-the-art facility, thus securing its future. However, it needs council land and the assistance of Lake Macquarie City Council.

At the meeting on 29 January the mayor asked his property officer to assess what land was available. I was surprised when a different council department intervened and organised a meeting to be held at 7.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 1 April. Unfortunately I was not invited to attend, and I could not have done so as the Parliament is sitting. At the meeting on 1 April the YMCA was told initially that council expected the YMCA to purchase the land for such a community facility. After much discussion it was proposed that the local community donate \$10,000 to Lake Macquarie City Council so that it could employ a consultant, I presume to assess land availability in the area. Amazing! In January the mayor requested the property department to assess available land in Toronto; then on 1 April a different council department asked the community for \$10,000 to

undertake the same job. It seems that the two council departments do not communicate with each other—the same thing has happened on many previous occasions.

I appeal to the Mayor of Lake Macquarie, Councillor John Kilpatrick, to intervene in this ludicrous situation and to help the YMCA. Mr Kilpatrick knows about the youth problems in the West Lakes district and Toronto in particular. I ask the council to assist this worthy community group. At least the YMCA has funding for a new facility if the council provides the land. If the Government provides further assistance, I am sure the YMCA will build an excellent facility that will go a long way to meeting the needs of the local youth. Since the 1 April meeting a few people have contacted my office expressing amazement that Lake Macquarie council has known for five years that the local community needs an indoor sports and aquatic centre. The YMCA has agreed to its new facility being used as stage one of that centre. I simply ask the council to provide the land for that project. I appeal to Lake Macquarie City Council to come to the party, to assist the local community by at least providing the land for this valuable community service.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.27 p.m.]: The story told by the honourable member for Lake Macquarie is amazing. As Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development and the longstanding member for Charlestown I have heard the same story before. In the late 1970s when the lack of youth programs and facilities in the Lake Macquarie area was identified, the Lake Macquarie Police-Citizens Youth Club, or boys club as it known at that time, surveyed Toronto, Glendale—Glendale was also known as the cross roads—and the Windale-Gateshead area for a suitable site. The facility was finally constructed at Windale. A proposal to construct the facility at the cross roads did not proceed because it required funding to be taken from a nearby development.

Recently, discussions have been held about the possibility of amalgamating the Toronto YMCA with a PCYC. Citywide sport and recreation plans drawn up by the former town planner, Mr Don Caldwell, identify the need for youth facilities in that area. As the honourable member said, the council has now asked the YMCA for an additional \$10,000 to employ yet another consultant, which is ludicrous. It is a case of council officers running rampant. It is unbelievable. As the local member and Minister assisting the Premier on Hunter

Development I will appeal to John Kilpatrick for commonsense. It is no wonder the city manager lost his job last week; obviously he had no control over council officers. Lake Macquarie City Council will be a laughing stock if the present situation in Toronto is allowed to continue.

The honourable member for Lake Macquarie is deeply concerned about youth and youth behaviour, as are all of us. What the honourable member told me this morning before I came into the Chamber is ludicrous, to say the least. Ample reports identify the youth needs in Toronto, and it is necessary to provide a long-term strategy to address those needs. I commend the honourable member for raising this matter today. As I said, I will raise this matter with the mayor. I will not stick my bib into the Lake Macquarie electorate; rather, I will rely on commonsense, and I am sure the mayor, John Kilpatrick, will respond properly. I hope that we can provide an answer to this longstanding concern before the YMCA finds itself on the street.

BONDI RAIL PROJECT

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [5.29 p.m.]: The Bondi local community is concerned that the proposed rail project is in limbo. In early December I wrote to the consultants undertaking the environmental impact statement and pointed out that the extension of the rail line to Bondi Beach was not receiving good community support and that opposition to the concept was increasing daily. Many residents were angry that the Government's proposal appeared to provide considerable benefits for tourists but not for residents. Effectively, the rail extension is perceived as a premium tourist tunnel between the beach and the city with accompanying social, and law and order problems. When I wrote that letter I pointed out that law and order difficulties associated with the rail extension would be aggravated by the Government's decision to downgrade the police presence at Bondi Beach, including the apparent cancellation of the proposed new police station.

Rumours abounded from government sources that the police station was not going to proceed. I emphasise to the Government that if the rail service is extended to Bondi Beach and the police station is not established on the block of land that has been vacant for 15 years, significant problems will be created. I suggest that the Government re-examine the matter if it is seriously considering putting the construction of the police station on the backburner. My letter pointed out that if the heavy rail extension were reworked to move the station out of the beach park—perhaps incorporating it with a new police

station in the shopping precinct—and a mid-station were placed on Bondi ridge, large numbers of residents would be attracted to it as regular rail commuters. That concept may receive more community support.

My letter stated further that the light rail concept must be seriously evaluated. I was pleased to receive a letter in January from the EIS consultants, who noted all the points I had raised and said they correlated with many other points raised by community groups during a stakeholder meeting. They said the significance of the issues would be evaluated during the EIS process. The consultants pointed out also that feasible alternatives, including light rail, would be properly investigated—I hope they are. Since January it appears that the Government has suffered severe indigestion in relation to the Bondi rail project. Rumour has it—I can only work on rumours because the Government does not provide information to me—that a discussion paper was prepared within the Rail Access Corporation or the Department of Transport and circulated in January, but it has been held up in one of the departments and has not been issued to the local community. The community expected the paper to be released in February or in March, but it is now April and it has not surfaced. Everyone is concerned at the disappearance of that discussion paper.

In February I wrote to the Rail Access Corporation asking for a copy of that discussion paper. I said that the community was concerned about many aspects of the project and was anxious to review the paper. In March the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport wrote to me, but did not mention the discussion paper. I am convinced the discussion paper exists. The letter stated that in due course everything would happen through the EIS process. However, the letter stated also that the EIS process would identify the best possible transport solution for Bondi Beach. I hope the Government takes note of that because undoubtedly, after a proper review, it will learn that light rail is the best option. The Government has been silent on the process—apart from these few letters—so I issued a press release to the local community that emphasised my concerns and asked the Government to come clean on the plans for the Bondi Beach rail extension. I pointed out that the local member and the community were losing confidence in the Bondi rail EIS process and that the Government must give careful consideration to the project.

The Government may not have substantial support for this project, but if further support is lost it will experience problems. For some months I have

asked the Government to release the discussion paper. I ask the Minister for Gaming and Racing to ask his colleagues to come clean with the discussion paper as soon as possible. The local community is concerned about this project. It is time for the Government to come clean about its plans. I thought the discussion paper would be issued before the Parliament resumed; perhaps it will be issued at Easter when the Parliament has concluded this two-week session. When the Government decides to release the paper it should be properly circulated throughout the community.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.34 p.m.]: The honourable member for Vacluse has intertwined the

police with the Bondi Beach rail extension project. I have little doubt that he will keep talking up this issue politically. While I am not a lawyer, I learned very early in my police career that assumption is not a matter of fact. Of course, much information about the Bondi Beach rail extension is based on rumour. However, I will forward the honourable member's convoluted speech to the Minister for Transport and to the Minister for Police to see whether they can fathom something out of it and thus help resolve the speculation of the honourable member for Vacluse about the project.

Private members' statements noted.

House adjourned at 5.36 p.m.
