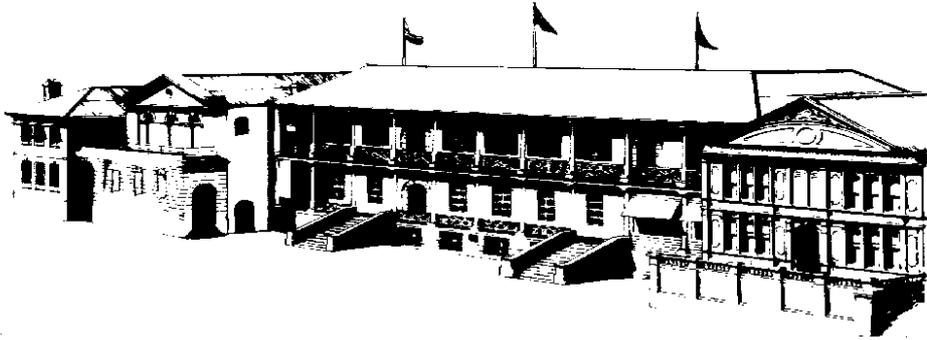




NEW SOUTH WALES



Legislative Assembly

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
THIRD SESSION**

OFFICIAL HANSARD

Thursday, 18 June 1998

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 18 June 1998

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Coastal Protection Amendment Bill (No 2)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Time Limits on Speeches

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing orders be suspended to allow the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party to have unlimited speaking time in his contribution to the second reading debate on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST BILL

Bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL

APPROPRIATION (1997-98 BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (TRANSMISSION OPERATOR'S LEVY) BILL

PREMIUM PROPERTY TAX BILL

PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 4 June.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [10.02 a.m.]: I am pleased that the

Minister for Local Government is at the table; I know that he enjoys listening to debate on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills because it assists him in his coverage of local government matters throughout the State. The elucidations of honourable members today will benefit his deliberations in country New South Wales during the next few weeks. I wish to speak in reply to the Treasurer's Budget Speech, but before I come to the substance of the debate, I make the point that this is the Government's last budget in this Parliament. As all honourable members know, in compliance with our fixed term of government system the next election will be held on 27 March 1999. I need do little else but refer to the moribund and becalmed state of this Government in regard to original ideas and, most importantly, future planning for capital investment, capital attraction, job creation and the improvement of quality of life in New South Wales.

It pains me to make those points. Generally, 10 months away from an election members of the public and members of Parliament expect that the Government will follow tradition and set out in its budget provisions for improvements to the State's infrastructure. That includes roads, schools and hospitals. Those provisions would include such things as installation of air-conditioning units in schools, opening of hospitals, the repair of an X-ray machine at Cowra District Hospital—which has not been repaired since last October because of a lack of funds—and the planning and approval of new sporting facilities. This year the Government handed out \$10 million for a new stadium in Campbelltown to save the seat of the Minister for the Olympics, and \$12 million for a new stadium on the central coast. But it literally cannot pay the butcher, the grocer and the everyday costs of maintaining hospitals in the central west.

Indeed, the Government has reached a low ebb. Telstra, the main communications arm in Australia, has threatened to disconnect telephones from a district hospital, and has terminated some hospital mobile phone accounts. We ludicrously debate a motion on supply. This budget is supposed to demonstrate the Government's leadership and positivism; it is supposed to show that the Government has been in charge and will remain in charge after the next election. But it is nothing more than a dull, humdrum attempt to show that it will hold the line on departmental numbers and current

programs within its various 21 portfolios, and somehow magically produce additional funds and programs to assist in its re-election next March.

The lack of funds to maintain the country public health system is bringing our bush hospitals to the point of collapse. There is not enough money to feed patients or, in some cases, make them a cup of tea. There is not enough money to replace vital medical equipment. I have already referred to the broken X-ray machine in Cowra District Hospital. There is not enough money to provide sufficient staff, either nurses, doctors or visiting specialists. That is not just rhetoric; a number of visiting specialists are trying to gain admission rights to hospitals, in particular in the west of Sydney and in the west of the State at Condobolin, Coonamble and Cobar, to provide services for the disadvantaged and ordinary citizens in those areas.

Ironically, whilst the Government boasts about what it has done for Aboriginal people, the areas that have been hardest hit by lack of funds, resulting in specialist medical officers being denied appointment to hospitals, have been large Aboriginal populations. This contradiction shows that the Government is not heeding the electorates' concerns. It is ignoring them, it does not understand them, and it simply does not care. Whilst some members may say that these concerns are rhetorical, the budget shows that they are not. The evidence is in the budget in black and white: the Government is not listening. If the broken X-ray machine in Cowra District Hospital was in a Sydney hospital, especially in the electorate of the Minister for the Olympics at Campbelltown or in the electorate of the Minister for Local Government at Coogee, it would have been fixed within a week to keep those members in their comfortable jobs. This budget clearly shows that the repairs may not take place for another 12 months.

Although it would seem to be an exaggeration to say that our country hospitals could have Third World status, under aid programs in Third World countries this situation would not occur. To give another example, according to an election promise made by the Premier four years ago, the finishing touches should now be taking place to a new \$6.4 million hospital at West Wyalong. But it is appalling that after four years not one shovel of earth has been turned; not one brick has been laid. A review that was carried out in 1992-93 established the need for a hospital at West Wyalong. Its construction was approved by the previous Government, it was listed in the 1994-95 budget and it has been reconfirmed by this Government in every budget since—until this budget. The hospital was to have been completed

this year. Indeed, the first patients and doctors should have entered the hospital this month.

Representatives of the regional health department and the Minister's private staff held meetings in West Wyalong with architects, who replanned the hospital on a couple of occasions, and with the local shire council about a combined operation with the council's nursing home. Tens of thousands of dollars have been spent in the planning process and tenders were to be called before the end of April. Then it was decided that more meetings were necessary, so the tendering was delayed. After the budget was brought down, without any prior announcement the completion date for the new district hospital at West Wyalong became 2000, not 1998. The Government has fudged the books and lied to the people of West Wyalong and New South Wales. It has taken money out of the health system. The Murray-Darling health system owed \$34 million. After writing off 50 per cent of that amount it now owes \$17 million. The Government has done that by denying the people of West Wyalong a hospital which this Government, the previous Government and two independent auditors of the district health system said was necessary.

Clearly, this Government does not have any integrity in the provision of health services, particularly to country areas. The Government has lied, cheated and connived to deny country people a basic and essential need. It is not a luxury measure—it will not improve the comfort of motorists or enable people to play football on Saturday afternoons. It is a health measure which involves life and death and research into diseases. Yet this Government denies that to the people in the bush. The \$1.7 million that was allocated in this year's budget means that this long overdue facility will not be built until the turn of the century.

The budget is more than a financial statement; it is written proof that the Premier lied to win the 1995 poll. I will return later to the history of that poll. All honourable members would remember what the Premier said about West Wyalong hospital. They would also remember the Premier's promise about the State's health system and halving hospital waiting lists in 12 months, which he signed in blood. The Government stood over a few hospitals to achieve its aim. But it has to admit that it fudged the books, it cheated again.

It is a fact of life that we have an abysmal situation in New South Wales in regard to health management and recognition of regional development. Even the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, who is

not particularly endowed with grey matter, must realise that he has been sold a dump. The Government has provided \$1.4 million for three offices, given him a white car and a driver and said, "Go forth and read the papers. Every time you read that private enterprise is going to do something, for example that Barters is going to expand, claim that you did it." That is all the Minister has done so far because, first, he is not very bright and, second, the Government has not given him any money.

The Government said to the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, "There is the Country Embassy down there that was started by the former Minister for State and Regional Development. It worked. It was good. Local governments, chambers of commerce, tourist development corporations, visiting interstate companies, overseas companies and trade missions have used it and have said it is working pretty well. But we will not give you any money for it, Harry." The Minister said, "That is okay. We will close it." There it is. The room is there this morning, but there is nothing in it. It is an empty room. It is like the Government, empty; it is simply not working. Bring back Ray Chappell to make it work again!

People are asking what the Carr Government is spending its money on. Well, \$700 million is going into Labor's re-election campaign, disguised as Olympic spending. The projects range from sewerage works to road works and they all share two characteristics: first, they are all in Labor electorates, good old Labor seats. Labor's motto is if you cannot win it by management, go and buy it. When you know you cannot convince the voters to vote for you because you have some ability, go out and buy them toffee apples. Throw them a few dollars and spread a bit of money around. Second, not one project is actually specified in the Olympic bid document on which Sydney won the right to stage the 2000 Olympics.

The Olympic bid document contains nothing about the refurbishment of George Street, which has now become an Olympic project, and it contains nothing about the road projects that have now become Olympic projects. They were not mentioned in the bid document, but suddenly they have all become part of the Olympics. The Government believes it can justify them because of the Olympics. For example, Labor's new \$400 million sewerage program for Sydney Harbour means that country town water supply and sewerage schemes will be cut by \$25 million or one-third. In order to try to win a few votes in the city, in order to try to clean up the problem of Sydney Harbour, the Government is prepared to spend \$400 million in the city while towns, and in some instances suburbs, in regional

areas are still using night carts. Honourable members know what they are.

It is true: it is Third World standard. There are more than 300 villages and towns with inadequate health standards, so far as sewerage systems are concerned. The waiting list in 1995 was down to eight years. It is now up to 14 years, which means it will be 2012 before those towns get a basic sewerage and water system that would satisfy world health standards and the standards of the New South Wales Department of Health. Although we have a grandiose scheme to refurbish George Street, \$12 million for a football stadium on the central coast and \$10 million for the electorate represented by the Minister for the Olympics in order to buy a few votes for Labor, tens of millions of dollars have been spent on each of a dozen suburban road projects in Labor electorates. That means that an additional \$40 million will be taken from rural road works in the 1998-99 budget.

When I addressed this House last year in reply to the 1997-98 budget I spoke of the horrible impositions on water resources in the rural sector being perpetrated by the Carr Government. In the latest budget those impositions have become cataclysmic. Under the Carr Government water costs to farmers have doubled. This Government will go down in history in respect of a number of things it has done. It is the first government in the history of this State, since 1856, that has actually charged for rural water—something that God provides and the Government takes. Never before has any government contemplated charging for rural water. It has charged only for the delivery or service. This Government has whacked on a charge of \$1.30 a megalitre for water.

The Government is selling something that it has not provided, something that the heavens have provided. Even in respect of those farmers prepared to pay because they are desperate for water, the Premier has moved to limit access to this basic ingredient for farming. For instance, the Lachlan Valley, the most underdeveloped farming region in the State according to the 1986 survey undertaken by the University of New England, is going to waste because water has been restricted before development has even begun. There is a ban on new bores accessing underground aquifers, putting at risk expansion of the fastest-growing grape industry in Australia. The Carr Government has imposed a ban on the use of water from certain dams to irrigate crops.

I am personally aware that \$180 million of development between Mudgee and Cootamundra in the south cannot proceed because the Government

will not allow people to irrigate from a farm dam—a dam that they dug and that nature fills. All they want to do in most cases is take some water over the bank, through a small pipe to water perhaps 20 acres of grapes, 10 acres of olive trees, or four or five acres of lucerne to feed to their specialist mohair goats. They are small projects. Let me relate the classic story of all time. There is a very modern, small piggery in Parkes—very small indeed. Adjacent to the piggery is a tank in which the pig farmer collects the rain water that runs off the shed roof. He does not catch any of the water that runs down the hill, only the water that runs off the shed roof.

The pig farmer has applied for a licence to irrigate a couple of acres of lucerne in order to cut green feed for his pigs. He has been told he cannot do that, but when he asked if he could let his pigs out he was told, "Yes, there is nothing wrong with that." If he lets the pigs out they can wallow in the dam all day. They can wallow in the dam or lie upside down in the sun and make a stinking heap, but the pig farmer cannot water a patch of lucerne out the back in order to provide some green feed for them—from a ground tank! That is how moribund this Government is. It is a fact of life that the State Government is not interested in additional export revenue. It is something that the Government has neglected. In the main, the projects I have referred to will contribute to the export income and therefore job creation in this State.

The Government's lack of interest is symptomatic right across the State, I have referred to health and infrastructure funding but the critical issue is that it is difficult to identify more than a few dollars that this State has earned in export income since this Government was elected. The State loses payroll tax and sales tax revenue because the farmer who cannot farm does not need the services of tractor dealers and mechanics. He cannot use the services of stock agents, fencers, fuel distributors and fertiliser spreaders. The farmer who cannot afford to buy land will not pay stamp duty. So the Government is really crueling itself. By constraining development, export income and the expansion of jobs it is reducing its own income. It is not generating business activity in order to boost its income so that we can afford better public facilities.

The financial blood of this fine State of New South Wales is choked if irrigation water is restricted. Agriculture generally will suffer from further budget cutbacks to vital programs. The Department of Agriculture, like many other

departments, has run out of money. Its bureaucrats manage it pretty well but they have exhausted their money. So for some months staff in major sections of the department have not been able to afford to drive out to field days to do trials. So it is cheaper for three or four officers to be put into a car to go to Sydney for training sessions to make them feel that they are doing something useful—rather than going out to advise farmers, canneries, and processors or doing proper research into disease in crops and animals. Perhaps they could do something positive about ovine Johne's disease.

The Department of Agriculture, undoubtedly one of the most prestigious and best run departments in this State, has been cut back by another \$18 million despite its efforts. The wool industry is just about clapped, the beef industry has lost nearly two-thirds of its income, the pork industry has major problems and there is unbelievable competition in the export market. The money cut from the department has probably gone to pay for two-thirds of the stadium at Campbelltown promised by the Minister for the Olympics. The only promise the Premier kept was that his Government would be green—to the point of absurdity. Ministers such as Yeadon, Allan and Knowles want to drive conservation, to make it their pyramid and be remembered for their environmental record. They sit in Cabinet with their green halos, yet they cut funding by \$3.4 million for work to reduce roadside, kerbside and pasture soil erosion. So much for those Ministers in Cabinet! What a weak-kneed lot they are: the bureaucrats in Treasury rolled them. The blue-green algae program and the Rivercare program received half their allocation of last year.

Law and order is another area in which spending by the Carr Government is woefully inadequate. The budget promised 100 extra police but the Minister for Police is unclear whether this is a real gain or simply to replace serving officers who resigned in the past financial year. The shadow police minister, Andrew Tink, has clearly demonstrated that the Government's own figures show that there will be fewer police in 1998, with the 100 promised, than there were in November 1997. Police around the State claim that they have become office bound because of paperwork and cannot get onto the streets.

Constables, sergeants and duty officers want to go out on the street to listen to people because they care what is happening in our communities. They care about preventing vicious crime, about stopping the theft of 200 cars a day in this State. Yet their capacity to deal with the escalation in crime and the change in its character is being inhibited because the

Government is fudging the books and is not giving police the resources necessary to do their job. Country New South Wales will be lucky to see a net single new officer under this budget. In denying the specific allocation of extra police in country areas the Carr Government is refusing to listen to the advice of its own crime tracking agency. Once again, the Carr Government is the uncaring government, the non-listening government. It is deaf.

The Dubbo crime rate has jumped so high that the town now is one of the worst for break and enters in New South Wales. Last year 999 homes were broken into—one in 10. The list of other country crime spots that have missed out on police funding in the budget is substantial. In Orange, the town represented so ably by Mr Russell Turner, the break and enter rate has increased by 20 per cent. Lismore, represented by Bill Rixon, is now one of the worst places in New South Wales for assaults. Last year 506 people were assaulted there. The honourable member has left the Chamber; he has probably been assaulted. Bathurst has a horrific rate of car theft. No wonder the honourable member for Bathurst, that great old campaigner Mick Clough, is resigning. He knows that the Government is done. He has had it. A staggering 176 cars were knocked off in Bathurst last year. He feels powerless to prevent it. I do not blame Mick for throwing in the towel. His own party, the Government, has let him down.

Shoplifting, ram raids and armed holdups are mentioned but in Albury last year the Bureau of Crime Statistics reported that 35 rapes occurred—a shocking figure to country people. Yet it was not shocking enough for the Carr Government to do something about it when allocating police resources. Law and order involves the most fundamental protection for one's home and family. Health is a basic ingredient of quality of life. Water and land are essential ingredients for the survival of man. They seem to be the areas in which the Government is axing funds and withdrawing services. Why does it attack the fundamentals? It is undermining the personal security of people and their quality of life. Why can not it recognise that people are hurting? They are confused and are under income stress and personal and emotional stress. The budget has not even attempted to recognise the hurt and anger in the community.

I suspect that there will be a change of government next year, which will not surprise many people. The Government—in the one opportunity it had this year to demonstrate that it was sincere and serious about going back onto the Government benches next year, and that it was sincere in saying

to the average person, which most of us are, that it listens and cares and will help—has simply blown it. The evidence is in the budget. This budget is a great example of a government deserting its people, saying it no longer respects them and saying it is prepared to abuse them. The Government is prepared to stick to the old Labor conventions but it does not have the capacity to make them work. The Labor Party listened in the old days—people such as Jack Ferguson and Neville Wran listened. We now have a compendium of left-overs from the Wran and Unsworth governments and a Premier who never wanted the job. He got the job because a couple of his colleagues, such as Peter Anderson and George Paciullo, would not take it on. He still does not want the job, and he will not have it after the next election.

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [10.30 a.m.]: This budget is characterised by the Carr Government's philosophy of budgeting for a surplus but delivering a deficit. This is the third year in succession that a budget surplus has been predicted and for the past three years there have been actual deficits. It is an extraordinary way to run a government; it is an extraordinary way to operate the budgetary process. There is virtually no budgetary process in New South Wales. In its first year the Carr Government budgeted for a deficit of \$238 million, which turned out to be \$611 million—it was wrong by \$373 million. In its second year, the first of the surplus-budgeted years, an estimate was made for a budget surplus of \$5 million, but a deficit of \$452 million was produced—wrong by \$447 million. In its third year the budget surplus was supposed to be \$27 million, but a deficit of \$416 million was produced—wrong by \$389 million. In those three years alone, comparing the budgeted position to the actual outcome, we have seen erroneous budgeting—budgeting that did not happen and that did not have a hope of happening—that had an accumulated error of \$1.2 billion in deficits. That is not the total of the deficits; that is the total of the miscalculations.

This year we see the third successive year of budgeted surpluses, estimated at \$45 million, but for reasons I will explain later the budget will yield a minimum \$450 million deficit in actual terms. That will make the error rate for the Carr Government in its single four-year term—the four budgets it has delivered—about \$1.9 billion. I say again, that is the error rate, not the accumulated deficits—they are more like three times that figure. Clearly, the assumptions for economic growth, inflation, interest rates and employment are substantially out. The inflation rate which is predicted—approximately zero—is incorrect and was known to be incorrect in

the two months immediately prior to the delivery of this budget. Because of the slide in the Australian dollar alone, the increased cost to an import-dependent economy will create an inflation rate substantially above zero. That will put the budget way out.

Without doubt, interest rates have bottomed. They have been at their lowest for about the past three or four months—again, in the months immediately preceding the delivery of the budget. One or two indicators show that interest rates have just started an upward trend. Some of the banks are increasing their home loan rates, which is the first sign. When the cash rate starts to increase there will be a general increase in interest rates throughout the economy. I think every economic commentator agrees that interest rates have bottomed. If they hold their current position for a period it will be because of the monetary policy settings of the Reserve Bank, not the natural effects of the economy. Without doubt, the pressure on interest rates is upwards because the Federal Government has budgeted a surplus, because property has flattened and because of the position of the Australian dollar. Those three factors alone, without considering more complicated factors, will put upward pressure on interest rates.

The Treasurer has predicted an economic growth rate of 3.5 per cent. The Treasurer has only dampened the revised growth rate prediction by a quarter of a per cent. Given the scenario I have painted thus far with respect to inflation, to the Australian dollar and to interest rates, there is no possibility that the economic growth rate we have seen can be sustained. Therefore, making a budget assumption of sustaining that growth rate by only dampening it by a quarter of a per cent is unrealistic and is unlikely to happen. Economic growth will undoubtedly decline, at least by another quarter of a per cent—maybe as much as by another half a per cent, although that would be a little speculative. These indicators were present in the months immediately prior to the delivery of the budget.

Again because of the cumulative effect of those factors, the assumption in the budget that unemployment will remain static at 7.5 per cent is also unsustainable, because economic growth is unsustainable. Those two assumptions are linked, and given that one is predicted to fall—but by not quite as much as I would suggest—without doubt the unemployment assumption of 7.5 per cent is also unlikely to be sustained. The flattening and downward tendency of the property market, especially in Sydney, will have a significant impact on stamp duty revenues which have not been taken into account in this budget. There will also be a

growth in the government payroll which has been insufficiently accounted for. This blow-out compared to prediction will occur because of industrial relations decisions that, again, have taken place in the period immediately preceding this budget. The Government has underestimated the importance of these industrial relations decisions and the impact they will have on its payroll—a significant part of its outlays.

The Government's expected blow-out is the key to all its portfolios as well. The expectation that each of the Government's portfolios will expend beyond their budgets, particularly in an election year and in a budget that has attempted to superficially restrain departmental outlays, is unrealistic. There will be a triple effect on the New South Wales budget, on the financial aspects of the budget, in addition to the overall economic indicators that have been incorrectly assumed. Even in Budget Paper No. 2 the budgeted \$45 million surplus is given three adjustments depending on certain outcomes of two of the economic indicators. The budget paper predicts, if growth is lower, that the \$45 million surplus will become a budget deficit of \$320 million.

Therefore, a lower growth rate—lower than assumed—will result in a \$320 million deficit. Budget Paper No. 2 also assumes that if the currency crisis continues to be as it is or worsens, there will be a further deterioration in the budget of \$315 million. In other words, the budgeted surplus will, with the currency crisis factor, become a deficit of \$315 million. If both take place the cumulative effect will be a \$635 million surplus. The budget paper suggests that if that is wrong and there is a higher growth, this will confirm the budget surplus and perhaps even result in a budget surplus in the order of \$230 million. This would be unpredicted and unexpected. It is more likely that the lower growth rate and currency crisis will continue, with continuing upward pressure on inflation and interest rates, together with increased unemployment. These factors combined will produce potentially up to a \$630 million deficit, but dampening both those indicators is the \$450 million deficit that I enunciated at the beginning of the analysis.

I have come to these conclusions by considering the views of financial, serious and academic commentators, and to some extent through my own knowledge of budgeting. Without doubt this third budget predicted to be in surplus will become the fourth budget to be dramatically in deficit. One figure that caught my eye in the Budget Speech was the projected \$404 million Treasurer's advance. Quite often the Treasurer's advance is set at \$50

million, and sometimes \$100 million. The fund is there to meet unexpected developments, such as natural disasters. It is unusual—dare I say not previously seen—for a Treasurer to predict a three-year forecast for a Treasurer's advance of such a large amount. This figure is clearly flagged as a western Sydney or Olympics unexpected expenditure during the next three years. It masks the essence of this budget, that is, advance announcements of the three-year program—it has now become a program—for the Treasurer's advance to be made some time in the next nine months.

Most of the departmental budgets contained in the State budget have padded, unexplained amounts awaiting special announcement in a mini-budget-style cocktail of election announcements due before March 1999. In most cases these items are described as sundry minor capital works or unexplained increases in maintenance amounts. This whole exercise has created a vehicle of deception within the budget papers, including the Treasurer's advance. It is designed to produce an election lolly jar in the order of \$1 billion to be announced in the nine months leading up to the March 1999 election. Electricity privatisation is missing from the budget, which signals that it is at an end within the Carr Government—at least for this year. The Premier has backtracked on many occasions and it would be a deception if in the lead-up to the next election the Carr Government magically produced a program of itemised capital or recurrent expenditure based on expected proceeds from privatisation during the 1999 year. It does not appear in the budget or in the forward estimates; it is not part of ALP policy.

I flag this item because I know what is going on and I know the style of this Government. If it gains office in 1999 it will not be able to fund these programs. The anticipated massive announcement in the next nine months on expenditure from privatisation funds ought to be treated as a deception. Net liabilities in the budget are down by \$3.5 billion. Whilst the Government and the Treasurer seem to be taking undue credit for this, they are reaping the benefits of one of the most significant financial reforms of the Fahey Government—that is, to commence to fully fund accretions to superannuation liability. In this way new superannuation liability will be funded and thereby not increase net liability. Over the next succeeding years as public servants retire the payment of entitlements out of accumulated superannuation fund assets, plus payments from the Consolidated Fund, will eventually eradicate the superannuation net liabilities of the State. I regard that decision of the Fahey Government to fund additions to new superannuation liabilities as they

are incurred—Mr Speaker, I seek an extension of time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Under the resolution of the House no extensions of time are allowed.

Mr SOURIS: The ultimate eradication of the superannuation liability, together with a genuine strategy to eliminate the State's public sector debt component of net liabilities through asset sales, means New South Wales is capable of becoming completely debt and liability free in absolute terms. This will be a marvellous achievement, which started its life by an assault on the unfunded liabilities of accumulated mismanagement, particularly in the Wran and Unsworth governments. As a Parliament we have a responsibility to direct public finance policy in this direction. The Government's fiscal ineptitude is heading in the opposite direction. The one item of good news in the budget for my electorate was capital works funding for Scone Public School.

I have a long list of urgently needed programs but this Government has turned its back on the people of my electorate. Construction of a new police station at Muswellbrook is desperately needed. The present facility is a collection of odd buildings and temporary Atco huts, which make it unworthy of its status as a 24-hour police station, the most important police station in the Upper Hunter Valley region. A new Roads and Traffic Authority facility is urgently needed for Muswellbrook. The existing small building is unsuitable for its role as a regional RTA office. Works are needed for TAFE, particularly the AREC Centre in Mudgee, and the Scone and Muswellbrook campuses. Road funding is urgently required for Sofala Road, the Rylstone to Muswellbrook road, Main Road 396—that is, Coolah to Binnaway—the golden highway and the Orange to Mudgee Road. Roads infrastructure should continue to be upgraded yet funding for these projects does not appear in the budget.

There is need for a duplication of the railway line immediately south of Muswellbrook to carry the ever-increasing coal tonnage and to keep our industry competitive and viable, particularly given the developments in the Asian coal markets. There is a need for consideration of duplication and new tunnelling under the Murrurundi range to allow for the development of the Gunnedah coalfields and the massive opportunities that will flow from that. There is need to consider the electrification of the rail line, including the line to the Ulan coalfields. That is important for reasons of noise and efficiency and it is important to replace diesel oil imports, which are

presently used to carry coal past the power stations to put on a ship bound for the Middle East so that the Middle East can generate electricity to power its electric trains.

There has to be a commitment to the Great Western Highway. Also needed are upgrades of hospitals, particularly regional hospitals such as the Mudgee District Hospital. There is a need for water development also. We must reverse the betrayal of water policy, which has denied water access to millions of dollars of viticultural development in the Mudgee area. Access to water was promised but has been denied, resulting in a denial of regional development. There is a need for significant commitment and funding to implement power station development. Significant planning for the next new power station in the Hunter, Ulan or Gunnedah area is necessary. There is a need for funding of major forestry hardwood plantations. What is needed is a genuine commitment to regional development; not a ridiculous promise of \$18 million over three years as this Government's sole regional development initiative. The incoming coalition government will shepherd in a new era of regional development, decentralisation and infrastructural development for regional and rural New South Wales.

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes) [10.50 a.m.]: I intend to speak of the needs of my electorate and of my shadow ministry responsibilities. The only item in the budget of any heart to my electorate is the announcement, finally, of the upgrade of the Gloucester primary school. That upgrade was promised 28 years ago. He who waits is rewarded, I guess. The previous Government included that school upgrade in its final budget, but did not get to deliver that budget. The promise then disappeared from budget papers. It is only through the good actions of the people of Gloucester—which is a very conservative, quiet town but one that was stirred into action—that the upgrade has been put back on the books. The people of Gloucester were concerned to the extent that they intended to vote with their feet and take their children out of that school unless or until they were given an undertaking that the school would be upgraded.

It was thus impressed on the Minister that this project needed to go ahead, and it will go ahead. I give the Minister for Education and Training some credit for the school upgrade, as I have previously. He met with people from Gloucester—although I might add that was only on the basis that they withdraw their strike action. As I have said, Gloucester is a very conservative town and for the people of Gloucester to talk about strike action was radical. The Minister has undertaken to try to push the matter through. Twenty-eight years after the

initial promise, the people of Gloucester will be very grateful for the upgrade of the primary school.

The budget contains nothing to provide for a new school in the Forster-Tuncurry area. The high school in Forster was approved by former education Minister Terry Metherell and was built by the coalition a few years ago. Schools are built to accommodate a maximum of 1,000 students. As soon as the high school was opened, demountable classrooms were moved onto the site and the school now accommodates 1,400 students. Already it is operating at 40 per cent overcapacity. The Opposition has sought from the Minister for Education and Training and the Government an assurance that they will expeditiously find a site for another high school, probably in the Tuncurry area. To date the Government has prevaricated. Departmental officers have considered and dismissed various sites. There is great potential for a serious social problems when a school built for 1,000 students accommodates 1,400 or 1,500 students.

The potential for education problems is bad enough, but the social problems that will be apparent are of great concern. I have been told that the area will not have a look in for another high school until the enrolment of the high school at Forster reaches 1,750, and I am horrified at that. I am sure that this Government will not be re-elected, but I nevertheless warn the Minister that if he thought there would be problems in Gloucester he should realise that there will be even greater problems in Forster if 1,750 students are forced into a school built for 1,000 students. Such a development is entirely unfair to the community, the students and the teachers. The Opposition will not stand by and allow that to happen.

The budget makes no mention of a new high school for Taree. The Taree High School is located in the centre of the town and is very old, built in the traditional double-storey design with asphalt playgrounds. Because of its location, it has little room to move in any direction. There is a great need for forward planning for a new greenfield site for the school at Taree. I am sure that my colleague the honourable member for Port Macquarie shares my concern in this regard. His new electorate will take in areas in Taree that have been represented by me. The Government must take note of that problem quickly. I have concerns about Old Bar also. Old Bar is the fastest-growing area within the Greater Taree City Council jurisdiction, yet it has consistently been refused both a high school and a police station. Every time proposals are put up, they are thrown out. I do not know what goes on in the demographic section of the Department of Education and Training.

It is beyond me why the department says it needs four, five or six years to consider forward planning. The department does not need the ability of an Einstein; all it needs to do is obtain census figures and then go to the council to find out about new buildings and proposals for new work to deduce that a particular area is or is not an area of significant growth. Forster, Tuncurry and Old Bar are significant growth areas. Every year the Forster-Tuncurry area takes second or third place in growth statistics. The department tells us that it needs to ensure that a new school will be sustainable. Of course a new school will be sustainable, and it is now time that it was provided. With growth in the areas that I have referred to comes the need for further infrastructure.

Finally, three or four weeks ago, work was begun on the Manning Base Hospital. An upgrade of that hospital was included in the coalition Government's 1995 budget and was scheduled to finish in 1997. This Government pulled out on that. Work is starting only now, with a projected finishing date of 2001. There is no guarantee that work will be finished in 2001, but, even if it does, work will be completed four or five years after the coalition would have finished it. I need an absolute assurance from the Minister for Health that this hospital upgrade will not be staggered. A sum of only \$8 million has been included in the budget for work on the hospital this year, which sends out a signal that there is something funny going on. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour has equal concerns about an upgrade of the hospital in his electorate, which he fears will be staggered. If a hospital upgrade is staggered, the Minister will be subject to the expression of a great deal of anger for the next nine months—and he will not be Minister after that. People will not accept that action from the Government. The upgrade of the Manning Base Hospital has to be finished with the minimum amount of disruption to patients and staff. The wrath of the community will certainly be evident if it is to be done in bits and pieces.

I am disappointed that the budget does not include funding for the Naraweema wing of the Gloucester hospital. Service clubs and the Gloucester community have come together on a proposal to upgrade the nursing home component of the hospital. At present people who are confined to bed and/or a wheelchair have a very limited area to access. Sadly, the palliative bed is at the end of the room, bounded by a screen and a wall. It is proposed that a hole be punched in the verandah area and that the wing be taken out into the beautiful gardens, allowing the sunshine in and providing a proper palliative care centre. All that is

required is \$2,000, and the community is raising a significant amount of that. This Government is so tight and so uncaring that it could not find it in its heart to provide that amount of money for such a worthy project.

The other matter on which this Government is deafeningly silent is main roads. Yes, there has been funding for the upgrading of the Pacific Highway, which goes through the electorate of Myall Lakes, but that comes as much from the actions of the Federal Government as it does from the State Government, and it results from an initiative of the former coalition Government in this State to upgrade the Pacific Highway. The Johnny-come-lately Minister for Transport in this State is trying to take credit for the upgrading as he troops up and down the highway in his specially hired bus with his Labor Party cronies, not even bothering to extend the courtesy normally accorded a local member when he visits an electorate. The fact is that those road programs were well and truly on the drawing board under the most far-sighted roads Minister that this State has had for many years, the Hon. Wal Murray.

Funding for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway is fine, but there is no point in having magnificent freeways—and under the coalition Government that is what that highway became when the Hon. Wal Murray became roads Minister and did away with the toll—if access roads are becoming dangerous. I specifically mention the Bucketts Way, which links the Pacific Highway with Raymond Terrace, continues north through the electorate of the honourable member for Maitland and into the electorate of Myall Lakes, and provides a link from Gloucester to Taree. It is in fact the old Pacific Highway. Also, the Lakes Way links with the Pacific Highway just north of Bulahdelah, taking in Pacific Palms, Smiths Lake and the Forster area. Both of those roads are in need of extensive repair. I repeat, there is no point having cars zooming along a dual-carriage highway at 110 kilometres an hour if, when they turn off the highway, they become involved in head-on incidents on what are virtually old bullock tracks that have been upgraded.

The Lakes Way traverses, by way of bullock track, two mountain ranges, the Koolonock range and the Meyers range. A proposal is on foot for part of the road that traverses those ranges to be bypassed by what is called the Link Road. A study of that proposal, commissioned by the council, shows that those works would cost about \$5 million and that the bypass would reduce the accident rate by 85 per cent and cut travelling time by about 10 minutes. The current Minister for Roads, in an

attempt to pacify what has been a huge ground swell in the Forster-Tuncurry, Pacific Palms and Smiths Lake area resulting in thousands of petitions and letters, gave \$3 million towards that project. The hook is that none of that funding will become available until 1999-2000, that \$1.5 million will be allocated in that year's budget and that a further \$1.5 million will be allocated in the budget for the following year. I have spoken with the next Minister for roads, George Souris, who has assured me that he will do better than that to provide funding for Link Road and the Lakes Way.

Every accident that occurs on those roadways will be on the head of the Minister. I do not say that about the Minister in a bad sense; I simply state it as the fact. It is evident that those roadways need upgrading, and now is the time to put in the infrastructure for that work, while construction is proceeding on the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook deviation from the Pacific Highway. That would be a lot simpler than having to restore this as a virgin project in two or three years time. I have mentioned the Bucketts Way, certainly a road that needs upgrading. Luckily, in the area that I represent down to the southern end of the Gloucester Shire Council boundary, that roadway is not too bad. The Gloucester council has devoted an enormous amount of money from its own resources to upgrade that roadway. However, the rest of the road, from that point through to the Pacific Highway north of Raymond Terrace, is very bad and dangerous.

Mr Scully: Did you tell the House about the \$3 million we have given you for the Lakes Way?

Mr J. H. TURNER: I said how lousy you were. The last matter of concern in my electorate that I want to talk about is the Nabic sewerage scheme. The former Minister for Land and Water Conservation presumably took great pleasure, in a perverse way, in trying to belt me up through my local paper, saying in effect, "Turner doesn't know what he's talking about. We're going to fund the Nabic sewerage scheme." But what happened? For this \$9 million scheme \$500,000 has been allocated. That will not even finish the drawings, let alone anything else. The people of Nabic and the Wallanbah valley are very disappointed about this whole matter. The Minister can be assured there is great anger in the Nabic and Wallanbah area, bearing in mind the unfortunate and damaging comments made by the Minister for the Environment in relation to the Wallis Lake oyster scare. The proposal to upgrade the sewerage scheme arises directly from those damaging comments. It was one of the supposedly great promises of the Premier that he would look after our area as recompense for the

hurt that was caused by the comments of the Minister for the Environment. Well, nothing much has happened despite those promises—just \$500,000. We have been led up the garden path, and there is nothing at the end of it.

In relation to my shadow portfolio responsibilities, I turn to fishing. The budget of the Minister for Fisheries has been cut. First it was blown out, now it has been cut back. The budget papers, under "Fisheries Conservation and Management", include a reference to programs "to promote sustainable harvest". Yet the Minister continually refuses to implement share managed fisheries. Specifically provided for in the Fisheries Management Act is promotion of sustainable harvesting of fishing. That is the single most important thing for people in New South Wales, whether they be recreational or commercial fishermen, and whether they be environmentalists or people with an interest in the issue. We must have sustainable fishing. We will not have it while ever this Minister continues to refuse to implement share managed fisheries in accordance with the requirements of the Fisheries Management Act. Even the Premier acknowledged that that is singularly one of the best things that was in place when his party came to government in 1995. We have the written word of the Premier on that. Yet on this matter this recalcitrant Minister continues to thumb his nose at his Premier and the rest of the community.

Likewise, the Minister for Fisheries has downgraded the role of aquaculture to the extent that it is practically non-existent in New South Wales. The only aquaculture extension officer who had been available—and even he was partly funded by TAFE—has gone. We are so far behind the eight ball that other States are running riot on us. Can the Minister not understand that aquaculture goes hand in hand with sustainable fishing? Aquaculture will take the drain off wild stocks, and will have import replacement benefits as well as export benefits. Yet the Minister has done nothing about that. We had the much heralded announcement on carp by the Premier, hand in hand with the Minister—\$1 million for a so-called carp eradication program.

I have mentioned in an urgency debate in this House the folly of that silly initiative, but I will reinforce my remarks. The average weight of a carp is four kilograms. The \$1 million that will be used will eradicate one female carp spawning a year; the female carp spawns one million eggs. Therefore, effectively, the \$1 million, based on the 25¢ per kilogram levy, will take out of our river systems one million carp—the spawning of one female carp in

one year! That is not a very far-sighted initiative. Tell the people of inland New South Wales whose rivers are being decimated by this rabbit of the rivers about this proposal and see their response to that silly statement and that small amount of money.

I now deal with fair trading, another part of my portfolio responsibilities. Some interesting figures have come out about the Department of Fair Trading—a \$20 million overexpenditure. I wonder why there have been three Ministers for Fair Trading in the past six months? I do not think any of those Ministers have got it right yet. The current Minister might have a go at tackling the problems, but even he is still on trial; I am reliably informed that yet another Minister for Fair Trading will be appointed during the parliamentary recess. That will make four Ministers for Fair Trading in six months.

Mr O'Farrell: Have you got a job?

Mr J. H. TURNER: It is almost as many as the number of directors-general; they have had five directors-general or acting directors-general in 2½ years. It becomes confusing. I repeat, the fair trading budget has been overspent by \$20 million, with \$18 million for employee-related expenses. That is a matter of grave concern. One of the main concerns is that this budget overexpenditure has occurred despite its supplementation with substantial sums of money when the former Minister, three removed, seized the funds of the Property Services Council and other organisations. About \$30 million went into the fund just from the Property Services Council alone. Yet the department still managed to overspend its budget by \$20 million. The budget for fair trading was strangely silent about the need to educate young people, particularly about personal debt and about buying as a result of advertising on the Internet and on television. Statistics have shown that personal debt on credit cards in Australia at present has blown out to \$60.9 billion. Regrettably that is a problem that will come back and bite this Government and governments of the future. Pro-active action must be taken by the Minister for Fair Trading, through his department highlighting the real problems associated with personal debt in Australia, particularly in New South Wales, and emphasising the need for people to exercise restraint in that regard.

The most damning part of the budget for mineral resources is the downgrading of the coalition's Discovery 2000 program. That program has been hailed by industry, the community, and indeed by the wider international market, as one of the best initiatives for mineral resources ever

introduced in Australia. It was a \$40 million, five-year project initiated by the coalition Government under John Fahey. What did the Labor Government do when it came to office? It downgraded the project by \$5 million to start with, and it was supposed to deliver \$5 million each successive year. Last year the Government delivered \$2.5 million for the project; this year it delivered \$1 million.

What message is being sent out to those in the coal and metalliferous mining industries who want to develop and explore in New South Wales? The message is: we are not interested; go somewhere else. Obviously, the decision by the Premier to close down Lake Cowal overnight delivered that message also, as did the need to spend \$6 million for environmental groups in order to get Lake Cowal going again. That downturn is also reflected in the Minister's budget papers, which show in the Minister's own handwriting a forecast downgrading of investment in new mines in New South Wales under this Government from \$1.6 billion to \$900 million for the next financial year. That is the Minister's forecast. The Minister is going to write off \$700 million worth of new investment in New South Wales because of the inept actions of the Government.

Dr KERNOHAN (Camden) [11.10 a.m.]: A recent survey of community attitudes in the Camden electorate indicated that the areas regarded as posing the greatest problems were health, crime prevention and education. Hence, I will deal mainly with these areas and the Labor Government's perceived inability or reluctance to solve these problems. I refer firstly to health. Prior to the 1995 election a \$40 million new hospital was promised for Camden by Labor. However, in 1997-98 the Macarthur health network strategy was announced, with a budget of \$85.6 million, to be completed in 2002, in which Camden Hospital was to be upgraded at a cost of \$15.3 million—in this case, a \$24.7 million broken promise.

The latest budget shows an estimated expenditure to date of only \$3.298 million—the equivalent of 3.85 per cent of the total \$85.6 million promised. This year \$6.8 million, or 7.94 per cent, has been allocated, which will cover the completion of the Tahmoor and Rosemeadow health centres and provision of Outreach mobile vans, but not a great deal more in terms of the necessary refurbishment of Camden Hospital. The *Macarthur Advertiser* of 27 May made the following announcement:

The redevelopment of Camden Hospital may begin as early as September.

Macarthur Health Service general manager Lesia Gale said project planning for the \$85.6 million Macarthur Health Network, including \$15.3 million on Camden Hospital, is now at a "concept stage".

While Camden Hospital is being redeveloped, Mrs Gale assured "appropriate arrangements" would be made for the temporary transfer of some services to Campbelltown Hospital during the construction period.

I have been informed of some of the proposals for Camden Hospital's refurbishment, which include: a new purpose-built theatre complex, including a day procedure unit; a new purpose-designed maternity unit, including birthing a unit located adjacent to the new theatres; two lifts to replace the existing lift; complete renewal of mechanical and electrical systems; a palliative care ward which takes into consideration the needs of families as well as patients; an aged-care and rehabilitation ward with windows; and a medical and surgical ward with piped oxygen to each bed. Those facilities are much needed. Such proposals mean virtually gutting the three-storey Hodge block and other parts of the hospital. The community has been vocal in its criticism of the proposed temporary moving of services to Campbelltown. The greatest fear is that those services will not be returned in the future. The article in the *Macarthur Advertiser* continued:

"The temporary transfers will only be for the redevelopment stage and they will be transferred back as soon as the renovations are complete."

Acting director of nursing Greer Jones said all staff at Camden Hospital would be kept informed.

"Any rumours that staff will be losing jobs or that the hospital will be closing completely are utterly untrue".

The lack of community trust in the Government's proposals is indicated by a further release in the *Macarthur Chronicle* of 10 June from Ms Gale in response to a letter from the secretary of the Save Camden Hospital Committee:

Ms Gale said although theatre surgery and maternity deliveries would temporarily transfer to Campbelltown Hospital during the redevelopment, mothers and babies would return to Camden after the birth.

The need for that second statement once again indicates the worries and fears that the people of Camden have. Once started, it is imperative that the refurbishment progresses as quickly as possible to minimise disruption of services to the Camden community. To this end it should not commence until fully funded, even though currently some services are diverted to Campbelltown because doctors prefer to use the facilities there. Thankfully,

Queen Victoria Hospital benefited from the budget by \$2.7 million in capital works funding to complete the half-finished new nursing home complex.

The next item of concern to my residents is crime. In that regard I will talk about police services in the Camden electorate. Nearly every respondent to my recent survey listed crime as one of the problems that needed urgent attention. The budget papers state that a record number of police—13,407—will be working in New South Wales this year. But the Government's own statistics obtained under the freedom of information provisions show that actual police numbers on 30 November 1997 were 13,415. This does not tell the complete story, as experienced police are resigning in record numbers because of low morale and are being replaced by inexperienced rookies straight from the academy.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 1 May published a list of rankings of local government areas in respect of robbery and home break and enter offences per 100,000 of population. Campbelltown, with 231.8, ranked 17th in a list of 50 council areas for robbery and 10th, with 2,052.9 per 100,000 of population, for house break and enters. The sign of the times, however, was that Camden listed 49th on the house break and enter list with a figure 1,163.2. This is confirmed by figures from the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research that show percentage increases in the following types of crime in the Camden area for the period 1995 to 1997: break and enter dwelling, 97 per cent; motor vehicle theft, 68 per cent; steal from motor vehicle, 25 per cent; assaults, 44 per cent; steal from dwelling, 47 per cent; and arson, 183 per cent.

Citizens are worried, and although the police are doing their best it is not good enough. They need more manpower and more assistance from the courts in dealing with recidivists. At a Campbelltown Alive meeting chaired by the mayor at Campbelltown City Council on 18 December, at which joint council, community and police efforts against crime in Campbelltown were discussed, Campbelltown patrol commander Superintendent Ben Feszczuk gave the following statistics on crime in Campbelltown. As at 30 April this year Campbelltown patrol had the ninth highest crime rate ranking in New South Wales. Last month the rankings and statistics were as follows: assaults, fourth at 107 per month; stealing, 27th at 241 per month; robbery, 22nd at 23 per month; break and enters, 21st at 183 per month; and motor vehicle theft, seventh at 106 per month.

Superintendent Feszek outlined some initiatives that were reducing the problem, but obviously it is a slow process. What is the Carr Government doing to put more police back on policing duties? Page 4-184 of Budget Paper No. 2 states that 150 police doing prisoner escort and administration duties have already returned to policing duties. This is commendable, but according to the *Daily Telegraph* of 5 June the Attorney General has directed police and sheriffs to escort women who have apprehended violence orders against their partners to and from court. With AVOs mainly taken out by women—over 20,000 were processed in 1996 and 12,000 in 1997—how many police will this typical knee-jerk response from Labor take from normal duties? The budget has allocated \$50,000 for a new police station at Narellan. However, this can only be a planning figure, as not much more than a garage can be built for \$50,000 these days. The lead article by Vanessa Mace in the *Camden and Wollondilly Times* of 10 June tells the story much better than I can. The article is headed "New police station at Narellan promise", and states:

Its official—Narellan has netted a multi-million dollar police station at a yet to be revealed location.

But the Carr Government, which announced plans for the \$3.7 million station last week, is refusing to comment on the future of Camden's existing 24 hour station.

The Government is also refusing to reveal any details about the new Narellan station which is supposed to be in use before the year 2000.

A spokeswoman from the Minister for Police, Paul Whelan, said she was not at liberty to say if police from Camden would be moved to Narellan to staff the new station.

She said: "The issue of police numbers is a matter for the NSW Police Service. All I can say is that the Government has now officially allocated \$3.57 million. And the police service are now in negotiations to buy land."

She would not comment on whether the Camden Station would be downgraded to a shopfront. Local police contacted by The Times last week said they had been sworn to secrecy, commenting that the new station "was a matter for the politicians".

That is a perfect example of the community's lack of trust in the Government. Two major questions must be answered with respect to the police station: first, will there be extra police to man the station when it is built? And, second, what will be the role of the Camden police station? I now turn to education. Much has been made of the announcement of a new primary school at Currans Hill, but only \$200,000 of the total \$3.126 million cost has been allocated in the 1998-99 budget. This figure will cover only planning costs. When will construction of this much

needed facility begin? Some \$191,000 has been allocated to finish the new hall under construction at Mawarra school, which will be completed almost four years after it was promised during the last election campaign. However, Narellan Public School, with a student body of 474, is one of the oldest in the area—123 years old this year—and has never had a school hall.

After being refused funding on a number of occasions over many years and by many governments, the school stopped making applications. Hence, there were no requests in 1995 when election promises were made to newer and smaller schools. Hopefully the school will be luckier in 1999. Confusion reigns as to what is happening with the new Camden high school. Under the heading "New Works—Camden High School Replacement Stage 2" \$598,000 has been allocated for 1998-99 of a total cost of \$3.68 million. The Budget also shows "Continuing Works—Camden High School Replacement Stage 1" for which \$2.50 million of a total cost of \$13.28 million allocated for 1998-99. I understand that the development application has not yet been submitted, so construction cannot progress. The only expenditure on the high school so far has been for the purchase of land and for planning. I wonder how much construction can be carried out in the next 12 months, and whether the school will be completed by the proposed date in 2000.

Everybody, except the Minister for Education and Training, seems to appreciate the population growth in the Wollondilly shire and the need for planning of a second high school. In a letter to me dated 9 December 1997 the Minister acknowledged that Picton High School has an enrolment capacity of 1,130 students with one demountable on site, and the sloping nature of the land presents some constraints. Current enrolments are 1,175, and one extra demountable has been provided, which is fine, but any more will radically affect the useable recreation areas of the school grounds. The *Camden and Wollondilly Times* of 25 February carried an article in which Mayor of Wollondilly indicated that the last census showed a growth rate for Wollondilly of 7 per cent, and asked for one new high school in the Tahmoor-Bargo area and one somewhere between Warragamba and The Oaks. I have spoken in this House about the need for a second high school in the area, yet no money has been allocated in the Budget to purchase a site—the first step in a theoretical three-year program to build a new high school.

Moreover, the reality of purchase, approval and construction times these days is a minimum of

five years, which could extend to eight to get a new high school up and running. The only real winner in the education stakes was Campbelltown TAFE, which received \$4.086 million of the \$6.308 million needed for arts, media and child studies facilities. I was unable to find out how much of that money was Federal and how much was State. The Picton sewerage scheme has been an ongoing matter for about 30 years. The major cost for the Picton sewerage scheme is not listed in the budget papers, as it is being negotiated as a build-own-operate scheme. Despite recent statements by Sydney Water officers, in response to my question last week the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning stated that the \$3,000 capital contribution per service does not have to be paid by residents, and I thank the Minister for that statement and confirmation.

The Picton scheme must go ahead. It is at the tendering stage. Perhaps this is another better-late-than-never scenario. However, Wollondilly residents with on-site sewerage systems are being slugged \$30 for registration and \$70 for inspections under Labor Government regulations. After all these years, another 18 months until the completion of the sewerage system for Picton, Tahmoor and Thirlmere will have little deleterious effect on the environment. Surely an exemption from these charges can be granted for those residents who have waited so long for their promised sewerage system. One of the fully funded items for the Camden electorate in this Budget is the promise of new fire stations for Narellan and Rosemeadow. Page 4-130 of Budget Paper No. 2 states that \$6.4 million has been allocated for six new fire stations, including those mentioned, together with associated full year recurrent expenditure of \$3.8 million.

However, on page 31 of the western Sydney budget statement the figures for these six stations are shown as \$8.4 million and \$4.1 million respectively. Whichever is correct, it is hoped that Rosemeadow and Narellan will get their much needed new fire stations. However, the question is whether they will be manned by permanent fire brigade personnel or volunteers, who are paid a retainer with hourly rates for attending emergencies and training. The fastest growing area in New South Wales deserves full-time professionals to protect its communities. The Rural Fire Service budget includes \$19 million towards a continuing tanker program which will provide an additional 155 new tankers and 100 to 150 replacement and second-hand tankers statewide. Although Wollondilly Bush Fire Service has received many tankers in the past eight years, it has a lot of bush and many bush fire brigades. It is still operating six tankers that are

more than 30 years old and six that are more than 20 years old. Such old tankers must be replaced to avoid future tragedies.

The budget contains no funding for major road improvements in the Camden electorate. The much-needed M5 east motorway, which was announced for the forthcoming year, is the only project in the entire capital works budget that does not have an estimated total cost. The axiom "Better late than never" is again applicable here, despite delays that have led to \$20 million of New South Wales taxpayers' money being paid in damages to the motorway operators. On 27 May I spoke in this House about the problems of changing the M5 before the M5 east is complete. I will not recount those problems again today. Though the Cowpasture Road-Camden Valley Way-Bringelly Road intersection is currently in the Labor electorate of Badgerys Creek, I am pleased that \$5.3 million of the total cost of \$7.2 million has been allocated in this year's budget for its upgrading. I thank the Minister for that. My recent speech in this House on this subject has been vindicated by an acknowledgement of the problems created by this road and the provision of funds in this budget.

Mr Scully: Give us a big tick.

Dr KERNOHAN: I have thanked the Minister, that is enough. The budget includes a \$50,000 allocation for the upgrade of Campbelltown railway station, but that amount will only fund the completion of work on various sections of the station that were previously listed for upgrade. I am pleased that the Labor Government will continue the major upgrade of this station that was commenced by the former coalition Government. The upgrade includes the installation of a lift at the north end of the overhead bridge to the major car park area. The installation of that lift has been complicated by the fact that the Department of Transport and Campbelltown City Council had an interest in that area and in its upgrading. However, more than three years have now passed and there appears to be no solution to that problem. A lift has certainly not been installed and the car park has not been upgraded. When will that occur? I thought the Minister for the Olympics, the former Minister for Roads, would have sorted out these problems and would have ensured that his railway station, which is also used by my constituents, was upgraded properly under the Carr Labor Government.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Shedden.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Private members' statements, by leave, taken forthwith.

ALBURY ELECTORATE DRUG DEALING

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [11.30 a.m.]: My constituents are gravely concerned about the lenient sentences being imposed on people involved in drug dealing. There have been a number of recent examples of that in my electorate. The police are so concerned that they have taken the unusual step of writing to the Director of Public Prosecutions about some of the light sentences that have been imposed and the need to appeal against those sentences. Honourable members would be aware that the use of drugs in our community is ruining the lives of many young people and their families. Drug-taking is extremely destructive. Young lives are being lost or ruined. In the Albury electorate there has been a recent rash of petty crime and burglaries associated with drug taking.

Young people who are desperate for money will do anything to get hold of some cash so they can buy drugs. They break into houses regularly. There are reports of young people carrying sports bags who are breaking into houses and stealing whatever they can get their hands on to feed their dreadful drug habits. The police are spending a great deal of time and community money to combat this dreadful scourge in our community. Last year the police conducted an expensive surveillance program and, as a result, arrested Sylvia Planing and Edward Tindle, who were found with drugs. They were arrested as a result of police had tapping their phones and recording conversations between them. Police then found a large quantity of amphetamines at Sylvia Planing's home. Those people had been planning to cut those amphetamines with glucose, thus providing them with a large quantity of drugs which would have been worth a great deal of money on the street.

Sylvia Planing was sentenced at Cootamundra court to nine months gaol and Edward Tindle was ordered to perform 500 hours community service. Those sentences are totally inadequate. So far as I am aware, the Director of Public Prosecutions has not yet decided whether to appeal against those sentences. The judge who sentenced Tindle said that he would not impose a sentence of weekend detention because he lived too far from the gaol and it would be inconvenient for him. That is too bad for Mr Tindle! He was prepared to ruin the lives of young people and he should have been sent to gaol.

Recently a man in Albury was shot at his business premises. As a result police raided properties owned by the Black Uhlan biker gang and a home owned by Mr Allan Arthur Whittaker. When they raided that home they found that Mr Whittaker, who was not licensed to own firearms, had a pump-action shotgun, a .357 magnum revolver, ammunition for .22 calibre, .38 calibre and 3.57 calibre firearms and shotgun ammunition. They found a spiked mace, a slingshot fitted with a wrist brace, a knuckleduster with spikes and blade, a .22 calibre rifle with a silencer, another shotgun in Mr Whittaker's garage and more ammunition, and two bundles of cannabis weighing 1,096 grams with a street value of more than \$32,000. When Mr Whittaker appeared in court the magistrate said that he had more than three times the deemed supply amount of 300 grams.

The magistrate said that these were serious charges, but Mr Whittaker got a \$1,000 two-year bond, was fined \$500 dollars and got 200 hours community service. That is ridiculous! This matter was dealt with only recently by the courts. The DPP should appeal in both of the cases to which I have referred. Offenders such as these should go to gaol. The community expects and wants them to go to gaol. The police have worked hard to bring them to justice and they are disappointed because, after all their hard work, offenders are given community service orders. In this case the judge said that the offender lived too far from the gaol to be given a sentence of periodic detention. It is nonsense! Drug dealers are ruining lives and destroying our society, and the courts are treating the whole matter as a joke.

CANTERBURY ELECTORATE CRIME

Mr MOSS (Canterbury) [11.35 p.m.]: Shoplifting and armed robberies are on the increase in my electorate. Shoplifting has become virtually a daily occurrence. A group of shops is usually knocked over all at once. Hardly a week goes by when I am not informed of an armed hold-up at a shop, garage or bank. Armed hold-ups are the most extreme form of shoplifting. Burglars are escaping with goods or cash and shopkeepers, their staff and customers run the risk of being injured or killed by some half-crazed burglar. Police at Campsie have acknowledged the seriousness of the situation and have decided to do something positive in an effort to reduce crime and to demonstrate to the crooks that the Campsie local area command is not a pushover for burglaries and, in particular, is no easy target for armed hold-ups. To this end an armed robbery awareness forum has been organised by Campsie

police and members of the local business community are being encouraged to attend. The forum will take place on 7 July at Canterbury Leagues Club at Belmore, which is a central location for the Campsie command and is well placed to attract members of the business community from nearby suburbs like Campsie and Earlwood.

In the words of the police the aim of the forum is to promote a pro-active deterrent to armed hold-ups and a reactive preparedness to handle such instances. The police consider it necessary to educate the business community who, in many instances, have not helped the situation with respect to armed hold-ups or, should I say, have unwittingly contributed to the success of many armed hold-ups. The forum will therefore provide a number of important tips to prevent armed hold-ups and the procedures which should be followed in the event of a hold-up. The forum will not be a public meeting as such; it will be more like a training seminar to equip business people with the necessary skills to deter hold-ups and prevent unnecessary violence. A range of expert speakers will address the forum, including a fingerprinting expert, a crime scene sergeant, an officer from the police video unit, security industry personnel and a representative of the Sydney City Mission victims of crime unit.

Needless to say, the line-up of speakers will deal with all the important matters associated with hold-ups. Paul Birch and Jeff Davis, the two detectives responsible for organising the forum, have assembled an information kit to be distributed to all participants. That kit includes suggested warning signs that indicate premises are under video surveillance and an incident report sheet which provides a simple but effective way of describing an offender. Police do not profess to have all the answers to hold-up prevention. They are keen to learn and the kit includes information sheets to be returned to the police which detail individual shopkeeper's observations and concerns.

Although the forum is primarily for business people, I have been invited to attend, and I am looking forward to it. After having been briefed on the format of the forum, I am convinced more than ever of the need to educate and re-educate the community and to update information on matters connected with armed hold-ups. For example, the police have already given me a range of simple tips to deter armed robbers. In an effort to track down criminals, the police ask shopkeepers to adopt certain procedures after an armed hold-up has occurred. The best way to introduce these measures is by way of explanation to the business community. That will occur at the forum, to which there has

been a positive response from local business people. If no-one is shot at or physically attacked in an armed hold-up the public tends to dismiss it as being no big deal, and we tend to forget the mental trauma a person can suffer as a result of a hold-up. Few people would remain mentally unscarred if they found themselves looking down the barrel of a sawn-off shotgun, and that is what frequently occurs.

I am pleased that the forum will also give advice on assistance to the victims of armed hold-ups. That segment of the forum demonstrates the caring nature of Campsie police. I congratulate them on organising this forum. I stress that this move is not the result of a directive from the Commissioner of Police or police headquarters or the regional office. The forthcoming forum, which undoubtedly will be successful, is the brainchild of the Campsie local area command. The Campsie Police Superintendent, Morris West, his fellow officers and staff are to be commended for addressing the problem of armed hold-ups in such a positive way. In particular, I thank Detectives Davis and Birch for their hard work in organising the forum. The decision to conduct this forum demonstrates a commitment by Campsie police to stamp out armed hold-ups within its local area command, and I have no doubt that this event will serve as a model that will be followed by other police commands.

SEVEN HILLS CAR PARK SURVEILLANCE

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [11.40 a.m.]: On 26 May I raised in this House concerns about surveillance problems at the Seven Hills commuter car park. Some of my constituents had queried how their vehicles could have been vandalised when the car park was supposedly under video surveillance. At that time I urged the Minister for Transport to immediately investigate the video surveillance equipment that was located in the car park. In response, the Minister for Education and Training, who was in the Chamber at the time, indicated that he was aware that the car park had been the subject of a great deal of investigation and there had been many associated problems of vandalism and theft.

The Minister for Education and Training said that the latest information he had from the Minister for Transport was that a decision about the supervision of the video surveillance equipment had been delayed because of a demarcation dispute between transport workers and the police. I first raised this matter in February last year, and I am appalled to advise the House that it has still not been rectified. A letter published in this week's *Hills News* states that the writer's car had been vandalised

at the Seven Hills car park, and that from talking to others he had learned that one person's car had been stolen three times and another car, considered unstealable, had disappeared, whilst other car windscreens had been smashed. All of these crimes occurred at the Seven Hills car park, which is supposedly under video surveillance.

After making further inquiries last Monday from Superintendent Ballard, the local area commander of Blacktown police, I received written confirmation about the state of the surveillance system at this car park. The superintendent stated that following the police restructure responsibility for the system was transferred to Blacktown Police Station and the responsibility for the review of the tapes was given to the Blacktown intelligence officer, who reviews the tapes when an incident is reported. However, the system has not been working for one month because of poor picture quality. The superintendent said that discussions were continuing with the Department of Transport to improve the quality of the tape and to correct the camera angle, focus and car park lighting.

As the local area commander, Superintendent Ballard will not sign off on an agreement for the operation of the closed circuit television system, which is owned by the Department of Transport, until it is of a satisfactory standard. I fully understand his position and support him in his endeavours. He went on to say that on 8 May advice was received from the Department of Transport that work on the system would be completed in May. The work has not been completed, and no further completion date has been specified. I commend this hard-working police superintendent for his efforts. He has given patrol cars the task of regularly patrolling the car park and has asked his officers as part of their daily duties to speak to relevant persons in the vicinity. A number of arrests have been made as a result of that strategy. In addition, a number of arrests have been made as a result of covert operations that have been conducted at the car park.

Car theft is a significant problem in the western suburbs of Sydney. Yet this video surveillance equipment, which is owned by the Department of Transport, is obviously inadequate to protect the cars of many of my constituents, who drive to Seven Hills Railway Station to commute to their places of employment. Honourable members will recall that on many occasions I have spoken about the lack of a rail service for my constituents, who are forced to leave their cars in the Seven Hills car park. Surely it is not too much to ask that their vehicles be protected. The letter that was published

in the *Hills News*, an excellent publication, also stated:

We have a wonderful multi-level car parking facility at Seven Hills station. It is reasonable to expect it to be secure and thereby encourage people to take the train and reduce the pollution created by private cars.

The security of the Seven Hills car park is an important issue for the residents of my electorate and for the residents of other areas who regularly use it. The letter continued:

Please don't let thieves and vandals continue their selfish practices unopposed.

I join with the author of the letter in demanding action to ensure the safety and security of Seven Hills Railway Station. The author of the letter also made the following point:

Most worrying, however, is the thought that if cars can be so easily stolen or broken into with such regularity, then how safe are the people returning to their cars?

People who leave their cars at Seven Hills car park do so with a false sense of security. I ask the Minister for Transport to look into the matter urgently, because both lives and property are at risk.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry): I welcome to the gallery students from the Auburn Adult Migrant Education Service.

NEWCASTLE GAS SUPPLY CONNECTION

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [11.45 a.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the inability of some of my constituents to access the natural gas distribution network, even though their neighbours can access the same form of energy. Last year one of my constituents, Kath Wilcox, contacted AGL Gas Networks Limited in the Hunter to request gas connection to her house in Longworth Avenue, Cardiff. She had lived in the same house for 30 years and was faced with the necessity of replacing her water heater and major appliances, including space heating. Having read AGL's advertisements, she chose to use gas.

She phoned AGL about the installation of gas appliances and was told that gas would not be connected to her property unless four other residents living in houses between her residence and a residence seven houses up the street, where the gas supply pipes ended, also required gas connection. After taking up a petition amongst neighbours on both sides of her street and in a side street, Davies Street, not four but 16 households wanted gas connection. Two weeks later a written reply from

AGL, Charlestown, indicated that the information given to Kath Wilcox over the phone was unreliable. The goal posts had been moved. The manager of sales, northern New South Wales stated:

Thank you for your effort in providing a petition to connect Natural Gas to your street.

Unfortunately the number of customers and potential gas load does not justify a mains extension to your street. Again thank you for your enquiry.

Mrs Wilcox came to me as the local member seeking assistance, so I made representations to the then Minister for Energy asking that he approach AGL with a view to reconsidering its negative decision. I also pursued a reconsideration directly with AGL. I told the Minister that a monopoly provider had some obligation to provide a service to the community, particularly when surrounding parts of the same suburb are already connected to the gas supply. The new Minister, the Hon. Bob Debus, replied earlier this year. I thank him for being present in the Chamber to respond to my statement. He wrote:

An important feature of the competitive gas market is that gas distributors are not compelled by legislation to extend distribution systems or to connect the premises of prospective gas users to these systems. Nor are gas suppliers compelled to supply . . . The Act facilitates the development of a competitive gas market within which the decision to supply gas and extend distribution systems is a matter of commercial judgment for gas suppliers and gas distributors respectively . . . AGL has advised that Mrs Wilcox's residence is 140 metres from the nearest distribution system and that the provision of pipes to her and other interested residents in the street would be uncommercial at this time.

I have no grounds on which to dispute this view, and the *Gas Supply Act* does not provide me with the power to intervene. Regrettably for Mrs Wilcox, AGL's decision means that natural gas will not be an energy choice for her in the immediate future.

Like any good local member I considered that it was too early to give up at that point. I have had further contact directly with AGL Gas Networks, and I thank it for its courtesy and patience in dealing with my further inquiries. Whatever the merits of the microeconomic reform processes applying to gas supply to residential customers in New South Wales, including the application of competition policy, the regime has failed to deliver a service and failed to deliver energy choice to some of the people of Cardiff. There are many more pockets of homes in Cardiff apart from the one in Longworth Avenue where people do not have access to gas supply. To some degree this is the fault of an old regime in which the failed Aberdare County Council did not deliver comprehensive gas supply to suburbs of the city of Lake Macquarie.

The brave new world of competition and reform is leaving some of my constituents in limbo. AGL says that it is not allowed to cross-subsidise anymore. Domestic consumers cannot be subsidised by commercial consumers or industrial consumers. A pipe cannot be put in the ground unless it turns a profit. The supplier cannot service a new residential pocket and spread the cost over existing residential areas. These are the rules set down by the regulator, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. IPART inspects AGL's books. If capital spent on servicing an unserved area is not justified, the regulator can penalise the gas company using mechanisms such as adjusting prices or disallowing the taking of new capital spending into account for establishing a reasonable return.

I had asked AGL to consider going occasionally beyond the economically justifiable so as to obtain the reputation of a considerate supplier and good corporate citizen. AGL has explained to me the extensive process it used in this case, and in all cases, to assess the economic justification for "short mains extensions". It has advised again that the Longworth Avenue mains extension is not justified. I hope that the situation will change. A review of the Gas Supply Act should start later this year. The domestic gas supply market is not yet contestable but that will eventually come, we are told. The Parliament only this month passed the Gas Pipelines Access Bill. Last month AGL told me:

I hope the time is not too distant when it will be possible to have crews in those areas of Cardiff without natural gas.

For me it will be a test of the new competitive regime whether residential consumers have pipes laid in their streets. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Minister for Energy, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [11.50 a.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Wallsend for raising this issue and for his interest in energy policies across New South Wales. AGL sells gas to 700,000 households in New South Wales, but that is less than 30 per cent of the total households across the State. This compares with 77 per cent of Victorian households buying gas from AGL. Obviously, the utilisation of gas as a highly efficient domestic energy source is not as high as it should be. That is an issue for government, AGL and regulators to consider. However, increasing numbers of people are appreciating the environmental cost benefits of gas. Given those benefits, I am not surprised that the honourable member for Wallsend should be so effectively

representing the interests of his constituents in this matter.

I point out that electricity companies such as EnergyAustralia are compelled to provide electricity to households by the Electricity Supply Act. They operate under an obligation to supply because electricity is an essential commodity. No such legislative provisions exist under the Gas Supply Act, and that is because gas is not an essential commodity but an energy of choice. People choose gas over electricity. The Gas Supply Act facilitates the development of a competitive market in which the decision to supply gas and extend distribution systems is a matter of commercial judgment. If AGL refuses to extend the pipeline to residents in Cardiff, the Act does not give me power to intervene. But the Act does end the effective monopoly that AGL has in the past enjoyed by progressively introducing competition into the gas industry. In other words, other companies from now on will be able to gain access to AGL's existing network and the monopoly supply of gas to New South Wales will soon be a thing of the past. I thank the honourable member for his interest and assure him that I will again raise this matter with AGL and ask it to carefully re-examine the issue to identify options that may benefit the citizens of Cardiff. [*Time expired.*]

BYRON BAY PARKING

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [11.52 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of Daniel Johnstone, a resident of whom the central coast is very proud. He is a champion sailor of Olympic standard and 22 years old. He recently won his class at the Queensland State sailing championships and hopes to progress to represent Australia in the year 2000 Olympic Games. He has raised with me a concern which would be of interest to every member of the House relating to the program to educate drivers not to drive for too long but to "stop, revive and survive", as the slogan has it. Mr Johnstone wrote:

Our travel from the Gold Coast, Queensland to the Central Coast in NSW required many hours of driving after competing at the Queensland State Sailing Championships. Myself and my sailing partner had been exhausted from the days sailing activities and were expecting to make our journey home that evening. After driving for over two hours in the light rain we had both become very tired and in urgent need of some sleep. The next opportunity available to park our van and 25 foot trailer . . . was taken. This required us to move away from the side of the Pacific Highway and use an available area to "stop, revive and survive". The total length of our vehicle warrants the use of off-road parking and the Byron Bay exit had indicated the town was only 5 kilometres and suitable parking would be available.

On arriving at the town ship at approximately 1.15 am, we made use of the first available car park to gain some sleep and

rest. Upon waking, we had noticed that an infringement notice had been issued whilst we had been sleeping in the vehicle. The notice was served at 3.42 am with no effort to wake us and communicate that we were infringing the local council policy. The sign post advising that the car park is closed between the hours of 1 am and 5 am was not lit, nor did we have the capacity to wander around car parks at 1.15 am and read fine print signs in darkness . . .

The council policy clearly infringes the State Government program that encourages people to stop, revive and survive. While the area was advertised as a car park, the car park was closed between 1.00 a.m. and 5.00 a.m., and the sign is not even illuminated so that people who arrive in darkness cannot see it. The council, fully aware of that, is issuing infringement notices. What council usually has rangers operating at three o'clock in the morning? If the Minister is serious about cutting the road toll and encouraging people to rest when they are fatigued—I believe he is; he certainly gets a good deal of television mileage and is not a person to shy away from that—he will contact Byron council and other councils saying that if they have car parks that are available to "stop, revive and survive" they should be kept open and not closed off during certain periods of the night.

If car parks are to be closed off at certain periods of the night, that should be made clear to people. Road users should not be subjected to unfair impediments when they are seeking to comply with State government policy, which encourages people to stop after a certain amount of time and rest. In this case an outstanding son of the central coast has been subjected to this ill-founded council policy. I urge the Minister to support my application to have this infringement notice withdrawn. Further, I urge him as a matter of general policy to contact councils that provide car-parking facilities on main highways, which are valuable and well-used, to ensure that they are open to all users and that they are well advertised.

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [11.57 a.m.]: If the honourable member for Gosford has not already formally corresponded with me on this matter, I ask him to send me a copy of the infringement notice and I will gladly take the matter up with the relevant local council. I am sure the council has a parking policy dealing with matters other than fatigue management—probably a policy designed to stop people parking in an area for a particular reason about which the council is aware, though I am not. I join with the honourable member for Gosford in seeking to do everything possible to encourage stop, revive and survive. Driver fatigue is a killer, along with speed and drink-driving. Drivers become

sleepy, close their eyes and often kill someone. I will do all I can to have the council give a special exemption to his constituent. I cannot comment on the council's policy on parking, but I will be happy to take the matter up with the council if the honourable member for Gosford corresponds with me formally.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [11.59 a.m.]: On 17 April 1997 the Leader of the Opposition moved a motion about the Armenian genocide. He joined with members of the New South Wales Armenian community in honouring the memory of the 1.5 million men, women and children who fell victim to the first genocide of the twentieth century. He condemned the genocide of the Armenians and all other acts of genocide. The House should have condemned all acts of genocide and not just that one. I first met members of the large Turkish community in my electorate in 1969. They have lived in my area since then and I have found them to be honourable, decent, honest, hardworking people. If any plaque is to be erected in this Parliament it should be about genocide. One need only look at the monument to be erected for the Great Irish Famine, which one could say was a genocide, to realise that it is not an attack on the English. I have received numerous letters and representations from the Turkish community and I shall put to the Parliament its side of the story. In a letter sent to the *Sun-Herald* last Sunday, Muzaffer Orel, President of the New South Wales Council of Turkish Associations, said:

On May 15, 1915, the Ottoman Government took action by passing a law to relocate the Armenians to prevent them assisting the Russians and attacking defenceless civilian Turks.

According to this law, the Armenians were to be escorted mainly to Aleppo and Mosul. The governors of the provinces they came from originally were to ensure that they arrived safely.

People walked. The climate was harsh. There was a war on. Famine, disease and brigands reduced numbers. According to Ottoman archives, it is estimated that 50,000 Armenians died during the relocation.

In eastern Turkey at the time these events occurred, 2.5 million Turks also died. However, they were not the result of planned extermination by the Ottomans. Therefore the deaths were not genocide.

In a letter to me dated 7 May the President of the Australian Turkish Social and Cultural Trust Inc. stated:

The concept of "genocide" reflects, fundamentally, a racist attitude which could not be attributed to the Ottomans. Indeed, when Europe was torn apart by religious wars and religious

intolerance, people of the Ottoman Empire lived side by side harmoniously, free of any religious and racist persecution. It may suffice to recall that thousands of Jews escaping oppression in Europe five hundred years ago found a safe haven in Turkey.

He continued to explain his position. In a letter addressed to me dated 11 May the President of the New South Wales Council of Turkish Associations said:

Many people with Turkish heritage live in the electorate you represent. They are concerned that this decision was made in Parliament with only the Armenian point of view being expressed. There are many historical inaccuracies in the information which was presented to Parliament. We are collecting information written in English about the historical events and will forward this to you. Studying both sides will allow you to have impartial judgement.

I know Mr Orel to be an honest, decent man and I accept what he has said about the Turkish people. I have received numerous letters and e-mail correspondence from the Turkish community. Unfortunately, the New South Wales Council of Turkish Associations rejected an offer of a \$2,000 grant for the Australian-Turkish festival. In a letter to me dated 15 June Mr Orel stated:

At a meeting on 10 June the Festival Committee, which represents 34 associations in NSW, unanimously decided not to accept the grant.

We took this decision because we wanted you to realise how hurt our community feels about the Armenian memorial issue.

I have written to the Premier on a number of occasions. Recently the Minister for Information Technology, the honourable member for Liverpool, the honourable member for Heffron, the honourable member for Lakemba and I wrote a joint letter to the Premier which, following discussions with him, stated:

We note the following, in particular:

1. The events that are referred to as the "Armenian Genocide" are the subject of significant dispute by constituents of ours from the Turkish Community.
2. The discussion to date in the Parliament seems to have reflected only one side of this dispute. The Turkish Community feel they have been ignored.

The Turkish people are wonderful, hardworking Australians. I have visited Turkey five times and found people there to be delightful, responsible, decent and honest. They are not responsible for what may have happened 80 years ago. The same applies in relation to the history of my family, on both sides. They were sent out here by the English, one lot in chains and another with the threat of being hung. I do not condemn the English for that. It is

yesterday's news. Let us advance to tomorrow and remember that the Turkish community is a fine community.

COUNTRY AIR SERVICES DEREGULATION

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [12.04 p.m.]: Once again I bring to the attention of the Parliament deregulation of New South Wales country air services and the continuing access to Mascot airport for country commuters. Access to Mascot airport is extremely important to existing residents of rural and regional New South Wales and will be vital to any future decentralisation of government departments and private enterprise. Country people need access to the Mascot airport to attend to medical, legal and business appointments because of the increasing centralisation of services from regional and rural New South Wales into metropolitan areas. At the New South Wales National Party Conference held on 12 June in Orange motion No. 92 reads as follows:

That the National Party ensure that regional airlines are not forced out of Mascot Airport by excessive landing fees, infrastructure and landing slot charges.

I wish to dwell on those matters. Though both State and Federal governments talk about supporting regional New South Wales having access to Mascot, it can be done surreptitiously. Because of the forthcoming sale of Mascot airport, I recently led a delegation comprising the honourable member for Tamworth, as chairman of the country summit conference, and two members of the country commuter airlines committee to meet with the Federal Minister for Transport and Regional Development, Mr Vaile. We put the case that any agreement for the sale of Mascot airport should contain contractual obligations that country commuters are not squeezed out of Mascot. The Minister gave an assurance that the process would be considered and would most likely be incorporated. That is being worked on at the moment.

It is feared that by then only 36-seater passenger aeroplanes will have access to Mascot because of the cost factor. A number of country towns are currently serviced by much smaller aircraft, particularly towns with a population of less than 10,000—the types of towns in which the majority of people in rural New South Wales live. Until recently towns such as Cootamundra, Young, Cowra, Forbes, West Wyalong and Condobolin were serviced by Navaho Chieftain planes, which may have only nine seats.

Access is just as essential for the viability of the small airlines as it is for the major airlines. There has been a polarisation of air services in New South Wales. Eastern Airlines, a major service provider in parts of New South Wales, is now owned by Qantas. Kendall Airlines, which operates out of Wagga Wagga, has been acquired by Ansett. Hazelton Airlines and Tamair are the only two airlines that remain independent. However, the centralised booking facilities are controlled by the two major airlines, Qantas and Ansett. All government personnel are required to book through the government agency, which is controlled by Qantas. So the squeeze is on. If we allow the smaller airlines to be squeezed out of Mascot, by costs, taxes and charges, or through the forces of other commercial operators, we will do a major disservice to local government and to the quality of life and the future of the people of regional New South Wales.

I therefore suggest that where a town's population is 10,000 or less, the existing arrangements should apply and there should be no changes to the regulations in respect of those services. The simple benchmark I suggest is that where the population of a town is 10,000 or less, air services should be left as they are; and where the town population is more than 10,000 the air services should be treated on an individual basis. Clearly, the people of New South Wales who live in smaller communities do a sterling job in maintaining distribution of population. All governments have enough difficulties these days trying to ensure a spread of population in order to maintain services in country areas. I ask that all parties recognise the need to retain full air services for country commuters to Mascot and ensure that charges are appropriate and that small operators are not squeezed out for economic reasons. Furthermore, I ask all parties to encourage the proper and sensible management of slot times and booking facilities so that the country commuter will not be disadvantaged by surreptitious exercises based on commercialism.

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [12.09 p.m.]: I share the concern of the Leader of the National Party about the impact of Federal Government policy pricing regional airlines out of Mascot. Either directly or indirectly, there is a policy commitment that may result in regional airlines being priced to Bankstown. All honourable members would have an interest in ensuring air access for regional New South Wales operators to Sydney airport and should strenuously resist any moves to price them out. I am delighted that the National Party Conference joined

with the Government in taking up these concerns with the Federal Government but, as the Leader of the National Party knows, this matter is in the hands of the National Party Commonwealth Minister for Transport and Regional Development, the Hon. Mark Vaile, the member for Taree. He is a member with whom I have a good working rapport, and for whom I have a lot of time. But, occasionally, he does not involve himself in issues with which he should become involved.

My worry is that the Hon. Mark Vaile should be telling the Federal Airports Corporation—and subsequently the Sydney Airports Corporation, which I understand will be the body created from the FAC—that it should not even be thinking about pricing out regional airlines and forcing them to Bankstown. That is one reason that the Standing Committee on State Development has a reference on regional air services. That committee, chaired by the Hon. Tony Kelly, has been well received in country New South Wales and by members of the National Party and their constituents. We will be doing all we can to apply pressure to the Federal Government. All parties, in a bipartisan approach, should be putting pressure on the Federal National Party and on the National Party Federal Minister for Transport, the Hon. Mark Vaile, to ensure that he does all he can to persuade the Federal Airports Corporation not to price regional airlines out of Mascot.

COAL POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [12.11 p.m.]: I raise a number of issues of concern to the Parents and Citizens Association of Coal Point Public School. During my time in State Parliament I have had a very good working relationship with the parents and citizens of the Coal Point school. In fact, early in my first term in this Parliament I was contacted by the parents and citizens association, as a result of which I went on an inspection of the school and discussed problems such as white ant activity in trees in the playground and improvements required for the playground to make it a better environment for students. I am pleased to say that after some lobbying of the previous Government we were successful in having funds allocated for the lopping of trees and major landscaping of the school.

My work with the Coal Point Parents and Citizens Association continued when the school sought further improvement of its facilities. I am quite happy to say that in October 1995 I represented the current Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. J. J. Aquilina, at the official opening of the school's new administration building, which cost some \$410,000. On that particular day

the school celebrated its fortieth anniversary. It might be of interest to honourable members to know that the school was officially opened in 1955 by the Hon. R. J. Heffron, MLA, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. Coal Point Public School began as a school of four rooms, toilets and a wash shed. The cost of the original school was some £6,984.10.0. The new administration building was funded by the Government and is providing excellent facilities for the staff and school students.

Coal Point Public School is located in a picturesque setting, with expansive open spaces for outdoor activity. A new covered outdoor learning area has been established with the help of the Government, and particularly with the work of the local community. As I have said, I have been delighted to work with the local school parents and citizens association over the years that I have been a member of Parliament and assist them with many of their problems. Towards the end of March they raised with me a number of concerns about school buildings, I convened a site meeting on 3 April. To that meeting I invited Department of School Education officials, representatives of the Parents and Citizens Association and staff of the school in order to discuss an infestation of white ants and damage to buildings, as well as to inspect the toilet blocks.

There are two sets of toilet blocks at the school: one is a permanent building and the other is a set of demountable buildings that have been on the site for about 11 years and were in need of upgrading. This was agreed by the departmental official Mr Clark, who was at the school that day. After that meeting commitments were given that work would be undertaken to rectify the white ant problems and to try to make funds available for upgrading of toilet facilities at the school. I made representations to the Minister seeking his urgent attention to address the problems at the school. The parents pointed out to me that white ant damage in the school was of a serious nature. That was confirmed to me at the inspection. The Department of School Education agreed with the parents. I am pleased to say that rectification works are taking place, and I believe the problems will be resolved. However, of major concern to the parents is the state of particularly the demountable toilet block, which has been at the school for some 11 years. I ask the Minister to inform the House and the parents of Coal Point Public School what action the Government intends to take to try to fix these long-running problems related to the school toilets.

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [12.16 p.m.]: I commend

the honourable member for Lake Macquarie for the work he has done on behalf of the Coal Point Public School. His support extends back over a considerable period of time. The honourable member has long represented the interests of the school. As he remarked earlier, back in 1995 I asked him to represent me at the official opening of the administration block of that school. That event happened to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the Coal Point Public School. In relation to the issues that the honourable member has raised, I am delighted to be able to relay to the honourable member some positive information, which I confirm by way of formal correspondence. The existing toilet facilities at the school requiring upgrading have been included in the 1998-99 minor capital works program. Officers from the properties school service unit in the Newcastle State office will commence planning on this project in consultation with the school community during term three this year. Therefore, the major issue of concern raised by the honourable member has been resolved, as work will be carried out to upgrade the toilets.

The department has arranged for a pest control contractor to undertake eradication measures in relation to the termites, in accordance with the safety guidelines, in the main classroom block. At the completion of that work the maintenance contractor will proceed to repair the white ant damage. With the introduction of the new school facilities maintenance contracts during 1997-98, all school buildings now have an industry-costed maintenance plan for the next six years. Every year Coal Point Public School will receive routine maintenance, as outlined in its plan, to ensure that the facilities are maintained at the specified performance standard. So this is good news for the toilet blocks and bad news for the white ants.

PRINCES HIGHWAY FUNDING

Mr SMITH (Bega) [12.18 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the deplorable condition of the Princes Highway south of Sydney. The section of road to which I refer extends from the Illawarra to the Victorian border. This Government has an appalling record of ignoring rural areas across all portfolios, many of which I have already brought to the attention of honourable members. One cannot compare the spending of this Government and the former coalition Government on the Princes Highway. Under the coalition Government no fewer than five major highway deviations or improvements were undertaken between 1988 and 1995, these being at Frogs Hollow, Yellow Pinch, Millingundi—which is the Merimbula bypass—Tilba Tilba and McLeod's Hill, an improvement

undertaken just prior to the change of government. In addition, the coalition Government undertook numerous bridge replacements and other improvement works.

In this Government's first budget only one new works was listed in the budget papers, at Albion Park. That work continued in the following year, and again was the only capital works listed for the 1997-98 financial year. Albion Park was listed yet again in the recent budget handed down by the Treasurer. One wonders how quickly this work is progressing. According to the Treasurer's budget the north Kiama bypass will soon get a start. I remind honourable members of the success of the 3 x 3 petrol levy. I am sure honourable members would remember the origins of this highly successful scheme. A 3¢ levy on each litre of petrol at the retail outlet was to be applied for three years. A guarantee was given that this money would be spent solely on maintenance of or improvements to the State's roads.

The then Opposition obviously thought that was a good idea, and it put up no objections to the second phase of the scheme—that the 3¢ levy would continue for a further three years—again with the guarantee that the money would be spent only on roads. No wonder the Opposition did not put up any objections. One of the first things the Labor Government did in relation to the roads portfolio was to take this money and change the legislation. Motorists are paying taxes for facilities, such as car parks, that were previously separately funded and never envisaged in the original legislation. The Government also altered the 60:40 per cent country-city funding ratio. The Princes Highway is the lifeline for the people of the south coast. We have no rail facilities past Bomaderry, so all our goods have to be brought in by road and our produce sent out by road. People think it is nice when they are able to zoom along the freeways when they get past Wollongong. It is unfortunate that people who use the M2 and M4 have to pay the tolls that they were assured would not be imposed.

A scheme was implemented whereby people could avoid paying the tolls, but many people do not take advantage of it. However, at least they have the pleasure of moving at speed along a straight road with several carriageways in each direction. Unfortunate truckies who have to service the south coast and far south coast must be prepared to negotiate a twisting, narrow road with few passing lanes for most of the route from Wollongong to the Victorian border. In fact, key findings recently released by the NRMA on the 955 kilometres of the Princes Highway between Waterfall, on the southern

outskirts of the Sydney metropolitan area, and Melbourne, revealed:

The route is subject to significant traffic increases during peak times, often doubling daily volumes, resulting in extensive delays at a number of points along the route. In addition, crash analysis results have indicated a concentration of crashes in the main urban centres along the route.

The overall condition of the Victorian section of the route is contrastingly superior to that of the NSW section.

Since 1990, it appears from a road user perspective, that lane widths have been narrowed . . .

I ask the Minister to consider funding for the Princes Highway. [*Time expired.*]

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.23 p.m.]: I inform the honourable member for Bega that this Government has spent substantially more on rural roads than the former coalition Government spent, and that is right across the board. When it comes to major roadworks in this State, particularly in rural areas, the Labor Government has always come to the fore. The work presently being carried out on the Pacific Highway—\$2.2 billion over 10 years—was signed off by a Federal Labor Government and a State Labor Government. Despite community outcries over the years, that work did not take place during the terms of coalition governments, at either the State or Federal level. Those sorts of roadworks are improving the efficiency capabilities of rural New South Wales and are adding to the regional development ability of them.

CHILD IMMUNISATION

Ms HALL (Swansea) [12.25 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a matter of great importance to the community that has been brought to my attention by a constituent. A mother of young children has encountered a problem with immunisation. Immunisation goes to the very heart of community health. All governments should ensure that immunisation is adequately funded. A new vaccine, DTPa, has been developed to replace the triple antigen vaccination which has been around for many years. The new vaccine can be given to children and babies with no or very few side effects. As any parent would know, the triple antigen can have very nasty side effects, some of which can be quite serious. It can produce high temperatures and soreness in babies and children, and in some cases can cause even more severe side effects.

My constituent had had three children immunised with the triple antigen and all of them

had had rather severe reactions. She went to her local doctor in an attempt to immunise her baby with the new vaccine. The doctor said, "Sorry, if your child was 18 months old or five years old we could give her this new vaccine. However, as you want to immunise your baby we will have to use the old vaccine; otherwise you have to pay \$90. If you pay \$90, which will cover the cost of the vaccine, I am able to immunise the baby." I contacted the Hunter Area Health Service, who arranged for the baby to be immunised. The core of the problem is that the Federal Government is not funding this new DTPa for babies. To my way of thinking, babies have the most adverse side effects to immunisation. We will get around this problem if babies are immunised with DTPa.

However, rather than addressing the problem in the younger age group, the Government is immunising the older children—in a cost-cutting exercise I believe. Instead of giving the initial series of three immunisations, it is prepared to pay for two at the other end, and therefore is endangering the lives of young children. We are coming into the season when things like whooping cough are more prevalent. By 30 September last year the Health Department had been notified of 1,826 cases of whooping cough, the highest incidence of whooping cough since the current epidemic began in 1993. In 1994 there were 1,420 reported cases; in 1995 there were 1,387; and in 1996 there were 1,167. In the past 12 months six children have died from whooping cough.

Governments have to consider very carefully why parents are not immunising their children. I think they are worried about the severe side effects of immunisation. The Federal Government must ensure that DTPa is available for all babies, because they are the ones most vulnerable to side effects. We cannot afford to cut costs when it comes to looking after the health of and caring for the children in our community. The local Liberal Party candidate for Shortland has misrepresented the case. He has written to the newspaper saying that children can have immunisations. That is so, but they cannot be immunised with what is best and safest for them. I call upon the Federal Government to fund DTPa and show some care and concern for the babies in our community.

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.30 p.m.]: The apparent drop in immunisation rates for serious diseases among young children is of great concern. I have heard the Federal Minister for Health, Dr Wooldridge, encouraging parents to immunise young children.

One would think, therefore, that the issues raised by the honourable member for Swansea would be taken up by the Federal Government.

OXLEY COVE NET FISHING

Mr BECK (Murwillumbah) [12.31 p.m.]: Constituents in the Murwillumbah electorate, particularly those who live in Oxley Cove, are calling for a ban on net fishing in the canals around the Oxley Cove area. Recently I presented a petition from more than 200 people to the Minister for Fisheries in the following terms:

We, the undersigned residents of Oxley Cove, Banora Point N.S.W., object to and strongly oppose the continuation of the currently permitted practice of licensed fisherman netting fish in the man-made canals in Oxley Cove, thereby continually and significantly adversely affecting both the current and future fish populations not only of the canals but also of the Tweed River itself.

We therefore request that the necessary action be taken by the appropriate authority to disallow all such netting in these canals in the future.

I thank the Minister for Fisheries, the Hon. Bob Martin, for acting upon the petition and phoning the spokesperson, Mr John Tester, about these concerns. However, the concerns remain. Commercial fishing continues in the canals. These people do not want to deny commercial fishermen access to the main river—they are entitled to a livelihood—but we have to be aware of the needs of the amateur fisherman. If juvenile fish are continually taken out of the canals by net fishing, no commercial or amateur fishing will be available in the area. That will affect both the tourist and the commercial fishing trade. The Minister needs to act fairly quickly.

The canals in Oxley Cove are surrounded by residential areas. One concern is that netting, which has been carried out after midnight, has caused dogs to bark and created a disturbance for residents. That is an invasion of their privacy. Another concern is that under-size fish have been caught in the nets. I have received statutory declarations to the effect that restaurants are receiving under-size fish. I am pleased that the Minister for Fisheries is now in the Chamber. I apologise for the lateness of the notice I gave him that I would be raising this matter. Only recently I received another letter which states that Rex Hunt—the TV presenter—and his colleagues were very impressed with the Tweed, but they were disappointed with the lack of fish in the area. They caught only four whiting of legal size. They want to return to make a documentary. It is also pleasing that the Minister for Energy, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the

Premier on the Arts is also in the Chamber. He represents another large fishing area. Both commercial and amateur fishermen must survive.

The people from the area are not asking the Minister to ban fishing in the Tweed, only in the canal area to ensure the future of the Tweed River. The 200 people who signed the petition are adamant that they will continue to seek a ban on net fishing in the canal. I ask the Minister to address this issue so that those who live in Oxley Cove are not disturbed by the netting, the fishing grounds are not destroyed, juvenile fish are not netted and the seagrass beds are not destroyed. I am sure the Minister has taken on board the information I have forwarded to his department. Recently he was in the Tweed carrying out another duty in his portfolio in relation to floodgates. I know he is aware of the importance of the Tweed River but I would ask him to ensure that netting is confined to the main river and kept out of the canals.

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries) [12.36 p.m.]: The honourable member has raised the matter with me and given me some confidential information, which Fisheries officers have continued to follow up. Anyone who takes under-size fish will be subject to the full force of the law. Even an amateur fisherman would receive a minimum on-the-spot fine of \$300. I have spoken to Mr Tester, as the honourable member said. Officers from my department attended a meeting held in the area last week. I am still waiting for a full briefing from that meeting. I take on board what has occurred in Oxley Cove. Mr Tester has lived there for seven or eight years. He grew up in Murwillumbah. He feeds the fish in the area and complains about the lack of numbers. My department also keeps monthly returns of where fish come from. I understand the fishermen have been targeting mullet.

Unfortunately, the 1994 legislation I inherited does not allow me much flexibility, therefore I will have to work in other ways in consultation with commercial fishers to reach a satisfactory outcome. I assure the honourable member that I hear these concerns regularly. My in-laws live in the Tweed. I continually receive complaints about the lack of fish in the Tweed River because of the massive pressure from tourists and commercial fishermen. I will take the matter up with the commercial fishing industry in the Tweed. If the brief from my department indicates that further action is needed, I will take it. We will consider how we can better manage the Tweed River. My administration has a history of good management, and that will continue. We will listen, as we always do, to the people irrespective of whether they are in Labor or non-Labor electorates.

DEATH OF Mr CHRIS TOUMAZIS

Mr STEWART (Lakemba) [12.38 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of Mr Ken Toumazis, his wife Helen and their family who reside in Roselands. Tragically, Chris, the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Toumazis, was recently brutally murdered. Chris died on Saturday, 30 May, after receiving several gunshot wounds the previous day outside a nightclub in Oxford Street. Last week, when I visited the Toumazis family at its Roselands residence to express my condolences, I was confronted by a family still numb and dazed by this tragic occurrence; a family that wanted to know why their much loved 18-year-old son, Chris, had been brutally murdered by young thugs who had somehow gained access to a nine millimetre automatic pistol; and a family that was very angry. Street violence and gang behaviour in the Sydney area have once again resulted in the death of another innocent young person. A family is trying to come to grips with the futility of this most terrible and gutless crime—the murder of its eldest son, Chris. Chris Toumazis was an ordinary, fun-loving 18-year-old. In the words of his father Ken:

My eldest son was my best friend. He was a happy kid. He liked to give, he loved his mates and he always put in a good day's work for me.

Chris worked for his father, a well-known local electrical contractor, as an apprentice. Chris, in his capacity as an apprentice, got to know his father well while he was working with him. They became mates, confided in each other, talked about what they were doing together, where they were heading in the business, and how one day Chris would take over the business. Tragically, that will never occur because the gutless thugs that roam our streets have claimed the life of another innocent young person. Chris' family is devastated. His young sister and his brother relied heavily on him for protection, advice and for a focus in their lives. This futile incident is a tragedy for the Toumazis family and the community that loved Chris. On the Friday night that Chris Toumazis was shot he was at the Goodbar nightclub in Oxford Street, having a fun time. Chris, who had had a long, hard week at work, was at that nightclub with three other mates. One of his mates was his uncle, who did not drink at all that night. As the oldest of the four he was there to chaperone them, to ensure that they encountered no difficulties, and to drive them home safely. Chris' uncle was entrusted to look after the group.

This group of innocent victims were at the nightclub when some concerns arose. No-one knows what the concerns were—that is how futile this whole exercise was. From what I understand and

from what I have been advised by the police, the killers of Chris Toumazis were in the Goodbar nightclub the night Chris died. When Chris left the nightclub a dispute broke out—a perplexing dispute because the people in Chris' car do not know why it occurred. Somebody suddenly came up to the vehicle in which they were parked and started to kick in the door. Chris got out of the car to see what was going on and that is when the difficulty arose. One of the offenders simply pulled out an automatic pistol and shot Chris' mate Nick in the stomach. When Nick started to run away the offender shot Chris through the chest, chased him down the street and, when Chris collapsed in a shop doorway, the offender shot him in the back. Those are the sorts of gutless thugs we are talking about.

Chris' family told me that they would like to see nightclubs take more responsibility. They know that their son did the right thing and that many other individuals are trying to do the right thing. Chris and his friends were out to have a good time, which they were entitled to do. The Toumazis family asked me to do what I can to ensure that nightclubs enforce mandatory metal detection at each club doorway. The thugs who were in this club were carrying a nine millimetre pistol. If that had been detected earlier this tragic crime would not have occurred. Something must be done. I have raised this matter with the police Minister who has been supportive, and a meeting has been arranged with Chris' parents for next week. I hope that this Government can support an initiative to introduce mandatory metal detection in youth nightclubs. [*Time expired.*]

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES RESPITE CARE

Mr RIXON (Lismore) [12.43 p.m.]: On 1 April 1998 I wrote to the Hon. Faye Lo Po', Minister for Community Services, as follows:

I write on behalf of Mr. Peter and Mrs. Kathy Stevens of Casino concerning their daughter Dianna and her need for appropriate residential care.

Dianna was born on 29 April 1981 and although he has some physical disabilities her mental age is less than an 18 month old child. She has no verbal skills and weighs approximately 65 kilograms.

Mr. and Mrs. Stevens have been caring for Dianna at their family home together with their four other children aged 18, 14, 13 and 11. Respite care has been available to Dianna on occasions, but as she has such high needs the availability of continuing regular respite is always a problem.

As Dianna has no regard for her own safety she is a risk to herself and other family members. She is unintentionally destructive, destroying household items, the other children's belongings and severely disrupts family life. She requires

constant supervision which is sometimes impossible to provide.

Mr. and Mrs. Stevens have advised me that they are now finding it almost impossible to care for Dianna as she is growing older. Although they love her dearly their own health physically and mentally is suffering and their family unit is deteriorating.

Mr. and Mrs. Stevens have advised me that if a permanent placement for their daughter is not forthcoming in the near future, they will have no option but to surrender Dianna.

On behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Stevens I seek your most urgent investigation and advice on this family's immediate needs.

I made those representations after talking to the Stevens family and after receiving a letter from them. Even the statements in their letter convey the stress that that family is experiencing. I will quote from that letter, which describes the stress of living with this disabled child:

No Communication, verbal, little on signing. Incontinent with no hygiene. Messes and accidents regularly. Toileting required every 30-40 minutes or more if no success. She also has no regard for her safety and Mouths many objects—Lids on jars, books, Power Leads and can break objects. Diannas Mass approx 65 Kilograms, height 155 centimetres. Mother, 50 kilograms, height 152 centimetres and having to move Dianna is extremely difficult.

Broken T.V.'s.—We were having our own TV repaired and were loaned a small colour TV from A and L Weber. Dianna Pushed it off the bench.

Books—Chewed and pages torn.

Poison—Medical assistance sourced after Spa Bromine tablet was chewed up and lid removed.

Poison—Sassafras Oil 25 ml. Dianna removed child-proof lid and we were challenged by the Doctor as to the fact. He also was unable to stop her from opening it once she had the bottle in hand and mouth. Stayed in Hospital Overnight. No ward available to safely serve her.

Coffee jar—Lid in Kitchen area. Mess . . . throughout the lounge area.

Shampoo and Soap—Showering must place out of her reach whilst attending her in area.

Walls—Bum whacked and plaster fractured.

That means that she simply hits the wall with her backside until she smashes the wall. The letter continues:

Phone Fax operated if left unattended.

I am finding it now impossible to care for my daughter Dianna. I love her, however both my physical and mental health are deteriorating.

In our home the other children have personal belongings destroyed including glasses and books and their lives are severely disrupted.

I've come to the end of my tether and wits end . . . Place in accommodation receiving one on one care and attention.

The letter goes on. I received a letter in reply from the Hon. Faye Lo Po' dated 11 June, which states:

I refer to your personal representations on behalf of Mr Peter and Mrs Kathy Stevens of Casino concerning their 17 year old daughter Dianna and her need for permanent accommodation support when she leaves school at the end of 1999.

I have been advised that the Department of Community Services is continuing a long involvement of providing case management for Dianna Stevens.

The letter concludes:

There are currently no vacancies or available funds for accommodation support in the Far North Coast Area. However your representations will be kept on file.

While the Stevens family is grateful for what has been done in the past, it is no longer enough. If the requested permanent placement is not provided, the whole family may be torn apart by stress. Then not one but seven people will need help. I ask the Minister to give this family the help it needs now.

BARBARA STREET METHADONE CLINIC

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [12.48 p.m.]: I wish to inform the House about developments in harm minimisation drug programs in the Fairfield electorate. Honourable members may recall that last year I called for a review of the Barbara Street methadone clinic. That review took place and many adverse findings were made against the clinic, the primary recommendation being that the clinic be relocated. The review also identified a range of problems associated with the current location. Council zoning is one of the major restraints on relocation, but ongoing discussions are taking place about a possible new location.

A decision by Holroyd City Council to rezone via amendment 20 to its local environmental plan allowed brothels and medical clinics in industrial areas in the Holroyd council area, which placed the suburb of Yennora as a possible site for a methadone clinic clearly on the agenda. The council has claimed it was never its intention to allow methadone clinics into the industrial area; its intention was to allow a medical clinic to accommodate any brothels in that suburb. Since that rezoning, applications that seem to be within the definition of a medical clinic have been lodged and are currently being considered by the council. In all fairness, proper due process has to be undertaken in the consideration of these applications. The council has taken every measure to achieve fairness in this

process by the appointment of an independent consultant to assess the applications. Fairness must be ensured so that any decisions made by the council will not be appealed against in the Land and Environment Court.

To assist in the process of proper determination, Holroyd Council has requested information from the New South Wales Health Department. The councillors have informed me that their requests of the Health Department have not delivered results. I ask the Minister that the department accommodate the council and deliver as much information as possible so that an informed decision can be made on this matter, so that the good councillors can make an informed decision about whether to allow a methadone clinic in the Yennora industrial estate.

It is a difficult task for government agencies and elected representatives to balance public and community health administration and the interests, fears and concerns of local residents and business owners and operators. Yennora residents, primarily through the East Fairfield Progress Association, have run a decent and fair campaign to express their opposition to the setting up of a possible methadone clinic in Yennora. I particularly thank Jim Newell, President of that association, and Jenny Jordan, President of the Yennora Public School Parents and Citizens Association, for the responsible, articulate, balanced roles they have played as community representatives and leaders. They have allowed a reasonably balanced debate to occur and mitigated the extreme elements that can arise in such debates.

Furthermore, I commend the residents who have run an extremely good campaign to express their views on the matter and have taken the time to properly inform themselves on the issues, arguments and matters involved. Once the council makes its determination on the applications, the New South Wales Health Department will make its assessments, and finally the Minister for Health and I will be formally involved in the process. The department has already said that if a methadone clinic were allowed in the area, only one would be approved. It is my view that the proper process must be complied with before I become formally involved. But I assure the residents and property owners at Yennora that the representations, concerns, fears and wishes they have expressed to me have not fallen on deaf ears. At every stage my involvement will be motivated by one consideration—the best interests of the people I represent.

It is important to clarify that my formal involvement in the process is still not required. The applications are currently before council. At the end of that process the New South Wales Health

Department will be considering those applications and formally making recommendations. I will pay particular attention to the guidelines for the establishment of methadone clinics and will give strong consideration to the wishes of the Yennora residents. When my formal participation is required I will then express my views on the matter.

KU-RING-GAI MUNICIPALITY CRIME STATISTICS

Mr O'FARRELL (Northcott) [12.53 p.m.]: Last Saturday's Queensland election contained a lesson for every Australian parliament. The message sent by nearly one-quarter of Queensland voters must not be ignored. It is not a message only about immigration; I do not believe that 25 per cent of that State's voters are racist. It was a message more about voters' perceptions of how parliaments operate, governments govern and members of Parliament behave. The result of last Saturday's Queensland election, like the earlier South Australian election, was a demand that parliaments, governments and members of Parliament better focus on the problems that are facing communities. One of the issues that most concerns communities across Australia is crime. An increase in antisocial behaviour and crime is not a perception problem, it is a demonstrable fact.

The recent release of data by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reveals a large increase in criminal activity across the Ku-ring-gai municipality, recording an increased level of activity in 14 out of 19 categories of crime. The figures for 1997 include a 22 per cent increase in house break and enters, a 24 per cent increase in break and enters of other properties, a 29 per cent increase in car theft, a 12 per cent increase in shop theft, a 14 per cent increase in assaults and an 80 per cent increase in sexual assault. Figures obtained by me, through a freedom of information request, demonstrate that in the first quarter of this year the crime problem across the Ku-ring-gai local area command had not diminished. Break and enters, robbery, sexual assault, street offences and offences against persons have all increased in comparison with the corresponding period last year. Assaults and homicide are recorded at the same rate. A weekly reading of the *North Shore Times* and the *Hornsby and Upper North Shore Advocate* confirms the view that crime is a problem in Ku-ring-gai. Only a concerted police effort will reduce the problem across the municipality.

I am disappointed that this Government continues to refuse to provide sufficient funding and police resources to the Ku-ring-gai local area command to enable it to deal with these problems. The Ku-ring-gai police do a terrific job, but there

are not enough officers to cope with the demonstrated increase in crime occurring in the area. The Government refuses to provide additional resources to this area because of the political landscape of the north shore. The type of political apartheid practised by this Government means that residents in Liberal areas are on the bottom of the priority list when resources are handed out. That is the type of action which led frustrated Queensland voters to desert the major political parties. People are sick and tired of governments playing politics with their safety. They want police resources distributed according to need, not political complexion—a view I strongly share.

When I first raised this issue and called for additional police, the Minister for Police responded by claiming that since the Carr Government's election there were "1,900 additional front-line troops" across New South Wales. Put aside the fact that such a response does not answer community demands for local action in Ku-ring-gai; it was also a patently false claim. Front-line or general duty police numbers in the Ku-ring-gai local area command have fallen from 106 in March 1997 to 98 in March 1998. Numbers have dropped at the same time as local crime rates have increased. One does not have to be Einstein, or the honourable member for Londonderry, to work out the link between the two or the solution to the problem facing Ku-ring-gai residents.

Last week the Minister refuted these claims by noting an increase in the overall numbers at the Hornsby headquarters of the Ku-ring-gai local area command. That is true, but it does not support his original comments about an increase in front-line policing. Increased administrative staff does not stop break and enters. Relocation of transit police to Hornsby does not stop car theft across Ku-ring-gai municipality. Relocation of highway patrol police does not stop robberies in local shopping centres. Ku-ring-gai needs additional police resources. The residents know it, the shopkeepers know it and the local police know it.

The Minister for Police and the Carr Government should heed the lesson of the Queensland election. They should stop politicking and start addressing the real needs of local communities. A demonstration in areas such as Ku-ring-gai of a determination to do whatever it takes to reduce crime would be a good start. I do not know whether the Carr Government will act. I do know that the Queensland election lessons have not been lost on honourable members on both sides of the House who are in touch with the needs of their local communities. We will continue to strongly represent

them on the issues which affect their lives and those of their families.

Private members' statements noted.

WORKPLACE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE BILL

Bill received and read a first time.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Clough) left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

POLICE MEDIA TELEPHONE SURVEILLANCE

Ministerial Statement

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [2.15 p.m.]: My attention has been drawn to claims made earlier today by the Hon. Michael Gallacher in relation to alleged phone tapping of certain media outlets. The honourable member's insinuations are extraordinary. They are another grubby, baseless Opposition attack on Commissioner Peter Ryan. Mr Gallacher stood up in the Parliament and made insinuations—not direct allegations—based on information allegedly provided to him by two unnamed journalists, based on information allegedly provided by an unnamed police officer. I can only hope that members of the parliamentary press gallery do not fall into the trap of being unwitting suckers in the Opposition plan to bring down Commissioner Ryan. However, because of the gravity of Mr Gallacher's claims I sought immediate advice from the Commissioner of Police.

Commissioner Ryan has advised me that the allegations are completely without foundation. It is obvious that in all the time the Hon. Michael Gallacher spent as a police officer he learned nothing about the process involved in obtaining a warrant for a listening device—a phone tap. As honourable members should know, all telephone interception warrants must be approved by a judicial officer under a stringent process. Phone taps are governed by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Interception Act 1979 under the Australian Constitution. Each State has mirror legislation which mainly relates to record keeping and oversight functions. For example, in New South Wales the Ombudsman has this function. To be able to tap phones a law enforcement agency must be specified in the Act. In New South Wales the specified agencies are the Police Service, the National Crime Authority, the Australian Federal Police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption—and soon the Police Integrity Commission. Other Federal authorities also have phone-tapping powers.

To get a phone tap, a law enforcement officer must make an application to a Federal Court judge or a member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. He must swear an affidavit setting out the basis on which he says the issuing of a warrant is justified. Warrants are issued only for serious nominated offences carrying a penalty of at least seven years. If the judge is satisfied, the warrant can be issued. The approved warrant is given to the Federal Police as well as the carrier which controls the connection. The Hon. Michael Gallacher should get his facts straight before he starts talking. I ask, for goodness sake, the Liberal and National parties to let the Commissioner of Police get on with his job of reforming the New South Wales Police Service and reducing crime. Just get off his back!

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [2.18 p.m.]: I listened with interest to what the Minister for Police had to say. Let me reaffirm that we on this side of the House certainly commit ourselves to the efforts being made by the commissioner to reform the New South Wales police force. There is plenty of work to be done and we wish the commissioner well in that. That does not mean that questions might not be directed relating to decisions by the Government or, from time to time, on rare occasions, the commissioner. There is no blanket immunity to either the Minister or the commissioner. It is valid for us to raise issues about police activities and police operations in this State. We want Commissioner Ryan to succeed in the huge task in front of him. The police royal commission was a mammoth task undertaken by the Government and we want progress to be made.

But let me come to the nub of the matter. Yesterday I interjected when the Minister was giving what I thought was an interesting answer to a question asked by the Government about special branch and its activities. The interjection that I persisted in asked who directed special branch to undertake the totally unjustified covert operations to which the Minister referred. The Minister, I am sure flippantly, gave a fairly partisan response. This leaves hanging the question of who directed some of these covert operations in the past. In deference to the Minister of the day I say that it was not necessarily the Minister or the commissioner who directed this. But we need to know the answers to these questions, and the answers have not been forthcoming so far. The question that has been raised by the Hon. Michael Gallacher in another place is legitimately raised and not adequately answered. I do not think that this should be taken as some kind of direct criticism of the commissioner; it is not. It is a request for information—information which is still not forthcoming from the Government.

MINISTRY

Mr CARR: In the absence of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs the Minister for the Environment will take questions on his behalf.

OLYMPIC PARK RAILWAY STATION

Ministerial Statement

Mr KNIGHT (Campbelltown—Minister for the Olympics) [2.21 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the House of the recent announcement of a major affirmation of Sydney's Olympic building program and the success of architects involved in that program. The Government's approach to excellence and quality in public buildings in the Olympic building program was recognised last night in the 1998 Royal Australian Institute of Architects New South Wales Chapter awards. In particular, the Olympic Park rail station won the prestigious John Sulman award. The award is not given out every year; it is given only for buildings of outstanding excellence. Last night's presentation was only the third time in the last 10 years that the award has been made. The award recognises the vision of the architects of the Olympic Park station, Hassells Architects, led by Ken Maher and Rodney Uren, who in the words of the jury created "a fine example of the integration of a complex transport hub and a successful urban space". The architects have created a structure that is comparable to the great railway stations of Europe and North America and provides a stunning entrance to Sydney's Olympic precinct.

Mr O'Farrell: But they are waterproof.

Mr KNIGHT: It ill behoves the honourable member for Northcott to interject and criticise their work. The result was also confirmation of the effort the Government is putting into getting the Olympic planning right. As the institute said:

The project was made possible by the Olympic Co-ordination Authority's commitment to architectural excellence and the skills of the design team.

As well as congratulating the architects on this project, I would like to congratulate the OCA and Leighton Constructions for turning Hassell's vision into reality. It is important to remember that all OCA project designs face the scrutiny of the OCA design review panel, led by the Government Architect, Chris Johnson, who also deserves congratulations. Of course, the award reinforces what was acknowledged by the 1.2 million people who attended the Royal Easter Show—the magnificence of Sydney's Olympic facilities.

I am pleased to inform the House that other Olympic projects and architects were also acknowledged last night. The architects who designed the Clydesdale Pavilion—Newcastle firm Suters Architects Snell Pty Ltd, led by Ed Clode—won the Boral timber award. The pavilion, built by Lahey Constructions Pty Ltd of Kempsey, made extensive use of recycled timber and provides a fitting home for these magnificent horses. Anyone who attended the Royal Easter Show could not help but admire its work in what was the most popular pavilion at the show after the show-bag hall.

Lahz Nimmo Architects, led by Annabel Lahz, also won a commendation for the temporary public domain overlay at the show. In fulfilling the magnificent building program at Homebush Bay, not only is the program on time and on budget, not only are the buildings world-class facilities in which world-class sport will be held, and not only do they provide a magnificent legacy for sport and the people of New South Wales, but also, as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects acknowledged last night, they are incredibly aesthetically pleasing because of their architectural excellence.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [2.24 p.m.]: I am pleased to offer my congratulations as the shadow minister for the Olympics and that of the Opposition to the architects of the Homebush Bay railway station. It is no mean achievement to win the Sulman award. It is even more of an achievement when the winning design was that of a modern and essentially functional building—and that is often a contradiction in terms. I congratulate also the other architects and designers who were given recognition last night. I refer, in particular, to Lahey Constructions Pty Ltd of Kempsey, to reinforce the involvement of regional New South Wales in the Olympic construction program. The honourable member for Broken Hill may well laugh, but I commend this extraordinary effort in the 1990s to perpetuate the traditions and skills of the craftsmen of the turn of the century, who had a great understanding of hardwood timbers and structural design used in stables and barns throughout Australia. It is a wonderful display of Australian, of Australian workmanship, skill and materials.

There are some concerns, however, with the railway station. First, it does not offer sufficient protection in the wet weather. Second, for it to function properly consideration must be given to constructing wheelchair access at Town Hall and Wynyard railway stations. Homebush Bay railway station is world-class and wheelchair access must be

provided if we are to attract major crowds. This year I travelled six times from Wynyard railway station to Homebush Bay railway station to go to the Royal Easter Show, and on each of those occasions I heard complaints about the lack of wheelchair access. The Opposition has acknowledged the problem, but the Government regards it as a joke. I ask the Minister and the Premier to attend to this matter with urgency, given that the railway station is in use every day of the year. Crowd control is also a problem; ingress passengers intermingle with egress passengers, therefore arrivals and departures are delayed. I remind the Government that without the efforts of the former coalition Minister for Public Works, who in 1995 left the area in such magnificent order, this would not have been possible.

LITHGOW REGION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ministerial Statement

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [2.27 p.m.]: I am pleased to announce that this year's community economic development annual conference will be held in Lithgow. The 180 delegates from across the State who will gather in Lithgow for three days, from 13 September to 15 September, will contribute \$100,000 to the local regional economy. The conference will provide an opportunity for all involved in community development initiatives to review their successes, learn from others and hear about the new programs contained in "Rebuilding Country New South Wales".

In recent times Lithgow has suffered its fair share of economic pain. The community economic development conference offers Lithgow the chance to showcase the town as a location for business activity to offset some of its economic distress. The State Government is working with the Lithgow community to help to secure new investments and a brighter economic future. The Government has secured investment by Doral Minerals Industries, a \$120 million investment in a minerals processing plant that will create 380 new jobs. This week the Premier announced the reopening of the Clarence coalmine, which will create 90 new jobs. Bioclip, a company producing coats for chemically shorn sheep, is up and running in Lithgow and will create up to 100 new jobs. The Government will continue working with the Lithgow community and will use the regional economic transition scheme to secure further investment and jobs.

The conference is another sign of confidence in the future of Lithgow. A number of delegates to last year's conference nominated Lithgow as a potential location for this year's event. The delegates saw the benefits that the conference could bring to Lithgow. This year's conference was earmarked for location in the west of New South Wales. Previous conferences have been held in the north and the south of the State, and when expressions of interest were called in February, 10 responses were received. I want to thank each of those communities for getting behind the Community Economic Development Conference, and I wish Lithgow well as this year's host. I am sure the town will impress each of the delegates and will leave them with a positive impression of what can be done when communities work hand in hand with government and with industry to turn around local economies and meet the challenges of the future.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [2.31 p.m.]: The Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs obviously reads the morning papers, or somebody else reads them for him, because suddenly he discovered something that he should talk about in this place: he made an announcement about what is already in the newspapers. The Country Economic Development Conference is an important event on the calendar, but the Minister cannot take credit for that conference, any more than he can take credit for Doral choosing Lithgow in which to establish a silicon processing plant. The Minister was at it again yesterday. I would like to put the facts on record.

Doral is a Western Australian company with Japanese input. Doral established in Lithgow for one reason only: it has a power supply in excess of 132 kilovolts, created by the previous coalition Government, before the Minister was a member of this place. The processing of 120,000 tons of granite each week requires as much power as would be used by Cootamundra, Young and Cowra put together. But here is the rub: if the Minister wants to support Doral, why will he not ensure that the granite goes by rail from Cowra to Lithgow, instead of it being hauled in eight B-doubles on our roads each day? Why will the Minister not rebuild the Holmwood rail bridge, which was burnt down? The Minister has refused to order an inquiry into the burning down of that bridge. Why does the Minister insist on putting eight B-doubles carrying granite on our road each day? The Minister tries to take credit for a coalmine. Minister, don't tell me you put the coal there!

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, Mr Ellis, Ms Ficarra, Mr Glachan, Mr Hartcher, Dr Kernohan, Mr Kinross, Mr MacCarthy, Mr Merton, Mr O'Doherty, Mr O'Farrell, Mr Phillips, Mr Photios, Mr Richardson, Mr Rozzoli, Mr Schipp, Mr Schultz, Ms Seaton, Mr Smith, Mrs Stone and Mr Tink.**

Ryde Hospital

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

Land Tax

Petition praying that land tax on the family home be repealed and that the land tax threshold on investment properties be doubled from \$160,000 to \$320,000, received from **Mrs Skinner.**

Sale of Knives and Extended Police Powers

Petitions praying that the sale of knives for unlawful purposes be prohibited and that police be given additional powers to search for illegal weapons, to question people in public places, and to disperse persons loitering or assembled in a public place, received from **Ms Ficarra and Mr Glachan.**

Coffs Harbour Jetty

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

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.**

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I draw the attention of the House to the presence in the gallery of the shadow ministers for the environment in the Australian and New Zealand parliaments. I welcome them to question time.

PUBLIC BODIES REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Neilly, as Chairman, tabled the report Committee entitled "Results of the Committee's Review of Ten Annual Reports", dated June 1998.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS**

Mr COLLINS: My question is to the Minister for the Environment, representing the Minister for Health. Does the leaked memorandum that I have in my hand show that South East Sydney Area Health Service is removing more operations from hospital waiting lists, limiting work from other areas of Sydney, and demanding other patients obtain referrals from two doctors, not one, before they are put on a hospital waiting list? Is the Minister denying that the Carr Government is trying to artificially cut record high hospital waiting lists because he cannot reduce them legitimately? I am happy to table the memorandum to which I referred.

Mr Whelan: On a point of order. The question is both too long and asks a series of questions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Traditionally the Chair extends considerable latitude with regard to questions asked by the Leader of the Opposition. The point taken by the Leader of the House is well founded: such a question would be ruled out of order if asked by a member other than the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms ALLAN: It will be a short but wise answer.

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

Ms ALLAN: I will take up this matter with my colleague the Minister for Health, who is in Adelaide today fighting for a better deal for health.

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

Ms ALLAN: The Minister is in Adelaide with his coalition colleagues, unlike the members of the coalition in this Chamber, trying to impress upon the

Federal Government that it needs to spend more money on health to fund the health services of this State.

COMPUTER MILLENNIUM BUG

Mr HUNTER: I direct a question without notice to the Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Forestry, Minister for Ports, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney. What is the Government's response to a proposal from the business community that Friday, 31 December 1999, be declared a public holiday?

Mr YEADON: The year 2000 brings not just the Olympics and Paralympics but also the dawn of the millennium bug.

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

Mr YEADON: We have just heard from the National Party bug. On 31 December 1999 a wide range of information technology systems could shut down if not adequately reprogrammed to accept a year starting with the digits 2 and 0. Experts say that computers could erroneously read the year as 1900 or zero, thus throwing systems into chaos. The Government has been advised that a failure to address the year 2000 problem will affect every business and government enterprise in Australia. I am also advised that some international airlines are re-evaluating their flight schedules during this three-day period in light of concerns about the impact of the millennium bug. In June 1997 the New South Wales Cabinet approved phase one of a government year 2000 strategy.

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

Mr YEADON: Phase two, which was launched last month, requires all government agencies, statutory authorities, State-owned corporations and government trading enterprises to ensure that the year 2000 problem is given the highest priority.

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

Mr YEADON: All agencies will be required to submit, by the end of September this year, a risk assessment report and detail contingency and disaster recovery plans.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for North Shore to order. I call the honourable member for Baulkham Hills to order.

Mr YEADON: More than \$100 million has been specifically allocated by the Government to rectify or replace systems that are affected by the millennium bug. The Government has worked to raise awareness of businesses in the private sector to the dangers of the millennium bug. A website is up and running and is receiving 150 hits per day. 31 December 1999 falls on a Friday. It is the end of the week, the end of the month, the end of the quarter, the end of the financial half-year, and the end of the year.

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

Mr YEADON: Ordinarily it is a significant reporting deadline. I am aware that the finance sector is particularly concerned about dealing with potential problems. The Government has been approached by a major business group and the by tourism task force. They have suggested that the Government give consideration to declaring 31 December 1999 a special holiday. That will allow information technology departments full unrestricted access to computer systems in the transition period to carry out last-minute preventative maintenance measures. There may be merit in pursuing this safety net.

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

Mr YEADON: I have therefore asked the Attorney General to enter into formal consultations with businesses, unions, and the restaurant and hotel industries. If the relevant bodies are in agreement, the Attorney General might consider gazettal of 31 December 1999 as a public holiday as a means of minimising the impact of the millennium bug.

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

Mr YEADON: The consultation process will obviously involve the status of the ordinary 1999 bank holiday and the 1 January 2000 public holiday. I believe the community will also support making Friday, 31 December 1999 a public holiday, thus creating a three-day weekend to celebrate the new century. I believe the Government is well on track to minimising the impact of the millennium bug, and One Nation is well on the way to ensuring the elimination of the National Party. Today's initiative continues the Government's considered approach and I believe it has wide community support.

STATE RAIL SECURITY

Mr PHOTIOS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport. In the light of

recent figures showing 84 robberies and 27 assaults against train commuters over a six-week period, why has the Minister not acted on the Premier's promise of almost three years ago to consider restoring the power of detention and arrest to station masters? When will the Minister honour that promise in the interest of train safety?

Mr SCULLY: I am delighted to be asked this question by the shadow minister for transport. The coalition's record on security initiatives for public transport is absolutely woeful.

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

Mr SCULLY: Members opposite have the gall to talk about upgrading security to improve public transport patronage, when the coalition's record is absolutely woeful.

Mr SPEAKER: I call the honourable member for Gosford to order for the second time.

Mr SCULLY: Unfortunately, the public perception is that travelling on transport at night is not as safe as it could be. When I was made Minister for Transport on 1 December, one of the first things I said to Simon Lane, the Chief Executive of the State Rail Authority, was that some simple principles must be followed to ensure that patrons are won back to public transport. Trains must be reliable. CityRail now has 92 per cent on-time running. That is a big tick for the Government. Train services must be accessible, and public transport must be safe.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the National Party to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for Ermington to order.

Mr SCULLY: I am happy to do some research for the shadow minister because I am not aware that the coalition, during the seven years that it was, unfortunately, in government, introduced security guards on trains at night. I am not aware of any other city around the western world with a similar public transport system that has two security guards on every train service every night for every patron. The shadow minister for transport criticises the transport budget. Yet, the Government has found \$16 million to employ 250 security guards.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Georges River will remain silent. The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr SCULLY: The members opposite are not happy because they would rather this Government do what they did, which was nothing, so they could

then make an issue of it. From 1 July 250 security guards—

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

Mr SCULLY: I am sure that my colleague the Minister for Police would agree with my asking the Opposition to tell the truth about transit police. There are 277 transit police. As I said, from 1 July 250 security guards will be employed on trains. I am sure that hooligans will find that a significant deterrent. I invite all members to ask commuters and potential commuters to look at and notice the difference from 1 July.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for The Entrance to order for the third time.

Mr SCULLY: When they travel on trains at night they will see two security guards sweeping backwards and forwards through the trains, providing passengers with dramatically improved crime deterrence. That is trains: there have been massive initiatives on trains and a massive improvement in train security.

Mr Collins: So it is not safe until 1 July?

Mr SCULLY: The Government has two weeks to introduce this. The Leader of the Opposition was Treasurer. He knows that it takes a little time to put out a tender. I do not know how quickly the coalition did it when it was in government.

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

Mr SCULLY: What is the Government doing about stations? There is very good news on stations as well. Did the coalition like it? No, they did not. \$55 million! Do you want me to go through it again? I do not for a moment pretend that we do not need to do this. Unfortunately, incidents occur on trains and on stations. We must do all we can to make our trains and stations safer. That is why the Government will spend \$100 million of taxpayers' money over two years. Of that sum, \$55 million will be spent over the next two years on video surveillance cameras on 301 CityRail stations. When the coalition was in government how many incidents were there at Cabramatta station per month? There were 29 incidents per month. The Government installed video surveillance cameras at Cabramatta. Members opposite do not want to hear this because they know it is good news. After the Government put in CCTV and high-intensity lighting the number

was reduced from 29 to three. In fact, the station master at Cabramatta said the safest place to be in Cabramatta is on the railway station.

Every station is entitled to that same level of deterrence and security. The number of video surveillance cameras to be installed is about 4,000, but that is not enough. I told CityRail that we have to do more than that. We are using interactive technology, help points, and public address on-line systems. The shadow minister for transport should join with me in a bipartisan way to promote the increased patronage of public transport that the Government has successfully achieved. He should stop scaremongering, stop frightening commuters, and get the message out that during the next two years every station will have an on-line public address system and closed-circuit television coverage. From 1 July every night train will have two security guards.

COALITION ONE NATION PARTY PREFERENCES

Mr WATKINS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts.

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

Mr WATKINS: What is the Government's response to concerns in the tourism sector about the failure of the New South Wales Opposition leader to put One Nation last?

Mr SPEAKER: A number of members are already on three calls to order. I call the honourable member for The Hills to order. I call the Leader of the National Party to order for the third time.

Mr DEBUS: Of all the industries at risk from the policies of One Nation, tourism is probably the most vulnerable. On Sunday I was in Malaysia, where I was truly shocked by the intensity of media interest in the Queensland election result. Internationally, the result is being interpreted as showing the rise of racist and anti-Asian leanings in Australia. The rise of One Nation is threatening our most priceless asset as a tourism destination: our international reputation for friendliness, tolerance and ethnic diversity. That reputation is well merited in Sydney and New South Wales. People who come here are warmly welcomed and have a great time. The tourism industry is deeply worried.

The Chairman of the Australian Tourist Commission, Don Morris, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the success of One Nation threatens the image that Australia's tourism industry has been working hard to project. Christopher Brown from the tourism task force described the Queensland election result as a black day for the industry. Today the *Australian* reported that Taiwanese tourism could fall by 30 per cent because of negative perceptions created by the rise of One Nation. The newspaper quoted a tourism operator in Sydney who is receiving calls from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan asking about the safety of Asian tourists in Australia. This State relies heavily on international tourists. They account for one-third of tourism-related employment and one-third of total visitor nights. Almost 60,000 jobs are at stake.

The Bureau of Tourism Research indicates that 59,400 jobs in New South Wales, or 35 per cent of tourism related employment, can be directly attributed to international visitors. Tourism New South Wales figures show that 50 per cent of international visitors to this State come from Asian nations. In New South Wales 30,000 people owe their employment and livelihood to Asian tourists. That is a lot of families who stand to lose from One Nation's influence, a lot of small businesses that will do it tough, and a lot of money that will not be spent in hotels, shops and restaurants across New South Wales. Tourism is also vital in regional New South Wales. It is worth \$54 million a year to Maitland and \$78 million a year to Dubbo. The honourable member for Lismore has been shouting in this House that he will put One Nation ahead of Labor in a ballot—

Mr Rixon: No, I just said I would put Labor last.

Mr DEBUS: Tourism in Lismore is worth \$76 million a year. I want to know how he will explain his irresponsibility to tourism operators in his electorate. The honourable member for Murwillumbah has said on radio that he will put Labor last. Tourism in his electorate is worth \$165 million a year. How will he explain his irresponsibility to tourism operators in his electorate?

[*Interruption*]

The best explanation the honourable member for Ermington can provide is that these two gentlemen will retire. The Opposition in New South Wales has a challenge ahead. It must not only put One Nation last on every how-to-vote card in every seat, it must rule out ever forming a coalition with

the forces of One Nation. Now is the time for the Leader of the Opposition to act. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party must state that not at any price will they get into bed with One Nation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mr DEBUS: If the coalition continues its dithering, double dealing and panicky backtracking on One Nation, we will continue to get bad publicity in Asia. The coalition knows the effect a preference deal will have.

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

Mr DEBUS: The coalition knows the devastation that will be wrought if One Nation ever gets a shot at coalition government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Murrumbidgee to order. I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mr DEBUS: The Victorian and South Australian Liberal Party branches have already announced they will put One Nation last on how-to-vote cards.

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

Mr DEBUS: If any elements of the Liberal or National parties fall short of totally ruling out any preference deals with One Nation or support for any One Nation member that should come into this House they will sell out the tourism industry.

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

Mr DEBUS: And with it, thousands of young people, part-time workers, small businesses, regional areas, country towns and their own constituents.

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

Mr DEBUS: I would very much like the Opposition to show some political and moral courage.

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

**COUNTRY AIR SERVICES
CHARTER OF USER RIGHTS**

Mr WINDSOR: My question is to the Premier. Will his Government support the country summit initiative of a charter of user rights for country airline commuters to Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport with a view to guaranteeing access for country people to their capital city airport? Will he join with that group to ensure the Federal Government does the right thing by country people on this issue?

Mr CARR: Those of us who attended the country summit at Wagga Wagga had the—

[Interruption]

That is right, the Leader of the National Party did not go to the country summit.

Mr Armstrong: And you didn't stay.

Mr CARR: I went there. I gave a long account of activities in rural New South Wales.

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

Mr CARR: I shared a lot of ideas with the excellent delegates there.

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

Mr CARR: There was Lilliane Brady, the Mayor of Cobar, and a lot of splendid leaders from outstanding country communities.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai to order. I call the honourable member for Pittwater to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for Burrinjuck to order.

Mr CARR: But, as my colleagues suggested, the Leader of the National Party must have been in New Guinea looking for water that day or maybe, Lear-like, he stood at the mouth of the Clarence and said, "River go back, river go back." Perhaps the Leader of the National Party was there in his Williams gear, mapping out the road that would run through the Blue Mountains. This is a significant issue for rural New South Wales; it is a sound principle of regional development. It is vitally important to people who run businesses in rural centres or who want to visit a doctor or seek other services in Sydney that they are able to fly to and

from Sydney and fly on the same day. That is an important matter. Throughout rural New South Wales country businesses and individuals have made it clear that they want to continue to have available to them the opportunity to fly to the State's capital, Sydney, conduct their business or seek the service they want and then return to the country centre within one day. That has always been important to rural New South Wales.

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

Mr CARR: I understand that work has been done on a charter of user rights and that country communities regard that, as I understand it, as a means of writing into the mission statement of Sydney airport a commitment to maintain the access that rural people want. Obviously, this is an issue for which the Federal Minister for Transport is responsible. However, I am happy to make submissions to the Federal Government to ensure that a charter of user rights enshrines access to country airline services by country people, and that the charter will remain on foot whatever happens to the ownership of the airport. The Government will pursue this matter and make the necessary submission to the Federal Government. In addition, I will speak to the Minister for Transport about making a submission to the Standing Committee on State Development, which is chaired by the Hon. Tony Kelly, to explore what other areas of co-operation between this Government and rural communities are available.

MILK INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

Mr NEILLY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. What is the Government's response to concerns held by New South Wales dairy farmers about the potential for milk produced in Victoria to flood New South Wales supermarkets?

Mr AMERY: The honourable member for Cessnock has long been a staunch supporter of dairy farmers, milk vendors and the dairy industry in general. Concern has been expressed about what is happening in the dairy industry. Circumstances in the industry have changed dramatically in the past few weeks, if not in the past few days. By way of introduction, may I say that the whole situation can be sheeted home to a decision taken in 1992 by the former Government when it started to deregulate the dairy industry from the farm gate to the supermarket shelf. The Leader of the National Party talks about

his new-found interest in regional New South Wales, but his decisions as a Minister on the deregulation of the dairy industry, not to mention the egg industry, were made without any pressure from the Federal Government to force the States down this path. In 1992 there was no threat of a penalty from the Federal Government or the competition council to force the New South Wales Government to deregulate the dairy industry. Yet the former Minister for Agriculture, the Leader of the National Party, set a process in train, and the chickens are now coming home to roost for many dairy farmers. The Leader of the National Party was involved—

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

Mr AMERY: The Ku Klux Klan is demonstrating in Texas. Couldn't you get a pair? The Leader of the National Party was involved—

[Interruption]

Don't tell me you're going to start again! I have told you before—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will not provoke the member for Wakehurst.

Mr AMERY: I have told you before to do one of two things, eat more food with your lunch or stop swallowing those suppositories.

Mr Photios: On a point of order. My point of order relates to the offensive remarks made by the Minister. I ask you to direct the Minister to withdraw the allegation that one member of the Opposition was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. It is an obnoxious, outrageous, deceitful, lying, gutter allegation and he should withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the honourable member for Pittwater on three calls to order. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the second time.

Mr Fraser: On a point of order. The comments directed to me by the Minister for Agriculture are offensive.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the member wants to make a personal explanation, I will allow him to do so at the appropriate time. He will resume his seat.

Mr Fraser: I want the remarks withdrawn. They should be withdrawn and the Minister should apologise.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

Mr Fraser: On a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If a member is sensitive about comments made in the Chamber, the Chair will allow that member to make a personal explanation at the appropriate time. If the Chair believes a comment is objectionable, the Chair will ask the member who made the comment to withdraw it. However, the Chair was unable to hear what was said because the member for Wakehurst and the member for Oxley were both shouting across the Chamber.

Mr AMERY: If the honourable member for Coffs Harbour is offended, I withdraw the comment. In 1992 the coalition Government decided to deregulate the post farm gate price of milk. That includes the retail price of milk as well as the margins for processors and vendors. The decision was made that the deregulation process was to begin on 1 July 1998. As a result of that decision the dairy farmers of New South Wales are now facing pressure from various supermarkets to bring down the farm gate price. Following an arrangement with Coles and Woolworths the price was dropped. However, a major supermarket, namely, Franklins, does not wish to accept the new price for milk and has indicated that it will not buy milk from New South Wales dairy farmers as from 1 July when the deregulation begins unless the price at the farm gate is reduced even further. Instead they say they may buy milk from Victoria at a lower price. The reality is that the New South Wales dairy industry is at a disadvantage when competing with Victoria.

For example, Victorian milk represents some 60 per cent of the farm gate market in Australia and New South Wales dairy farmers hold only 13 per cent of the market. Production costs for New South Wales dairy farmers are higher than those in Victoria simply because of the climatic differences. The supermarket chain in question is threatening to put a process in motion, for the sake of increased profit margins, that will cripple the New South Wales dairy farmers. It is talking about undercutting the current farm gate price in New South Wales by 3¢ a litre, from about 57¢ to 54¢, which will have a considerable impact on dairy farmers across the

State. The President of the New South Wales Dairy Farmers Association, Mr Reg Smith, with whom I have been negotiating during the past couple of days, has estimated a loss of approximately \$20 million to this State's dairy farmers. Also, a significant number of dairy farmers across New South Wales would be marginalised.

I know that the honourable member for Cessnock has been very interested in this issue. The supermarkets will also reduce vendors' margins by 50 per cent, bearing in mind that from 1 July there will not be any regulation in place to protect the margin for milk vendors—a policy decision that was taken by the Leader of the National Party when he was Minister for Agriculture. I am beginning to feel like a contract cleaner cleaning up the mess that he left behind. Retailers' profit margins in a deregulated market would increase from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. The Leader of the National Party should be ashamed of himself for supporting such an initiative and placing our dairy farmers and milk vendors under threat. It is time to compare the role of the coalition Government in 1992 with that of the Carr Labor Government.

Mr Armstrong: I think you are a bit of a cow, Richard.

Mr AMERY: Did the Leader of the National Party say that milk comes from cows? Although I have not read it, I thought the National Party's policy on the dairy industry was that milk is extracted from a subterranean shelf in New Zealand and bubbles up into a milk bar in western Sydney. I will get around to reading its dairy policy, it will always be there.

Mr Armstrong: You cannot get your policy through Cabinet.

Mr AMERY: That is not true. The Carr Government agreed to maintain the farm gate price regulations despite pressure from the national competition council—another issue on which the Leader of the National Party has been silent. The Carr Government has stood firm to protect our almost 1,600 dairy farmers across New South Wales, who could be subject to threats by this move. Unlike the coalition Government, we did not sell our dairy industry short. We have worked with the industry to maintain it by securing the farm gate price. As a result of a decision in which the Leader of the National Party was involved, the only winner out of the 1992 deregulation plan has been the retail sector, in particular large supermarkets. It has not been the farmers or the vendors who the coalition deserted,

and certainly not the consumers. It has been the major money-making supermarkets.

History has proved in many industries that merely because a farm gate price is kept low, margins are not necessarily passed on to consumers. The pork industry is a further example—another unregulated industry which is under threat because of a coalition Government in Canberra. The farm gate price of pig meat has been pushed down while the supermarket sales price has increased. In other words, the supermarkets are getting a cheaper cut of meat from the pig farmers but are increasing the retail prices to shoppers. The same thing is now being repeated in the dairy industry. Since 1997 the farm gate price of pig meat has decreased from \$2.60 per kilogram to \$1.70. Yet at the same time the retail price of mid-loin chops increased from \$8.20 per kilogram to \$8.50. That is not good for the average shopper buying dinner for the family.

I have always been concerned about the impact of the national competition council's policies and its failure to recognise the buying power of the retail sector. I am having talks with the Premier about this matter and we will look at ways to address this problem. The New South Wales Dairy Farmers Association is having a meeting with its members this afternoon. I assure the dairy farmers that we will help them to achieve the most appropriate outcome from the mess left by the former coalition Government. I note from reports in the *Central Western Daily* newspaper in Orange that the National Party conference voted last weekend to oppose any further deregulation of the dairy industry. It did not have that policy when it was in government. I will keep the House informed of progress on this very important issue.

STATE RAIL SECURITY

Ms FICARRA: My question is to the Minister for Transport. When 23-year-old Vanessa Laws complained that a man sitting next to her on an early morning train was playing with his genitals, why did State Rail Authority security throw him off at her stop, leaving her to run for her life on a deserted Killara station? Is that the Government's idea of train security?

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

Mr SCULLY: As I have said on many occasions, there is no place for thugs and vandals on our trains, buses or ferries. I will have this matter investigated by the State Rail Authority.

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

TWEED HEADS DISTRICT HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT

Mr BECK: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, representing the Minister for Health. How does the Minister explain comments by doctors in the Tweed that the Government is dragging its feet on extremely serious health care issues and that government funding for the Tweed Heads District Hospital redevelopment could be nothing more than a paper pledge, the project having already been delayed by two years?

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

YOUNG WOMEN SPORT PARTICIPATION

Ms ANDREWS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the Government doing to encourage young women to participate in sport?

Ms HARRISON: I thank the honourable member for Peats for her question because it gives me the opportunity to advise the House of the latest developments in this area. Honourable members might recall that last year my department's women's unit ran a pilot program called "Active Girls—Role Model and Participation". A project officer was employed and groups of sportswomen were co-opted to conduct a series of school visits and participate in a number of events aimed at involving young girls. The project proved to be successful in raising the awareness about issues affecting girls' participation in sport and physical activity, gaining the interest of the girls involved and, most importantly, motivating them to become physically active. It also identified a number of deficiencies, particularly in the level of knowledge amongst school, sporting and community groups about these issues, and strategies were devised to address those deficiencies.

The key recommendations which came from the evaluation of the pilot program were: that the active girls' program be continued and developed as a model for improving the participation of girls in sport and physical activity; that a training program on gender and sport be developed for teachers, sportswomen, sports development officers and others who work with young people; and that these strategies be incorporated as part of a longer-term, integrated approach to address the needs of girls in sport and recreation. The Department of Education

and Training has agreed to provide joint funding to further develop this project during this year, for which I thank the Minister for Education and Training.

The project will have two main components: professional development on gender issues and physical activity, and the provision of community-based girls' events. The aim of the professional development component is to provide both the broader context for the focus on physical activity by girls and specific strategies to improve their participation. Development officers and centre staff from my department's regional offices, together with personal development, health and physical education teachers and consultants from each of the school districts across the State, will take part. The Active Girls events will be modelled on those which were conducted in the pilot program—in the Auburn and Nowra areas—and will offer a range of recreational activities for the girls to try. They will also involve elite level sportswomen and other active women as role models and create direct links for girls to community sport and recreation services.

At this stage it is anticipated that these events will be run in four targeted locations across the State—on the far north coast and the western region in the country and in the south-east and western metropolitan regions of Sydney. The initiative is consistent with my department's key performance areas, particularly social justice, in responding to the special needs of disadvantaged groups within the community. The type of exposure provided by the Active Girls program is a positive step but it can be successful only as part of a much broader and measured educational process. We have identified a strong need to counter the persistent myths, attitudes and assumptions about girls' participation in sport, and we now have a plan which will help to change those views. I am delighted to see the progress made in the program to date and I certainly look forward to its continued development and success.

TWEED HEADS DISTRICT HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT

Mr BECK: My question is to the Minister for the Environment, representing the Minister for Health. Why has the Minister delayed the Tweed Heads hospital redevelopment for more than two years?

Ms ALLAN: The honourable member for Murwillumbah had time to get the question right and he still did not get it right. In fact the Government has made a \$31.5 million capital works commitment to the people of the region. Staged redevelopment of

Tweed Heads hospital is under way and will ensure a more efficient and functional hospital to meet the needs of the honourable member's growing constituency. I am advised by the Northern Rivers Area Health Service that it is undertaking negotiations to determine the best type of services for the redevelopment. I am also advised that the completion date for the project remains June 2001. The completion date of 2002 in the 1998-99 budget papers refers to the finalisation of accounts allowing for the one-year defects liability.

It is standard Treasury procedure to refer to the date when all accounting has been finalised as the completion date. The Government made a promise to improve health services and it is doing just that, despite the negative attitudes of the honourable member for Murwillumbah. The Northern Rivers Area Health Service has in place a comprehensive winter strategy to deal with the anticipated increase in admissions. The strategy ensures that patients with winter illnesses will receive timely, quality care. Their care will not be compromised in any way.

Mr BECK: I ask a supplementary question. Given that answer, can the Minister explain why the Tweed Heads medical staff council is predicting further closures of hospital beds and operating theatres and cuts to services?

Mr Hunter: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, do standing orders not provide that supplementary questions must flow out of the answer given?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Lake Macquarie is correct. However, in my view the supplementary question arises from the Minister's answer.

Ms ALLAN: I am happy to answer the question, although I believe that it was part of the earlier question which was ruled out of order. In fact, the criticisms that the honourable member for Murwillumbah—trying to intimidate the Chamber by showing newspaper articles—referred to relate to an article that appeared in the *Daily News* in Murwillumbah on 22 May 1998, nearly a month ago. So the question is based on very old news and has been superseded by my reply.

Mr Beck: On a point of order. It is not based on that article. It needs a correction.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat.

Mr Beck: It is from today's paper.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member for Murwillumbah that he is on three calls to order.

Questions without notice concluded.

MILK INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

Personal Explanation

Mr FRASER, by leave: When the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation made the remarks which he subsequently withdrew that the Ku Klux Klan was meeting in Texas and I could not be there, the honourable member for Manly shouted across the Chamber that he thought that it was true that I was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. I find that absolutely offensive. The honourable member is an immigrant into this country and we have accepted him not only into Australia but into this Parliament. His comment is an absolute disgrace. I ask him to withdraw the remark.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The standing orders do not allow the member for Coffs Harbour to attack the member for Manly in that manner.

TWEED HEADS DISTRICT HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT

Personal Explanation

Mr BECK, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. The Minister for the Environment, in answering a question on behalf of the Minister for Health, has misled the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member is not complying with the standing orders in relation to the making of a personal explanation.

Mr BECK: She defamed me by saying that the news was three weeks old when it is from today's newspaper. I seek leave to table the article headed "Tweed Faces Health Cuts".

Leave not granted.

BATHURST WATER SUPPLY

Personal Explanation

Mr ARMSTRONG, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Yesterday the Minister for Health said in this Parliament that at no time did I—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Leader of the National Party seeking to make a personal

explanation in relation to a matter that arose during question time?

Mr ARMSTRONG: Yes, yesterday, and I have had no opportunity to make a personal explanation because I had to read *Hansard*.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the National Party will resume his seat.

Mr ARMSTRONG: Mr Speaker, that is unfair, and I believe it is against the standing orders.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the National Party will resume his seat.

APPROPRIATION BILL

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL

APPROPRIATION (1997-98 BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (TRANSMISSION OPERATOR'S LEVY) BILL

PREMIUM PROPERTY TAX BILL

PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [3.28 p.m.]: The Carr Government has been a big-spending, big-taxing Government. The budget gives us no hope of a secure future for New South Wales—no hope of jobs, regional jobs, and a demonstration of commitment to people in the bush and their families. There is no hope for those engaged in agriculture and regional businesses. There is no hope that the finances of this State are being managed well and no hope that the cost of the Olympics to New South Wales will bring any tangible benefits to all the people of the State. This is a budget that will go down in history as the Carr Government's final big-taxing, big-spending budget.

I will admit that there is one bright spot for the southern highlands in the budget, and that is a credit to the very hard work of the school

communities of the Colo Vale and Hill Top primary schools. I take the opportunity of congratulating both school communities, particularly the principals, on the hard work and leadership they have shown in demonstrating the real needs of both schools to the property management unit of the education department. Anyone who visits those schools will know that they are dedicated to providing the very best of facilities. The communities in many cases suffer their share of financial and social problems but they are keen to help themselves and to support each other. Both Hill Top and Colo Vale schools for the last several years have been struggling to operate with demountable buildings. They are located in wind-prone areas and recently the landscaping of both schools has been redeveloped, which has greatly benefited the students.

I am pleased that the budget has finally acknowledged the need in both those schools for permanent buildings and I welcome at last the allocation for construction of those buildings. That is one of the few bright spots in this budget for my electorate. The Government has not addressed the operational cuts that have occurred in schools across my electorate to pay for the unfunded salary promise to teachers. Teachers thoroughly deserve that salary increase but as the Carr Government awarded that salary increase without making a budget allocation for it, the costs must now come from school operational budgets. School maintenance budgets have also suffered. Recently I visited Wingello Public School where the principal and school community informed me of the great need for additional maintenance.

One of the biggest problems in my electorate is the need for an additional Bowral area public school. Bowral Public School is a fine but overcrowded school situated within the rapidly growing central business district—and I hope the coexistence of the Bowral Public School and the CBD continues because children should be a part of a community. I know the Retford site has been allocated for construction of a further school, but the budget does not include any planning, timetabling or budgeting for a second public school. The same applies to the hoped-for Mittagong area high school. We have two fine public high schools at Bowral and Moss Vale but in the next few years another high school will be needed in the Mittagong area.

I ask the Minister for Education and Training why he continues to be secretive about the demographic study I requested two years ago to assess the future needs of education in the community. That study was carried out but was then buried. One can only surmise that it contained real

evidence of the need for a Mittagong area high school and an additional public school in the Bowral area. I ask the Minister to come clean, give us answers and inform us why they have not been addressed in the budget.

Another major issue in my electorate is police. People, in particular seniors and the chamber of commerce, are concerned about the increase in all types of crime. The Minister for Police promised an extra 100 police, but they will not even keep up with the attrition that has been a feature of the Police Service in the past two years. However, if 100 police are available, I hope that some will be allocated to my region so that areas such as Bundanoon, which is underresourced, might at last gain some police resources. People in my area are keen to help in the volunteers in policing program—VIPs. I have made many representations to the Minister for Police about this and I have asked many times for the training budget to be reinstated at the police academy at Goulburn so that those who are prepared to be volunteers can undertake the required training. They can then take their place appropriately beside police in police stations and provide help in areas that otherwise would not be catered for. At least half a dozen potential candidates are keen and ready to go, but the Minister is unwilling and unable to come up with the necessary funds for the requisite training.

Similarly, the Minister has been silent on the subject of police prisoner escorts, which Bowral police have the burden of performing. Last year they spent 1,000-plus hours ferrying prisoners between Goulburn gaol and Silverwater, and other corrective services institutions throughout New South Wales. That means that for those 1,000 hours they were not policing the Southern Highlands. I have written to the Minister for Police but he has not even been interested enough to respond to my request. This is one way in which police can be removed from duties that are not central to the core of community policing—and I would have thought the Minister would be interested in that. Apparently there are two pushbikes ready to go in the Bowral area but the uniforms, which cost between \$800 and \$1,000 each, and equipment are not available so the bicycles are left unused. The pushbike program cannot be accessed because of the lack of funds to equip the police to do that job properly.

Last week I mentioned in a private member's statement Wombeyan Caves Road, which is in desperate need of upgrade. The Carr Government has not maintained the roads budget and sufficient money has not been allocated to regional councils, particularly the Wingecarribee Shire Council, which

has literally hundreds of kilometres of dirt roads to seal, let alone all the other roads that must be maintained. I hope money is allocated to Wombeyan Caves Road so that agricultural and other businesses along that road can be safely accessed, in particular the excellent tourist attraction, Wombeyan Caves.

Another important need in my electorate, as with all of regional New South Wales, is health. Over the past two years Goulburn and Bowral hospitals have had a reduction in the number of theatre surgery hours, in particular, for orthopaedic surgery. Even though official waiting lists have been reported to be between three and four months, they have blown out in both those hospitals to six and nine months respectively. That is not good enough. Many elderly people who have waited for six to nine months to have hip replacements or other joint surgery have visited me. In that waiting period they have gone from being independent and mobile to having a degree of immobility, which cannot be easily reversed. I call on the Minister for Health to acknowledge the problems in Goulburn and Bowral hospitals, as my electorate attracts many retired people who will increasingly need surgical services, particularly orthopaedic surgery, which is an expensive form of surgery. The Minister should not avoid the issue but should implement a plan that addresses waiting lists. It is difficult for people who were independent and mobile, who enjoyed doing community work and gardening, to have to wait nine months and, in that time, to lose their independence and mobility.

One of the curious features of the budget is a program called the regional economic transition scheme—RETS. The scheme was announced with much fanfare by the Minister for Regional Development and is worth examining. It aims to help develop new industries and jobs in towns facing major structural change. However, in Goulburn this structural change has been brought about by the Carr Government because government jobs have been moved needlessly from Goulburn to other centres, such as Wollongong and Queanbeyan, which have a much greater critical mass. The value of one job in Goulburn is more than one job in Wollongong, and the impact of a job loss is more severe in Goulburn than in Wollongong.

Goulburn has a population of approximately 20,000 and a government job loss has a huge effect—a job loss from Goulburn to Wollongong has more impact than a job loss from Wollongong or Newcastle to Sydney. In the past two years the Government has removed from Goulburn approximately 40 jobs in each of the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Department of Health, energy,

and police communications, which has been moved to Wagga Wagga. Also, TAFE jobs have been lost through redundancies and with the loss of trade courses in Goulburn people have been forced to go to Wollongong, Queanbeyan, Nowra or other places to study. Many have given up because they have family responsibilities and cannot easily travel around the countryside undertaking further education. Rail Services Authority jobs have also been lost in Goulburn.

It is completely hypocritical for the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs to produce a bandaid measure, the regional economic transition scheme, and apply it to the very problem that he himself has created. I suggest that the answer to the problem is that the government jobs that were already in Goulburn—moved there from larger centres by the former member whose electorate encompassed Goulburn, the Hon. John Fahey—should be returned to Goulburn, where they were very much appreciated. Each of those government jobs in Goulburn, particularly with its population of about 20,000, brings with it or attracts to it between one and 10 private sector opportunities.

I suggest that the remedy lies with the Minister and the Government. Rather than coming up with mad, bandaid schemes, they should fix up the problems that they themselves have created. They should have left those jobs in place in the first instance. Decentralisation of government jobs is a function of government and a very important plank of any government. Any regional community ought to expect a fair share of jobs involved in the delivery of government services, whether that is a community in Sydney, Bathurst or Goulburn. All should have a chance to share in those opportunities. Goulburn should be no exception.

Everyone is aware of the job and work redesign program going on in CityRail. That affects communities in the electorate of Southern Highlands, particularly in Mittagong, Bowral, Moss Vale and Bundanoon. CityRail jobs in my electorate are very important; they provide not only for the efficient and smooth running of CityRail's services but also a degree of security on railway stations, and they are much appreciated by the local communities. I sought an assurance from the Minister for Transport that jobs will not be lost to my electorate. I have been given no such assurance. The Minister has not been prepared to tell me what the outcome of the job and work redesign program will be. That has created all sorts of concerns, not only among CityRail personnel but in communities surrounding the railway stations. The Mittagong, Bowral and Moss

Vale chambers of commerce, not to mention shopkeepers in Bundanoon, are very concerned about the prospect of reduced manning levels at CityRail stations.

The Olympics are something that we hear quite a bit about from the Government, but it is an event not nearly well enough publicised internationally. We do not hear much about ideas to ensure that regional New South Wales will benefit from this biggest ever spending item in New South Wales. The Olympic bid was first conceived by the Greiner Government. That was not because that Government particularly wanted to focus on two weeks of sport in September 2000, desirable though that is. The bid was conceived not only out of a love of sport, but in recognition of the fact that staging the Olympics in Sydney would focus the eyes of the world on Sydney, on New South Wales and in turn Australia, and as a result we would reap the economic benefits of investment—benefits that places like Barcelona and Atlanta still enjoy several years after those cities have staged successful Olympics.

There is no point in staging the Olympics in Sydney, or in New South Wales, if the State is not to gain some long-term economic and other benefits. Recent surveys show a low level of awareness overseas that Sydney is hosting the year 2000 Games. Those surveys reveal low levels of intention to visit Sydney during the Olympic Games. In particular, we continue to see nothing from the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs on what plans are in place for the rural and regional Olympic expo, which was proposed by the honourable member for Burrinjuck and me. That expo was to be held in the Sydney central business district during the Olympic period to bring the bush to the city, to make sure that anyone who visits Sydney for the Olympic Games but does not have the chance to visit rural and regional centres of New South Wales will see showcased the very best food and fibre products produced in New South Wales.

I have made repeated calls to the present Minister for Regional Development for an update on his position on this suggestion. I had an assurance from the Treasurer, who was formerly Minister for Regional Development, that he thought this was a good idea and would support it. But since the honourable member for Clarence has become the responsible Minister absolutely nothing has been heard from him on this matter. I find that particularly disappointing given all his rhetoric about regional New South Wales and his bandaid measures, such as the regional economic transition scheme. It is vital that we turn around the perception

of regional communities that all the problems they are suffering and all the initiatives that are not being followed on capital works and other agendas in their regions are the fault of the Olympic Games.

Alternatively, if the Carr Government is syphoning off capital works funds from regional New South Wales for Olympic purposes, in return the bush should gain some benefits flowing from the Olympics. I will give the House some examples. The Goulburn community has about a dozen families with members who need renal satellite services. Some of these people are elderly, and some are in the care of other family members. They find themselves having to travel regularly to Canberra or Sydney for back-up renal dialysis treatment. Those dozen people would like to have a renal satellite unit in Goulburn Hospital so that they could cut down on their travel time. In particular, some elderly people who feel uncomfortable about driving, and know that at some time soon they will have to stop driving, would like to feel secure that the services they require are available in their community. The perception of those people is that the lack of commitment to provide such services at Goulburn Hospital is related to the Carr Government's budget overruns and blowouts due to the Olympics.

It is an easy equation to understand. It is important that the Carr Government put some effort into promoting the Olympics and making the community understand that the Games are not just about sport, worthy though that is, but about a whole new focus on New South Wales and Australia and the consequent benefits that will flow through to all in our community. I seek clarification from the responsible Ministers on some curious aspects of the budget. I would be keen to learn from the Minister for Corrective Services the actual projections for the stage two redevelopment of Goulburn gaol. There has been an announcement of a \$32 million project to be completed by 2002, but the first year's allocation is all of \$1.5 million. So, magically, between now and 2002 another \$29 million or so will have to come from somewhere.

I would like a clear exposition of the budget and timetable for that project. Similarly, for the stage one redevelopment this year's allocation is only \$2 million, with an estimated cost of \$6.25 million. We are more than half way through the project but there has been less than half of the expected expenditure. It is important that the Minister respond on that matter. This is a big taxing, big spending budget. It will be the Treasurer's final budget. It deserves to be his final budget because it

is a bad budget and it will drive New South Wales further into debt. This Government keeps promising to provide a surplus but, as usual, its budget this year will produce another deficit.

[Debate interrupted.]

MILK INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

Personal Explanation

Mr Fraser: I wish to make a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A personal explanation is normally permissible only when no business is before the Chamber but as the honourable member approached me earlier about this I will allow him to proceed.

Mr FRASER: There is nothing more offensive or more despicable than for a member of Parliament to lay false accusations under privilege in this House. Today in this place the honourable member for Manly directed to me, with viper-like venom, words to the effect that he considered I was a member of the Ku Klux Klan. I raised my heartfelt concerns and great offence at that despicable allegation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! How has the character of the member been impugned?

Mr FRASER: The honourable member for Manly, as he left the Chamber, having heard my impassioned protests, repeated the offence and sought to drive the knife into me by saying, in the hearing of other honourable members of this Chamber, "Obviously the truth hurts." I have many friends born of many races. I care about the many races and the indigenous people who make up this wonderful Australian society. I ask—indeed I demand—that the honourable member for Manly withdraw his remarks and apologise to me for those remarks, which would be offensive to all fair-minded Australians and the majority of constituents of the electorate of Manly.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The standing orders do not prevent a member from making an allegation about another member. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour has asked that the honourable member for Manly be directed to withdraw a statement he allegedly made earlier in the afternoon. However, the standing orders do not compel the honourable member for Manly to do so.

APPROPRIATION BILL**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL****APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL****APPROPRIATION (1997-98 BUDGET
VARIATIONS) BILL****ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT
(TRANSMISSION OPERATOR'S LEVY) BILL****PREMIUM PROPERTY TAX BILL****PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT
AMENDMENT BILL****STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION FURTHER
AMENDMENT BILL****Second Reading**

[*Debate resumed.*]

Mr CRUICKSHANK (Murrumbidgee) [3.50 p.m.]: I wish to speak to the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills. The words uttered by the Treasurer in his Budget Speech when he said that the budget was every inch a Labor budget were prophetic and portentous. It is not much of a joke when country New South Wales is allocated a few hundred thousand dollars from a \$23 billion budget. That says it all about the Labor Party's so-called love affair with the bush. Unfortunately for the Labor Party, some other parties also have those sorts of furry notions. But the Labor Party has the notion that somehow, ever since Gough Whitlam said that the road to power for the Federal Labor Party was via the Country Party, as it was then, people have engendered these notions for themselves. If only they could see themselves as others see them, they would realise there is nothing in that affair.

The budget's allocation of taxpayers' funds, as expected, was overwhelmingly in favour of the city—in what most of us would regard as pork-barrelling of city electorates and further efforts at social engineering. This has been done by ensuring that money has not been allocated for work on country roads and the health system has not received a cent by way of capital expenditure. Indeed, during his recent investigation the commissioner was appalled that the Greater Murray regional health board was running out of money and will be over budget by many millions of dollars.

The Government has had to continue to provide money for the Murrumbidgee Irrigation

Area. A further \$12 million has been allocated for bridges and roads. The Labor Party did that because it was part of an agreement. However, the Labor Party will never be able to make up for the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been denied to the people of the MIA through lost opportunities, purely and simply because of the way in which the area was run by the Labor Party for some 45 years as its own personal fiefdom. It was not a bad political philosophy, and all members have probably struck something similar somewhere along the line. It is just that here it was perpetuated for a long time. Despite it being a socialist entity where everything was controlled from Macquarie Street via the local member, it really was not what you knew but who you knew and who you were prepared to make your contributions to that counted. That is why in 1988, when the coalition came into power, it made sure that deregulation of the industry was commenced.

Despite the fact that the coalition when in government deregulated the industry and the Labor Party has pursued that policy, typically a lot of the bureaucracy cannot let go. Many aspects of the irrigation areas, including approvals, are spuriously dragged in. Bureaucrats within the Department of Agriculture, local government and State government worked their tails off to ensure that the old regime would be swept away over their dead bodies. They are making it as difficult as possible. If the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for Agriculture want to make a real contribution to that area, the best way to go about that would be to get the bureaucracy to back off to allow the area to develop as it is at present. The area is experiencing a boom in wine production and grape prices; incomes in that part of the world are fantastic.

Repair of the road between Harden and the Hume Highway will finally address the problems caused by the dreadful black spot at Illalong which has been the bane of the industry in transporting produce from the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area to the markets in Sydney. The value of soft-stone fruits, melons, and so on, has been seriously diminished because of the need for them to be transported on that road. The Illalong stretch of the road is probably the worst. I am pleased that roadwork will finally be carried out, although I acknowledge that it will take several years to fix. I am pleased also that the new industry food technology unit at Griffith will finally begin after many years of toing and froing. The unit will link the production of fruit and vegetables in the area with value adding activities, training and tourism. Leeton has been given \$61,000 for an engineering upgrade program and the school at Coolamon is to receive two demountable classrooms. Bravo! Out of

a \$23 billion budget, that is certainly nothing to write home about.

Contrary to the lavish claims of Government press releases, the bush has not been a winner in this election-year budget. The pathetic part of the efforts of Government members, particularly the honourable member for Clarence, to woo the people in the bush is that, in all their excitement about discovering these big, well-run enterprises that are developing in the country—like the Barters, the de Bortolis, the Parles, and the multi-million dollar establishments which have been developed by those people through the labour of their own hands—they take them on board and give them a lot of good publicity; it would be great if the publicity were simply for the benefit of the companies themselves. But the sad part is that the honourable member for Clarence and others take those companies on board and try to build on them and then say that if it had not been for the Government the companies would never have been so successful.

Barters employs about 1,200 or 1,300 people. It would be fantastic if that sort of wages bill were to go to Griffith and surrounding towns each week. Despite the efforts of any government that comes along, those organisations will expand, and no-one will be able to stop them. For Government members to make out that if it were not for them those companies would not succeed gives an accurate picture of just how desperate the Government is when it comes to trying to woo the people of country New South Wales. After the treatment that the Labor Party has dished out over the years to the people of the Murrumbidgee, the Labor Party owes them millions upon millions of dollars for lost opportunities. By and large, despite the budget and what happened before, the shareholdings of the Labor Party in the bush are pretty low.

Mr Speaker, as you would be aware, I will be retiring at the next election. Consequently, I will not have a great deal of opportunity to contribute to debate in this House on matters of a general nature, except for legislation and similar issues. Therefore I would like to make a couple of observations. There is no doubt that the system of adversarial politics that have developed within the framework of the Westminster system is a major inhibitor to good government—although I used to be involved in it a great deal myself. When one remembers that all legislation is a compromise—whether in the party room or within the legislative Chamber or as a result of the government of the day knowing what it can get away with—it is a great pity that there has to be so much animosity and invective traded between opposing sides of this House.

Members stick to their ideologies, even though most of the ideologies are moribund. I could not disagree with Jack Munday when he told the university that most of the good things about life in Australia had come about because the trade union movement had fought for them, along with the development of wealth, etcetera, in the community. I would suggest that Australians now have a reasonable quality of life. But most of those great ideological battles in Australia have been fought. The action of the Maritime Union of Australia was probably the last dying cry of that ideology. I hope it was. I hope we have learned lessons from that incident. To the outside observer, Australia in general and New South Wales in particular appear to be rather tired democracies. We now speak of and chase such things as poverty levels, which I do not think anyone knows anything about or understands.

Usually it is a shorthand way of referring to that section of the community that needs more taxpayers funds. More and more social responsibilities are given over to government control. Consequently, greater levels of regulation are required in all aspects of life. Most of the legislative argument, because of this lingering barrenness of trying to fight battles along ideological lines, follows plain, good old prejudice and bias without adequate thought for the common good. Much worse is that many politicians want to impose more and more regulation to show that government is doing something and that governments really care. One would have thought that by now, with the incessant stream of Department of Community Services failures and the never-ending stories of abject failure by the department, the community would have lost faith completely in DOCS. But it has not.

The community simply tries to take as little notice as possible and to ignore the problem as much as possible—except for the unfortunate participants—in the hope that it will all go away. The political parties are quite content to leave it like that. Both sides can only lend it ideological support and throw money at it. It is really only a salve to their collective consciences. If any genuine ideology is left, ideology that is still looking for a home, it has moved into the environment. It is moving into much more complex areas. With that inexorable urge to oppose authority, the battle lines have largely moved into a more fertile area—the generation gap—with politicians hanging on to its coat-tails. It is a highly charged emotional subject, but emotion is a highly tradeable political commodity and Australian politicians are no slackers at using it as much as they can as a replacement for reason.

Yesterday the Australian Labor Party pledged that there will be no new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights. Only history will tell if the French nuclear tests in the Pacific were merely another blip on the nuclear horizon on the way to developing newer and safer controls for harnessing the potential of nuclear power. While Australians were going overboard and politicians were racing off to Tahiti, while we performed like hysterical maniacs, those with the most to lose—the Chileans and the Peruvians—could hardly get a word in, even if they wanted to. Nuclear is here to stay. It is with us and it is not going to go away. It is a bit like fire: you cannot do anything to get rid of it and it is here to stay. History will show that nuclear power is here for good reason. Greenhouse gases, which, we are told, contribute more and more to the ozone layer, are produced by our coal-powered stations, therefore nuclear power will come more and more into its own.

The undoubted benefits of having a small nuclear reactor, such as that at Lucas Heights, for experimental, medical and research purposes cannot even be tolerated by this country. Wake up, Australia, for heavens' sake! This is flat-earth politics revisited. India and Pakistan have sent every civilised society, including Australia, into paroxysms of rage and apoplexy. Why? Because we shook our collective fingers at the world's second most populous nation and said, "You cannot be trusted with an item such as nuclear power." And we probably responded in that way because it was India. It is fruitless to try to change the institutions within which the Government of this State operates. They are costly. Politicians waste untold millions in this place. There is no discipline. Costly, time-wasting theatre is encouraged.

If ever one wants a good example of how not to correct the shortcomings of one's government, one has only to look at the results of the big changes made to the system of elections in New Zealand: the mixed member proportional—MMP—representation. Because a government could not be installed for months after the election, New Zealanders are now seriously considering going back to their original system of first past the post. In case I do not get another chance, I would like to say thank you to everybody for the courtesies extended to me during the past 14 to 15 years and for giving me the honour to serve in this place. In leaving this place I bear in mind that the old adage that the one disappointment at election time is that the only person you can vote for is a politician is still as true as ever. If that ever changes, it might be possible to make this place work better.

Mr JEFFERY (Oxley) [4.05 p.m.]: The Labor Government has failed to get the budget out of deficit. Taxpayers of this State have had a noose put around their necks. By March 1999 the situation will be even worse and the coalition will be elected to government to pick up the pieces. The State's finances are haemorrhaging. Only a change of government can stop it and start along the long road back. We can put a stop to the spiralling debt, but it will be a long, hard road after the current regime is forced to hand over the keys to Treasury. The honourable member for Gladesville will not be here, so he should not be smiling. The Labor Party is like light-fingered Jack with its grubby hands in the till. Nothing is left for health, education and roads in the bush. We might get the best Olympic facilities the world has ever seen, but country people, including many of my constituents, say they have been made to suffer in the meantime.

What can anyone tell the battlers about the budget? There is nothing in it for them. What does one tell the parents of a sick child when there is no money for health? Will people feel safe in their homes if no more money is provided for police resources? They will not. The Police Service needs more funding to fight crime. The service needs more officers. Where is the commitment to be tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime? The Minister for Police stated that an extra 100 police are on our streets, but this State had more police on the streets last November than it has now. Kempsey needs another 10 police tonight, because it has a lot of problems at the moment. I put a question on notice on 4 June regarding police strength. Police on long-term sick leave must be replaced. I have been raising this matter and waiting for an answer for months, but the Minister has avoided it. I estimate that about 10 per cent of all police are on long-term sick leave.

The Minister for Police has to deal with this matter urgently to assist those in the country. Though the Minister suggests there is a record number of police in the service, statistics show that police strength in this State is 37 below what it was seven months ago. Instead of boasting about an extra 100 police, the Carr Government should admit that police numbers are reducing. The back-to-school allowance has been the subject of a lot of criticism. Even though most people have taken the money, there have been complaints about how the scheme has been administered. It is a shambles with errors and overpayments that have cost our schools valuable resources.

Roads in my electorate are a disgrace. The Pacific Highway is subject to the continuation of a funding agreement between the previous coalition and Federal governments. A recent assessment of road and traffic conditions on other than the Pacific Highway included on-site inspection of all rural bus routes in Kempsey shire. School bus safety is a major concern to the parents in my electorate. Recent rains caused flood chaos on roads, highlighting the lack of money provided for road maintenance by this Government. In fact, since the Carr Government came to office road maintenance has been cut by \$243 million. Money must be spent on solid infrastructure in rural and regional New South Wales, not on bus shelters and bicycle racks in Sydney. On return to government the coalition must restore the 60-40 basis for road funding and put the appropriate balance of government support back into regional New South Wales.

Another matter that is close to my heart is the forestry industry and the jobs that that industry has generated over the year. The forestry industry on the mid-north coast has been decimated. People's livelihoods depend on timber milling and other work that is generated by the forestry industry. Many forest roads provide access to private properties. Because many wilderness areas have been locked up or turned into national parks foresters have no interest in those areas. The roads are in a state of disrepair and people living in rural areas no longer have proper roads. It is a joke. When governments remove resources from certain areas they should make a commitment to allocate funding for the maintenance of the roads in those areas.

The funding for public works is a pittance. The Department of Public Works and Services and the Department of Land and Water Conservation have been engaged by Kempsey council to come up with a solution to combat arsenic problems and meet water supply demands at Stuarts Point. That situation has been critical for two years. Environmentalists constantly make representations to me about the arsenic problems and their fears for the health of people in that area. Do we have to wait until people get sick? The Department of Health has said that there is no problem, but in the past some problems have occurred that should be rectified. Adequate funding should be allocated immediately to enable that problem to be rectified.

I turn now to health services. The Oxley electorate and most rural areas in New South Wales are in a perilous state. Hospitals cannot pay their bills. Budget blowouts have closed beds and lengthened waiting lists. Where is the funding for beds and services for Kempsey, Wauchope and

Macksville hospitals? Banaid money is not good enough; we need high-quality, permanent services, not crisis management. Carers are desperate for access to better mental health services in the Nambucca Valley. Money should have been provided for a dental health scheme to improve waiting times for dental work and dentures. People are getting sick while they wait up to four years to get their teeth fixed. If people with dental problems cannot eat they will lose weight and suffer serious health problems.

Mr Gaudry: It is because of Federal Government cuts.

Mr JEFFERY: The honourable member for Newcastle blames everything on the Federal Government. He should read a letter that I received recently. It suits the honourable member and the current New South Wales Government to blame the Commonwealth Government for its alleged ineptitude in the provision of public dental services. Three and a half years of assistance under the Commonwealth dental health program materially assisted New South Wales in reducing its waiting lists as well as contributing towards improving infrastructure in the public dental sector. The Government has done nothing to provide those services but other States have taken the necessary steps to provide them. The Government has been siphoning off the money it has received from the Commonwealth instead of putting it into dental health services to help pensioners in this State.

I will tell everyone in my electorate how miserable the New South Wales Government is to the pensioners who want to get their teeth fixed. Tomorrow I will have printed in the papers a letter from the Federal Minister for Health that will expose the New South Wales Minister for Health. The Government has been in office for 3½ years, but it has done nothing in this area. A cook-chill proposal for Kempsey hospital to provide health district catering services would generate good jobs and economic benefits. The Government wants to take away the cooking facilities at Kempsey and Wauchope hospitals. How dare it take jobs away from my area! Kempsey and Wauchope hospitals need those jobs. The Minister has to provide the means by which we can combine high-quality services with job security.

There are record waiting lists at Port Macquarie hospital. Kempsey has the ability to take the surgical load off the Port Macquarie Base Hospital with appropriate funding, but it needs the funds to do it. The Minister's failed waiting list program caused drop-out rates in private health

insurance to double. As a result more people are waiting for hospital beds than ever before. Beds and services at Wauchope and Macksville hospitals are also starved of funding. Many other government facilities and services in Oxley electorate are so starved of funds that they are unable to operate properly. Fisheries inspectors have been taken away from South West Rocks and Nambucca Heads and the Department of Agriculture at Macksville has been closed. Fisheries inspectors have been relocated to city areas rather than coastal towns such as Nambucca Heads and South West Rocks where they are needed. Nambucca Valley should be called hidden valley for all the help it receives from this Government. What did the Premier promise on 29 August 1996? Premier Bob Carr promised:

Any major changes proposed by government departments in rural NSW will be subject to a Rural Communities Impact Statement in the future.

These statements will give Cabinet an understanding of the full extent of the impact of any changes in services, staff numbers or facilities in regional areas.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUNTER REGION DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY SERVICE FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATION

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle) [4.15 p.m.]: On Wednesday, 10 June, I had the pleasure of attending, as I do each year, the Hunter Region Developmental Disability Service foundation day celebration at Stockton Centre. Of all the functions I attend each year, this one gives me the greatest pleasure. Lorraine Yudaeff, Director of Stockton Centre and the staff of that centre join with members of the community, with foster grandparents and with the support group for the centre. On Wednesday the opening address was given by Brendon O'Reilly, Deputy Director-General, Operations, of the Department of Community Services. All participants were given an opportunity to witness the magnificent work done by the staff. An impressive feature of that ceremony is that each year the thanks of the centre director and the Department of Community Services are passed on to staff at that centre.

It is an outstanding tribute to the dedication and loyalty of those workers that exceptional service awards are given out each year. This year Mrs Betty

McAskill topped the list with 35 years service to the Hunter Region Developmental Disability Service. Five members—Mary Beazley, Owen Beldham, Anne Jaeger, Krystyna Newburn and Betty Yates—received awards for 30 years service. Ten people received awards for 25 years service, and 20 or more people received awards for 20 years service. That represents a total of 995 years service by those members. That is outstanding service by members at Stockton, Kanangra and Tomaree, the three areas which come under the auspices of the developmental disabilities service. Those people have dedicated their lives to providing services for disabled people at those centres: 480 clients at Stockton, 161 at Kanangra and 65 at Tomaree are cared for by a total of 900 full-time workers, 75 per cent of whom are nursing staff.

The loving and caring team at the centre comprises housekeepers and kitchen, laundry, transport, trade, outdoor service and clerical staff. One thing that strikes anyone visiting Stockton Centre is the total team effort. That is evident from the care provided and the relationship between clients and workers at the centre, whether they be nursing staff or ancillary staff. Another outstanding feature of the centre is the individual care given in the 14 wards or dormitories, eight of which have been turned into residential units or apartments, and three more which are in the process of being converted. Clients at those units live in a home environment. The groups of about six clients who live in each apartment block have adequate access to the community. Each block of units has a minibus to transport clients.

There is a sensory room with soft disco music, a sound beam, high swinging chairs and a range of services designed to integrate disabled people into the community and give them the stimulus that they require. Cerebral palsy victims live in two six-bed units at the Ghost Gum cottages. I know that the Minister for Community Services, who is now in the House, is proud of the Stockton Centre workers. They provide an environment of care and love, with the assistance of the foster grandparents scheme and support centre. The disability clients show a great sense of fun in their relationships with their individual nursing carers. I am proud of the dedication and public service of those people who assist disability clients, and I am proud to support the work of the centre. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.20 p.m.]: I literally ran down to the House to add my comments to those of the honourable member

for Newcastle. I am pleased that the Stockton community is supportive of the Stockton Centre. The impressive contribution of the honourable member for Newcastle highlights the measures that the Government has attempted to implement in the disability services portfolio. The raising of such matters strikes a balance, so that people not only hear when the department does something wrong, they also hear when the department gets it right. I intend to send copies of the honourable member's statement to the appropriate places to show the workers in this tough industry that members of Parliament understand that their work, which may be shunned by others, is performed with great dedication and achieves great results.

The Stockton Centre is a model for forward-thinking people. Instead of remaining a dormitory-style institution, it is implementing forward-thinking measures with the creation of group homes within the organisation. The honourable member for Newcastle said that positive outcomes are important. There is a general feeling that the Stockton Centre is a model for other centres. I thank the honourable member for Newcastle for his contribution. In my portfolio, which is one of the toughest, praise is rarely given. When it is, I am quick to relay it to the appropriate people.

LOWER HAWKESBURY VISITOR INFORMATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTRE

Mr O'DOHERTY (Ku-ring-gai) [4.22 p.m.]: Few members of this Parliament have the privilege of representing an area as beautiful as that part of the Hawkesbury River, which I represent. A few weeks ago in a small boat floating off Kangaroo Point I joined three commendable members of my community—Tom Richmond, Miriam Maloney and Jennifer Warner—in sharing a vision that should be shared by every member of this Parliament: that the people of Australia should acknowledge the importance of Brooklyn and surrounding areas in the lower Hawkesbury and support the development of the Lower Hawkesbury Visitor Information and Cultural Heritage Centre. Few people would know about the links between Brooklyn and this nation's Federation. The railway bridge, which was constructed in 1888-89, was the final link in the railway network to connect the eastern colonies. The railway link was opened in 1889 by the then Governor, Lord Carrington, who recognised its significance as a stimulus towards Federation.

Attending that opening were Sir Henry Parkes, the Father of Federation, and George Reid, who was later to become Prime Minister. It was some months

before Sir Henry Parkes used the same theme in his oration at Tenterfield. Seven toasts were drunk with Moët et Chandon Dry Imperial 1884, one toast being to the united Australia the railways had done so much to bring about. At the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention held in 1891, the Australian Constitution was drafted aboard the *S.S. Lucinda* while it cruised the Hawkesbury, with its supplies being replenished at Brooklyn. Charles Kingston, Sir Edmund Barton, A. J. Thynne, Sir John Downer, Henry Wrixson, and Bernhard Wise were all on board. In 1901 Brooklyn hosted a visit from King George V and Queen Mary, at the time the Duke and Duchess of York, who came to Australia to open the first Parliament. The importance of Brooklyn was acknowledged by its portrayal on the first £5 note of the new federated Australia.

For those reasons my constituents and I believe that the Federation Fund could do no better than to provide a significant amount of money to start work on and complete, if possible, the vision of my three constituents: the development of the Lower Hawkesbury Visitor Information and Cultural Heritage Centre. I have raised this matter so that my support for this project can be recorded by this House and the Federal Government. There are many reasons to develop the centre at Kangaroo Point. Since I have been the representative of the electorate of Ku-ring-gai, a period of almost six years, many proposals have been put forward in the Brooklyn area for all types of development.

I have never seen a more appropriate development that better suits Brooklyn from an historical, educational, cultural and environmental point of view than this proposal. The proposal will allow people to view significant archeological sites and infrastructure of the early years of our nation, such as evidence of the original Peats Ferry Wharf, which operated between 1844 and 1889. The wharf also operated until 1930, and a vehicular bridge was built in 1945. There is evidence of the construction site of the Hawkesbury River road bridge which, after its construction between 1938 and 1945, was only eight inches short of having the deepest bridge foundation in the world.

The area also has a significant Aboriginal history with 1,700 Aboriginal cultural sites recorded in Ku-ring-gai Chase and a number of significant rock carvings around Brooklyn. A rock carving at Stingray Rock, near Kangaroo Point, is plainly visible. Governor Phillip led the first exploration expedition to the Hawkesbury in March 1788 and discovered Mullet Island, now an important part of my electorate called Dangar Island. It is well

documented that Sydney could not have survived without produce from the Hawkesbury area, which continued until the 1950s.

The Hawkesbury River postman still plies his trade; it has been an important service in the area for generations. The area also has a significant industrial history; three generations of road making are evident within 500 metres. I commend my three constituents for their work, particularly Tom Richmond for his careful research of the history of Brooklyn. I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition was among the first to send a letter of support to this group. I assure them that I will make every effort to fulfil their vision. I appeal to the ~~Car~~ Government to support this group's efforts. I once again commend this project to the Federal Government as a matter of national significance that should receive funding from the Federation Fund.

FATIGUE-RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

Mr GIBSON (Londonderry) [4.27 p.m.]: I speak about an issue that is affecting my electorate, New South Wales and Australia. Two weeks ago a group of people brought to my attention deaths that had occurred in their families in the past couple of months as a result of motor accidents. They told me that the reason given for the accidents by the police and other authorities was fatigue and asked what could be done to combat motorist fatigue. I explained to them that fatigue is now viewed by police and authorities as a major killer on our roads and that Government measures had been implemented to combat it. Many years ago when a reason could not be given for an accident, the new phenomenon called fatigue was given as the reason.

So far this year in New South Wales motor accidents have claimed 270 lives. In many cases death could have been avoided. The Government has taken measures to reduce the number of deaths on New South Wales roads. In 1980 1,400 people died on the roads. Last year was a record year with the number of deaths reduced to 570, and that is still 570 too many. Recent accidents in Richmond and Mount Druitt have highlighted to the families I have mentioned and to the local communities that many road accidents are caused through fatigue, and they ask what can be done. While talking about fatigue-related accidents, I applaud the trucking industry. With the long hours worked and millions of miles travelled by truckers, it might be considered that the trucking industry is a major cause of fatigue-related accidents. Statistics show the opposite. Between 3 per cent and 4 per cent of fatigue-related accidents are related to heavy vehicles.

We must congratulate the trucking industry. The improvement in its safety record is due to the work-related safety practices adopted by trucking companies. Driving requires considerable attention and the exercise of judgment. Anything which affects the driver's ability to attend to the task has the potential to cause accidents. Identifying fatigue as a significant factor in accidents is not straightforward. It is hard to attribute the cause to fatigue, partly because there is no objective measure of fatigue. Symptoms of fatigue vary between drivers. They include restlessness, boredom, drowsiness, aches and pains, sore or tired eyes, and loss of concentration.

Two different methods are used to calculate the proportion of accidents involving fatigue. The first is to count only accidents in which the police, after investigation, have nominated that fatigue was a likely cause. An example is when the driver was known to have fallen asleep or reported that he or she was drowsy or fatigued. The second category of accidents are those which meet a set of criteria established by road safety professionals based on the crash circumstances and manoeuvres of the driver prior to the crash.

Drivers may be tired when starting a trip. Many people believe that fatigue sets in after many hours of driving but that is not always the case. Statistics show that fatigue can arise in the first hour or half hour of a trip. If people feel tired, physically or mentally, for whatever reason and are thinking of driving somewhere they should think twice. People who are tired before they start driving are at risk of accident and people who lack sleep or rest should not drive. People who drive late at night or in the early hours of the morning are at increased risk. Men make up 83 per cent of fatigued drivers in accidents and 46 per cent of fatigued drivers in accidents are under 25 years. Fifty four per cent of fatigue accidents happen between midnight and 8.00 a.m.—41 per cent on rural roads and 38 per cent in the metropolitan area. My message to the people who came to see me was simple: if you are tired, do not drive. [*Time expired.*]

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.32 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Londonderry, who is well known for his longstanding commitment to road safety, on raising a very important point: fatigue does not depend on the hours of driving; other factors contribute, such as very long work days and tension and stress at work. During my time in the Police Service some of my fellow officers and I were among the worst

offenders. After working for an eight-hour shift an officer might be involved in an incident that would take up half the night. In those days we did quick shifts and sometimes I would have one hour's sleep in 18. If one was in that state it was not safe to be driving high-speed motor vehicles. The rostering arrangements have long since been rectified.

The honourable member for Londonderry also referred to the driver reviver scheme. It was pioneered by Steve Owens in my electorate through the local Lions club many years ago. He established it and the Roads and Traffic Authority took it over with his permission. It was pioneered by this State. A little park called Lions Park in Charlestown was one of the first places established as a driver reviver point. I was happy to assist Steve Owens and the Lions clubs in this regard. I put on record Steve's commitment to this Australian phenomenon. The driver reviver system brought fatigue to the attention of the public. Fatigue can affect people in various ways and they should take this into account not only while driving long distances but in their daily lives. I commend the honourable member for Londonderry for bringing this matter to the notice of the Chamber. [*Time expired.*]

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr CHAPPELL (Northern Tablelands) [4.34 p.m.]: I have had several visits recently by hotel and nightclub operators who are concerned about the application of rules about responsible service of alcohol. They are not opposed in principle to the rules; they are very supportive. Their staff undertake regular training and some licensees employ additional bouncers if they know that there will be a heavy night. The application of the rules rather than the existence of the rules is of concern. Recently I met the local police area commander and some of the local licensees. There is a need for finetuning of the liquor licensing legislation and its administration. Licensees and staff are in the firing line. They are required to control and manage matters over which they have no practical control.

For example, someone who has consumed a considerable amount of alcohol elsewhere may turn up at particular licensed premises and after one or two drinks exhibit signs of intoxication. There is no way that the licensee or staff member could know that the person was already close to being intoxicated before drinking at that establishment. Someone sitting at a table at the back of a pub could have drinks purchased at the bar all night by someone else, as often happens. That drinker will not have come to the notice of the bar staff or the licensee. Yet that drinker could be becoming

inebriated—technically causing a breach of the law by being an intoxicated person on licensed premises. But the staff would have no way of knowing this.

Given the diversity of attitude, personality and behaviour in any group of people, how does a bar attendant, no matter how well trained, always get it right in detecting intoxication? It is simply not always possible to do that accurately. I know of one case at the moment of a hotel patron seeking legal redress for being ejected from a hotel for being intoxicated when he had not had a single alcoholic drink. He has witnesses to that. He was identified by a visiting plainclothes police officer, who insisted that the patron be ejected for intoxication when there is no way that he could have been intoxicated.

Often the judgment about intoxication is entirely subjective, and very often wrong. That is not to say that there should not be rules, but we have to find better ways of doing it. The penalty is real and it has to be borne by the licensee and his staff. There is constant risk of being called to account for supplying alcohol to an intoxicated person on licensed premises. This is very inexact science. The policy as yet is ill-developed and it is often unfair in its administration. Part of the unfairness comes from putting all the onus on the licensee and staff and virtually none on the individual drinker.

No clearer example of the unfairness exists than the requirement on the licensee to manage behaviour out on the streets, in the vicinity but beyond the licensed premises. It is always possible that rowdy, misbehaving, inebriated individuals or groups may be on the way to or from particular licensed premises. It is called a pub crawl and it happens in every town and many suburbs. Yet the behaviour of people involved can be held to be the responsibility of the licensee, who can be charged with allowing intoxicated persons to be in the vicinity. In bringing this matter to the attention of the House I ask the Minister for Gaming and Racing to revisit this area of concern with industry representatives and perhaps with the Minister for Police to develop a better and fairer management plan.

This area needs to be fairly and accurately policed but that is not necessarily the case at present. Part of any regime should include an acknowledgement of the high standard of compliance by particular licensed premises in respect of responsible service of alcohol so that in the event of a rare but virtually inevitable breach of the rules due credit can be given to the record of the particular licensed premises. We seek co-operation

in achieving responsible service of alcohol on licensed premises, not heavy-handed policing just for the sake of it. It behoves all members of the Parliament to achieve a system that is fairer than the present one, much as we agree with the principle of responsible service of alcohol. [*Time expired.*]

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.39 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Northern Tablelands and assure him that whoever he has spoken to is way out of step with everything else that the industry is doing. The opposite is happening and it is being applauded. Recently I went to the winter campaign with people from the Balmain Tigers and tomorrow I am involved in launching an important project which represents the continuing progress being made in the Government's harm minimisation approach. It provides a definite overall policy and strategic framework and this accord will be trialled in the Kings Cross area. No government throughout Australia has done more to try to minimise harm from alcohol.

This Government is leading the way. The measure is being embraced wholeheartedly by the liquor industry; not one section of the liquor industry has complained about it. The Government is reviewing the process but people cannot be expected to become educated overnight. All other States throughout Australia are examining the New South Wales model, though one cannot judge what people will do. However, even the Australian Hotels Association and the Registered Clubs Association are running courses because they realise that this problem needs to be addressed. Some people believe that the section about serving intoxicated persons is new. It is one of the oldest sections of the Act. As a result of the Queensland case, even though harm minimisation in the main will afford protection against certain types of litigation, if harm minimisation is not pursued one is likely to end up in court. The industry is very aware of that Queensland case and I commend it to all honourable members. [*Time expired.*]

LABOR INVOLVEMENT LINKING AND ASSISTING COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Mr SULLIVAN (Wollongong) [4.41 p.m.]: I wish to speak about a luncheon being held tomorrow in Wollongong by the Labor Involvement Linking and Assisting Communities—LILAC—Committee. That committee has been in operation for more than 12 months and consists of Government members' wives who have made a commitment to raise funds in various towns and cities throughout the State and

to donate the moneys raised back to those communities. The membership includes a sprinkling of wives of backbenchers and Ministers, but those holding office are primarily the wives of backbenchers. To date they have held a number of functions and I shall inform the Parliament of them. The committee raised \$5,385.75 at a luncheon held in Bathurst to help provide funds for the Bathurst Cancer Care Cottage. Also, \$3,500 was raised in Dubbo for the Lourdes Hospital palliative care unit.

Subsequently, the committee held a luncheon in Newcastle and raised \$7,960 to help fund research into children's debilitating and life-threatening diseases at the John Hunter Research Centre, which is part of the John Hunter Hospital. The committee has also held a number of film mornings in Parliament House and raised a total of \$5,600. Tomorrow's luncheon is to raise funds for the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service, which will be located in Wollongong. This is to the credit of those women and they have given a great deal of their time and effort. I know from my wife's involvement that they derive a great deal of pleasure from involvement not only in their own communities but in towns and cities throughout the State.

Wollongong City Council has provided funds to develop a helipad at Coniston to house the helicopter. This helicopter will provide search and rescue services along the south coast, from the national park to the limit of the range of the helicopter, and can be used to augment similar services in Sydney and on the far south coast. The final cost to Wollongong City Council is approximately \$250,000, which is a not insignificant sum, and will enhance the services offered in Wollongong. I place on record the appreciation of all those involved with the luncheon to be held tomorrow. In particular, I commend Mrs Jacqueline Samuels, the Governor's wife, who will be the guest of honour and who will give the address. It is expected that approximately \$7,000 will be raised, which is no mean achievement. It is estimated that just under 200 people will attend this most enjoyable day, which will be to the long-term benefit of the Illawarra region.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.46 p.m.]: I congratulate the wives of Illawarra members and the members on being involved in the Westpac helicopter fundraising, which is greatly needed in the Illawarra area. A former police colleague of mine, Bruce Tarrant, who was involved for many years in the police-citizens youth club movement, has now retired and is at the forefront of trying to assist this

important service. The LILAC Committee has raised funds throughout the Illawarra and New South Wales. A large luncheon was held in Newcastle in which the local Hunter members' wives were involved.

I also pay tribute to Mrs Jacqueline Samuels, the Governor's wife, who on that occasion gave the address. My daughter Marika had the privilege of singing the national anthem at the opening of that luncheon, which involved an all-round effort on everyone's part. Substantial funds were raised for worthy causes and the committee is to be congratulated on that. The LILAC Committee is not the first committee that has involved ministerial and backbenchers' wives. Some years ago a committee called Focus was formed which likewise raised funds for communities. It was later disbanded. The LILAC Committee is its successor and has been equally as successful. The substantial amounts of money it has raised for worthwhile causes is a reflection on the committee members and I congratulate them on their efforts.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr MacCARTHY (Strathfield) [4.48 p.m.]: The concerns I raise emanate from rumours that a needle exchange is to be set up on the site of what was the former Western Suburbs Hospital at Croydon. Those rumours prompt me to raise the more general question of needle exchange programs and the great risks that they may pose for the community. It is unfortunate that today the Minister for Health is in Adelaide because I would have liked him to be here to respond to my concerns. I asked a question on this subject some eight months ago to try to get statistics on the program and how it operates. The smart alec reply that I received from the Minister is typical of replies that one receives in response to genuine attempts to obtain information from this Government. In my question I asked the Minister about categories of people eligible to receive free needles, how many needles were handed out in a particular period, how many were handed in and the maximum number of new needles that may be given to a person at the one time. The smart alec answer I received was that the program is still running under the same guidelines that have existed for a number of years. That may well be true, but it tells me nothing and was an inappropriate response to the questions that I asked.

My fear is that a needle exchange program effectively becomes a needle handout arrangement if used needles are not surrendered for the clean needles that are issued. Therefore used needles will have been left in streets, in parks and even in school

grounds. An example came to my attention just recently of a young child at a school soon to be incorporated into the electorate of Strathfield. The father of this five-year-old, whose name I will not mention because to do so would invade the privacy of the family, told me that she saw some paper in the school grounds and nobly decided to bend down, pick it up and dispose of it. However, in so doing she was spiked by a needle. Her lack of knowledge of the seriousness of this type of injury led her to treat it lightly, and it was some time before the family learned what had happened. The family is still waiting to find out the result of that incident.

The father wrote to the school and made a number of suggestions. First, he asked the school to initiate a program of increased and continuous vigilance in and around the school to enable the early detection of discarded syringes, needles and other dangerous articles. Second, he asked that the school immediately begin to educate students and staff on the recognition and danger of these articles and their safe handling and disposal. Thirdly, he said—and I think he is right—that this regrettably means that children, young ones in particular, must be told that they ought not pick up rubbish unless it is something that they have dropped themselves because it is quite clear that there is no guarantee that if they pick up something they will not do themselves an injury.

While ever the Government is secretive about the needle exchange program, the community is right to be wary of needle exchanges. And the Government continues to be secretive about this program. The shadow minister informed me that last year the Opposition attempted to have a review of the needle exchange program by a reference to the committee looking into the question of safe injecting rooms. However, the Government used its numbers to defeat the Opposition's proposal. If the Government persists in being secretive about the operation of the needle exchange program, as it was in refusing to answer the reasonable question that I asked some eight months ago, and if it is not forthcoming with information on a program such as this, it is no wonder that the community has concerns about such a program. The Croydon community certainly is concerned about the possibility that a needle exchange program might be set up in that residential area. I have asked a question on notice about the specific case at Croydon, but I now ask the Government to consider the implications of the example that I gave of the young schoolchild, and what can be done in schools to protect young children from risk of injury from discarded needles, which are time bombs ticking away with the potential to cause serious injury and illness to defenceless children.

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [4.53 p.m.]: On behalf of the Minister for Health, I assure the honourable member, who was with me at the Western Suburbs Hospital site, that the Minister announced that a family medical clinic would be established on the site. It will have a vast array of health purposes. The only conspiracy is the one started by the honourable member. I was with him when he said he heard rumours—rumours that he obviously started himself—that this clinic would become a needle exchange outlet. I repeat: this is a family medical health centre. It is to replace the Western Suburbs Hospital, which the coalition demolished. The clinic will supplement the great work being done on the rebuilding of Canterbury Hospital. The honourable member is doing nothing more than attempting to create a climate of fear, and the people will reject him very quickly because of what he is doing. He is the only one talking about the setting up of a needle exchange in that area. The Minister has denied that. It will not happen. The honourable member knows it will not happen. He does no service for himself or the constituents whom he will ask to re-elect him by creating a climate of fear. It will not work.

FRETILIN FOUNDATION ANNIVERSARY

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.55 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a significant function that I attended on Saturday, 23 May, in south-western Sydney. This function was a celebration to mark the twenty-fourth anniversary of the foundation of the Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente, more commonly known as Fretilin. The title is best translated as the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor. I was, of course, delighted to attend the function. There are many Timorese refugees living in my electorate and they play a significant role within my community. I was also happy to attend, not just as a local member—although I was certainly happy to attend in that capacity—but also to provide some support for the struggle for independence by the East Timorese people. As the co-ordinator for Fretilin, Filomena de Almeida, wrote to me:

The 24th anniversary of Fretilin is an historical event in the 24 years of the East Timorese people's continuous struggle for liberation and the right to live in a peaceful and independent country.

A significant number of community representatives as well as community members were present at the function. The community representatives included the Timor Chinese Association and the Aged Timorese Group. Those present also included, significantly, Edwin Gozal, the Asia Pacific representative of the Indonesian PRD, the People's

Democratic Party of Indonesia. I note in passing that segments of the function were featured last Monday night on Chris Masters' program on *Four Corners*. The resilience of the East Timorese people, especially Fretilin, is quite extraordinary. Their resilience has been well documented since 1975 with the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, DRET, and the Indonesian invasion. The East Timorese people have withstood the oppression of the Indonesian military, the lethargy of much of the rest of the world, and the effective hostility of successive Australian governments. They have maintained their position of opposition to the invasion.

Official Australian statistics have estimated that one-third of the East Timorese population of 650,000 have been annihilated since 1975. I emphasise that those are official Australian statistics, rather than figures that Fretilin or I have invented. Two notable authors, Noam Chomsky and Edward Hermann, have noted that by as early as 1977 a number of commentators were referring to events in East Timor by Indonesians as genocide. Torture and human rights abuses are being inflicted upon the Timorese people; they are regular and frequent occurrences. It is a matter of considerable personal melancholy to me that Australian governments have been accessories to these series of events. Apart from diplomatic support from successive Australian governments and restraint from real criticisms, the Special Air Service regiment of the Australian Armed Services regularly trains with the Indonesian Red Beret unit, Kopassus, which plays what they euphemistically refer to as a pacifying role in East Timor. Despite all of these pressures, Fretilin has heroically maintained both external and internal opposition to the invasion. They have continued that opposition for some considerable time.

Fretilin was first established in 1974 in the wake of Portugal's announcement of independence for East Timor. It was originally formed as the Association of Timorese Social Democrats, ASDT. That occurred within a month of the coup in Lisbon on 25 April 1974. The ASDT was formed on 20 May 1974, and its first program was published two days later. An organising committee comprising nine people was established, including, notably, Nicolau Lobato. The party declared it was based upon the universal doctrines of socialism and democracy. The policy was framed on what James Dunn described in his book *Timor: A People Betrayed* as relatively moderate language. Fretilin's international efforts started within a couple of weeks, with Jose Ramos Horta visiting Jakarta to meet foreign Minister, Adam Malik, and one of the most influential generals, Ali Murtopo.

On 12 September 1974 the title of the organisation changed from ASDT to Fretilin. The membership of Fretilin rapidly increased, especially in the second half of 1974. It was the main party calling for complete independence and opposing integration with Indonesia. It was the only party effectively working outside the main towns and villages. The organisation developed plans for the creation of co-operatives, a more equal distribution of land, and dramatically increased literacy. There was also a greater emphasis on Timorese culture and Timorese nationalism. Of course, the organisation was subject to the usual slurs and things of that nature which accompany Cold War rhetoric. James Dunn's assessment of Fretilin is worth noting. He said:

It remained essentially a populist, Catholic party whose leader's attitudes were attuned more to the socialist aims and influences of similar movements in Third World countries, but especially in Africa, than to those of any communist State.

The well-known events subsequently unfolded. The UDT staged a coup, which collapsed within three weeks, demonstrating comprehensively the popular support for Fretilin. In the shadow of an Indonesian invasion the DRET was proclaimed on 28 November 1975. This followed the second major Indonesian offensive, which began on 20 November with an attack on Atabai. I salute the courage of the Fretilin people and look forward to their act of self-determination and, in the meantime, the release of political prisoners, especially Xanana Gusmao. [*Time expired.*]

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.00 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Liverpool for drawing to the attention of the House the matters concerning the Fretilin community and its twenty-fourth anniversary. These functions are important to the Fretilin community, especially refugees who have found themselves in this country. The honourable member is to be commended for the way in which he has assisted the people of East Timor, especially in the events of recent times. I am sure that he will continue to support those people in their important endeavours.

FIREARMS AWARENESS TESTING

Mr SMALL (Murray) [5.02 p.m.]: I raise a matter on behalf of one of my constituents, Mr Carl Miller, who has asked me to draw to the attention of the Minister for Police his concern about firearms awareness testing. Mr Miller stated that if a resident of Victoria who has already undergone the required testing and already possesses a firearms licence

moves to New South Wales to become a permanent resident of the State that person is required to undergo further firearms awareness testing, to pay for the cost of that testing, and then to apply for a new licence. I understand that New South Wales residents who move to Victoria must also undergo further firearms awareness testing. Following the unfortunate Port Arthur massacre and the meetings of all State and Territory police Ministers, it was agreed that uniform laws should apply to all States of Australia. The Hon. Ted Pickering, when police Minister, introduced the requirement that testing must be undertaken in New South Wales. I would have thought that that national scheme would have avoided the need for secondary testing when a resident moves to New South Wales for permanent residency.

I am pleased that the Minister for Police is present in the Chamber to respond to this matter. I ask the Minister to look into this matter. Many Victorian residents move to New South Wales either for employment or retirement. A uniform law for all States and Territories will ensure identification of people who have already undergone testing and hold a licence. A holder of a driver's licence who drives from one State to another is not required to be licensed in both States. On the other hand, a person who moves permanently to another State is required to replace his or her licence but is not necessarily required to undergo testing for the new licence. I request the Minister to consider this matter to see what can be done to introduce new uniform laws that will allow people who already hold a licence to become a resident of New South Wales without undergoing and incurring the cost of firearms awareness testing. At present interstate travellers come across to New South Wales for shooting competitions or to assist in the control of vermin in this State, which is great.

In recent times members of the New South Wales Field and Game Association and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia have encountered problems in relation to registration. The Minister has been good enough to give recognition to those organisations by allowing four New South Wales shooters to gain registration, thereby overcoming the problems that were occurring at that time. I am grateful to the Minister for his responses to my requests. The gun laws have been and still are a worrying issue for many people. Many Victorians have been good enough to come across the border into New South Wales to help control the vermin that plague the area where I live, particularly ducks, foxes and wild pigs. The kangaroo shooters have their control measures and their licence process. I ask the Minister to look into the matter of the

recognition of interstate licences. I would be grateful for anything the Minister is able to do to overcome the problem I have raised.

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [5.07 p.m.]: Firstly, I thank the honourable member for Murray for his courtesy in advising me of his intention to raise this issue on behalf of one of his constituents—obviously, a constituent who has an interest in firearms and who wants to ensure compliance with the law. This is a vexed issue, to say the least. A firearms licence is deemed to be a new licence as soon as the licence holder crosses the border. That is the essence of the honourable member's concern and his constituent's concern. The Australasian Police Ministers' Council, when it considered Prime Minister Howard's gun laws, touched only briefly on the matter of recognition of interstate licences. This was because, from memory, the South Australian Government had indicated to the Australasian Police Ministers' Council and the Prime Minister that it had a system of firearms awareness training which the Commonwealth said it would consider and was likely to adopt for all States and Territories.

Firearms safety training is a matter for the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth is still considering the matter. I give an undertaking to the honourable member to find out exactly why the Commonwealth has taken so long to come up with an answer. I am not shifting the blame. I accept responsibility to ensure that the legislation is able to accommodate legitimate shooters. I want to ensure that firearms safety awareness testing is conducted, but at the same time I do not want to see unnecessary duplicity. We must ensure that the laws of each State are uniform. The difficulty will arise in relation to recognising and providing reciprocity for the variance between the laws of each State. I undertake to take the matter up and provide a reply for the honourable member as soon as possible.

CENTRAL COAST TOURISM INCORPORATED

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [5.09 p.m.]: In December 1994 Central Coast Tourism Incorporated was formed to replace the local tourist associations who were totally dependent on council funding and were only involved in the operation of visitor information centres. Since then, Central Coast Tourism developed into a self-funding regional tourist organisation, twice winning—in 1996 and 1997—the New South Wales Award for Excellence in Tourism as best regional tourism organisation. I am delighted to advise the House that Central Coast

Tourism received the award for the third consecutive time at last night's award presentations.

I congratulate the Chairman of Central Coast Tourism, Peter Hale, and the Chief Executive Officer on their success. More importantly, Central Coast Tourism developed successful marketing initiatives that were constantly monitored and evaluated in the domestic and international markets. That brought tangible returns to its shareholders. The success of the marketing initiatives undertaken by Central Coast Tourism are reflected in the outstanding response rate and actual bookings converted over the past three years. The success of Central Coast Tourism marketing activities are evidenced in the increase of consumer responses monitored through specially introduced 1800 numbers. Over the past two years, the increase in consumer response was 371 per cent. The combined 1800 and standard numbers used in Central Coast Tourism's information and reservation system averaged over 5,000 incoming calls per month.

The success of the marketing campaign is also reflected in the actual bookings through the centralised information and reservation system. For example, accommodation bookings for the peak period of December have increased from 80,000 in 1997 to 140,000 in 1998. Overall, the Australia Bureau of Statistics and Tourism New South Wales statistics show the success of the region. In 1990-91 the number of visits was 778,000. In 1996-97 the number of visits had increased to 2,028,000, a growth of 162 per cent. In 1990-91 expenditure was \$198 million and in 1996-97 it was \$384 million, an increase of 94 per cent. These results have been achieved with funds raised through membership and dollar-for-dollar funding from New South Wales Tourism.

I should also like to mention some of the other good things happening on the Central Coast in relation to tourism. The Entrance Town Centre, which was completed last year at a cost of some \$15 million, received the Bluett Award in 1996-97, municipal government's highest award, because of its outstanding success as a local government development and also as a private sector type activity. The Minister for Gaming and Racing has witnessed the changes that have occurred and the subsequent development. I should also mention that this year, the Mingara Club received the New South Wales club of the year award, which was presented by the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

The central coast also has the Australian Springtime Flora Festival, the region's major tourist

event. It was introduced in 1987 and has been managed through Central Coast Tourism Incorporated since 1995. The festival has attracted major sponsorship from Yellow Pages Australia. It is currently held over four days in mid-September at Mount Penang, which has magnificent views over Brisbane Water. The festival attracted 87 visitors last year. Research undertaken by Central Coast Tourism indicates a steady increase in visitors of 30 per cent in the past three years. The festival has developed into the largest of its type in New South Wales.

It has won the New South Wales Award for Excellence in Tourism in both the major and significant regional festival categories. Each year, three hectares of grassland are transformed into an exciting display of landscaped garden settings, interspersed with exhibits and demonstrations of garden crafts providing a total picture of garden and outdoor living. The festival is now reaching the stage that it could be developed into something greater. It has the possibility of presenting itself as the major garden festival for New South Wales. It is hoped that it will develop into the premier garden festival for the whole of Australia.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.14 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for The Entrance for raising this matter. I will refer his comments to the Minister for Tourism who, for the third time, presented Central Coast Tourism—under the chairmanship of Peter Hale, whom I know very well—with the award to which the honourable member for The Entrance has referred. Peter Hale has made a significant contribution not only to tourism on the central coast but more recently to the club industry. As the Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development and as the representative of an electorate close to the central coast I am aware of activities there. Anyone who travels the highway would realise that the central coast has become a playground for people from Sydney not only on the weekend but also during the week. It is not only a Christmas holiday destination; along with the Hunter, it is probably the most popular coastal area during holiday periods.

I congratulate the Mingara Club on taking out the club of the year award this year. I congratulate the president, the chief executive and everyone involved. The facility is second to none and is attracting people from outside the local environs. These are very positive aspects of the central coast. I hope the good work in tourism which was acknowledged and alluded to by the Minister for

Tourism today in question time is not affected by the antics of the One Nation Party. I say that with some authority. Last year I led a trade mission from the Hunter to South-east Asia after Pauline Hanson had received some publicity. I spent all my time, together with Bob Cotton, the ambassador to Malaysia, putting out fires. Trying to deal with those types of antics is very time consuming when one is trying to boost trade. [*Time expired.*]

MONA VALE ROAD

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [5.16 p.m.]: Today the people of Pittwater speak with one voice about Mona Vale Road and ask how many more people have to die before something is done to fix it. At approximately 2.30 p.m. on Friday, 2 June, a truck careered down Mona Vale Road, veered off the road at Emma Street, collected a car turning left out of Emma Street into Mona Vale Road, and took the car with it through a six-foot brick fence and the garage of a house. The truck killed two people, Silverio Garcia and 13-year-old Nicole Everson.

Mona Vale Road has been known to the people of Pittwater for many years as a death trap and a goat track. It is in a pathetic state of repair. It is both a traffic hazard and more importantly, a safety hazard. I informed the Minister for Roads that I intended to make a statement about this matter, and I am disappointed that he is not in the Chamber. I ask him to come down from his ivory tower and face me, the people of Pittwater and, indeed, the people of New South Wales on this important issue. In the past seven years, 12 people have died on Mona Vale Road up and down its five-kilometre length between Terrey Hills and Mona Vale.

I acknowledge the presence of the Minister, who has just entered the Chamber. The Minister sought to distort the figures; he has given another set of figures. Pittwater Council supports the original figures. I was disappointed that the Minister tried to fudge the figures. The Minister has stated publicly that he is awaiting reports. I was grateful last year that the Minister accepted the longstanding invitation of the mayor of Pittwater and I to inspect the road. He drove up and down the road. We had a look at the road. We talked to concerned local residents. The Minister indicated that he did not have enough money to fund an upgrade of the road.

On the very day of the accident I received a letter from his Parliamentary Secretary stating that the road was a long-term priority and that the funds to upgrade were not available. What will the Government do about the road? The people of Pittwater are waiting to hear from the Government. They know what the coalition will do. I will again

state publicly today in this Chamber and place it in *Hansard*, as I have done for the past two years and as the coalition did during the by-election campaign for Pittwater in May 1996, that if elected on 27 March 1999 the coalition will commence the upgrade of Mona Vale Road to a two-lane dual carriageway from Terrey Hills to Mona Vale. It will also continue the work it started when last in government to upgrade the exit out of Terrey Hills and commence other works along the road.

The Minister and the Government have copped out. The Opposition cannot wait for the Minister's promises to be fulfilled. They will never be fulfilled unless the coalition is fortunate enough to be re-elected. The Opposition and the people in my electorate want funding for the upgrade of Mona Vale Road to be allocated now. This accident occurred directly across the road from a reserve and right in front of Pittwater Returned Services Leagues club. If the road were upgraded this corner would be removed. It is highly likely that Emma Street would be closed to traffic. The road would be straightened out and it is likely that this sort of accident would never happen again. I have seen many things in my life, but when I attended that accident on that Friday afternoon I saw something I hope I never see again. The devastation at that scene, which was phenomenal, incredible and heart-breaking, made me sick to the stomach. I was sick to my stomach after seeing the death and destruction at the scene of what I hope was an accident, a black spot that must be fixed immediately. When I left the site at about 8 o'clock that night an emergency worker said to me, "See you next time"—a statement I will always remember.

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [5.21 p.m.]: Let me set the record straight in relation to the traffic accident statistics. Reference was made by a commentator at a media interview I attended to a figure that Pittwater Council did not agree with. The mayor took it upon herself to allege that I had asserted those figures. That is not so. I welcome this opportunity to correct that misconception. The figure I used, a figure provided to me by the Roads and Traffic Authority, reflects the number of accidents

per kilometre travelled. It is a method used everywhere by the RTA to profile the accident statistics of a road. Apparently, the accidents per kilometre profile on Mona Vale Road was about the same or slightly less than the profile for similar roads.

I am disappointed that the mayor and the local member used this extremely tragic accident to score political points. I assure honourable members that I was very disturbed by this tragic accident. I take this opportunity to convey my condolences to the families of the two people killed. We do not yet know the circumstances of the accident, although it appears that a truck ran out of control. I have asked the RTA to undertake a safety audit of the site and of the whole of Mona Vale Road. I point out to the local member that, in the last four years of the former Government, only \$3 million was spent on the road. When that road safety audit is completed I will make a decision about what should be spent in the short term on Mona Vale Road.

Mr Brogden: When?

Mr SCULLY: It will not take long to complete that audit. At the honourable member's request the Government conducted a safety audit and it proposes to undertake work on Powder Works Road and in the area around the Baha'i Temple. The intersection of Emma Street and Mona Vale Road and the rest of Mona Vale Road will have to wait until that safety audit is completed. When it is completed I will be advised and I will have available to me the circumstances of the accident. I will then be able to make a decision as to what works should be done on Mona Vale Road and when they should be done. The honourable member cannot reasonably expect me to do more than that at this stage. [*Time expired.*]

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Aboriginal Housing Bill

**House adjourned at 5.25 p.m. until
Friday, 19 June 1998, at 10.00 a.m.**