



NEW SOUTH WALES



Legislative Assembly

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
THIRD SESSION**

OFFICIAL HANSARD

Tuesday, 23 June 1998

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Henry Murray) took the chair at 2.15 p.m.

power lines and should use the emergency telephone lines only for genuine emergencies.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

MINISTRY

Mr CARR: I advise the House that during the absence of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister for the Environment will answer questions on his behalf. During the absence of the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads will answer questions on his behalf.

The events of this morning demonstrate once more the vital role played by our SES volunteers in times of emergency and the great spirit of community and co-operation of those who work within the emergency services in general and the SES in particular. These volunteers devote their leisure time and weekends to training to assist in road accidents, floods and storms. When an emergency occurs, as happened this morning, they leave their workplaces and homes to brave difficult conditions and considerable physical danger. The community owes them a debt of gratitude. I am sure all members of this House will join with me in expressing appreciation for their efforts and in wishing them well in the difficult hours ahead.

HUNTER REGION STORM DAMAGE

Ministerial Statement

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) [2.16 p.m.]: Members may be aware that this morning strong winds, at times reaching gale force intensity, tore through the lower Hunter region. The lower hunter division of the State Emergency Service has received 114 calls for assistance and that number is expected to increase. Lake Macquarie is the worst affected area, where local SES units responded to more than 50 calls for assistance. The Bureau of Meteorology has advised that gale-force winds are expected to continue throughout the day and overnight as the east coast low-pressure system deepens. High winds south of the Hunter and east of the ranges are expected to continue until tomorrow evening.

Mr COCHRAN (Monaro) [2.18 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I join with the Minister for Emergency Services in expressing the gratitude of the House to the emergency services workers and volunteers who have been working this morning in intolerable circumstances in the lower Hunter. They have put their lives in danger on an hourly basis on behalf of the community. We also extend our gratitude to the families of volunteers and emergency workers for their tolerance. At the same time we pay tribute to Major General Horrie Howard and his team for the excellent working relationship that has been established.

State Emergency Service units from Cessnock, Cooranbong, Dungog, Forster, Pacific Palms, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Napiac, Newcastle city and Stroud are all presently active with a total of 16 teams in the field. Assistance is being provided by the Rural Fire Service and New South Wales Fire Brigades. Major General Howard, Director-General of the State Emergency Service, has requested that members of the community affected by the storm remain indoors if possible. Members of the public should take great care to avoid downed or damaged

The State Emergency Service works in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service, New South Wales Fire Brigades and the Volunteer Rescue Service to provide this State with a level of service that is unparalleled in the world. We are very proud of them. In addition, we should compliment those employers who release employees to attend these emergencies in a voluntary capacity to assist members of the community in times of trauma. All members of this House have seen reports in the media of young people who have been trained to a high level of proficiency risking their lives on behalf of the community. The Opposition joins with the Minister and the Government in expressing its sincere thanks to the SES workers and all volunteers who are assisting in this emergency. We wish them good fortune and a safe journey home.

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.**

Surgical Visiting Medical Officer Dr James

Petition praying that the appointment of Dr Alan James as surgical visiting medical officer at the Mullumbimby and District War Memorial Hospital be continued indefinitely, received from **Mr D. L. Page.**

Ryde Hospital

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

Land Tax

Petitions 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 **Dr Macdonald and 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.**

Transmission Structures

Petition praying that telecommunication carriers not be allowed to erect transmission structures within close proximity to residential homes, schools, child-care centres, hospitals, and aged-care centres, received from **Dr Macdonald.**

Northside Storage Tunnel

Petition praying that plans to construct a storage tunnel from Lane Cove to North Head be abandoned, and that the allocated funds be used to find a long-term sustainable solution to sewage disposal, received from **Dr Macdonald.**

Manly Wharf Bus Services

Petitions praying that plans to move bus services from Manly wharf to Gilbert Park be abandoned, received from **Dr Macdonald.**

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TOTALIZATOR AGENCY BOARD SHARE ALLOCATION

Mr COLLINS: Given that the Totalizator Agency Board sale was supposed to be a mums and dads float, how does the Premier explain the fact that when the company listed yesterday 10 of the top 20 shareholders were foreign-owned companies? How does he justify these companies getting up to nine million shares each when small investors had to settle for just 257, stripping them of any short-term profit?

[Interruption from gallery]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the public in the gallery will refrain from clapping and remain silent.

Mr CARR: In case the House is wondering why the Leader of the Opposition missed all the favourable publicity about the TAB float, the answer is provided by the front page of the *Western Advocate*.

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

Mr CARR: It shows the Leader of the Opposition at a conference of bush fire fighters on the public platform sound asleep next to the member for Bathurst. The member for Bathurst ought to be congratulated on having an advertisement run in today's *Western Advocate* showing the alert member for Bathurst next to the sleeping Leader of the Opposition with this caption, "Sleep well, your State member is awake." I am happy to lay the document on the table for the information of members.

Mr Hartcher: On a point of order. For four years now we have had innumerable rulings from

you—all blatantly defied by the Premier—that while he has the right to table documents he does not have the right to wave them around, to the jeers of people in the public gallery, who have already formed their opinion of him.

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

Mr CARR: In answering this question I have a wonderful opportunity to compare how the coalition handled the GIO float when the Leader of the Opposition was in charge of matters with how this Government has handled the TAB float. It will expose him as the hypocrite that he is.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question. He will listen to the answer in silence.

Mr CARR: He handled the GIO float.

Mr Collins: On a point of order. The Premier is lying and he knows he is lying. I was not the Treasurer; I did not sell the GIO.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. The Premier is answering the first question in question time and a number of members have already been called to order. The House will come to order. The next member to be called to order will be deemed to be on three calls.

Mr CARR: The Leader of the Opposition is saying that we floated the GIO. He is saying that is our responsibility, is he? That is an extraordinary proposition. I thought a coalition government floated the GIO. In any event, I will draw a contrast. In today's *Daily Telegraph* financial commentator Terry McCrann hailed the float of the TAB as a very impressive "people's privatisation". So it is.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on three calls to order.

Mr CARR: From the outset the Government gave ordinary investors every chance to buy TAB shares. It said to every one of the 1.3 million people who requested a share offer document, "If you apply for shares you will get some." More than 750,000 people took up that offer. It is Australia's most popular float. I ask members to compare it with the way the Liberals in Victoria handled the float of that State's TAB. In this State 750,000 people took up the share offer. How many did so in Victoria? A mere 44,000! That is the way Victoria handles things. How many invested in the GIO, the coalition's opportunity to undertake a float? In the

GIO float, which the coalition was in charge of, which the Leader of the Opposition was in charge of, a mere 127,000 took up the share offer.

Mrs Skinner: On a point of order. My point of order relates to Standing Order 138, which deals with relevance. This is a question about the top 10 shareholders and nine million shares.

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

Mr CARR: What a joke! For the first time ever larger investors, those who received shares through their stockbrokers' allocations, paid extra for those shares. That was an innovation for which the Government is responsible. Ordinary investors paid \$2.05 per share, large investors paid \$2.10. The Leader of the Opposition claims foreign companies should be excluded.

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

Mr CARR: That is not what happened when the Leader of the Opposition was in charge of the GIO float. Foreign companies had entree. Why is the Leader of the Opposition so sensitive?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows the procedure that is available to him if he does not agree with what the Premier is saying. At the conclusion of question time the Chair will give the Leader of the Opposition unlimited time to refute the Premier's remarks. In the meantime, I appeal to the Leader of the Opposition to remain silent while the Premier is answering the question.

Mr CARR: The Leader of the Opposition claims that the Deputy Leader of the National Party was in charge of the GIO privatisation. That could not be! He was the bloke who lost \$50 million on Luna Park. They could not have put him in charge of the GIO privatisation; he was too busy with Luna Park. The basic guideline for the TAB float is that companies are restricted to no more than 5 per cent. The figures are now in and they show where the small investors come from. They are not only from the traditional share-owning areas of the northern and eastern suburbs of Sydney.

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

Mr CARR: Let me take this head on. Nearly 20 per cent of the people in the Canterbury electorate bought shares in the TAB. In Parramatta,

18 per cent of the people have bought shares in the TAB. I will take another area at random. In Auburn 16 per cent of the people have bought shares in the TAB.

[Interruption]

The honourable member for Gordon interjects as he slides closer to the crossbenches. He is the only person running in a preselection ballot for a lower House electorate to say, "If I lose, I demand a seat in the Legislative Council." What an interesting preselection platform! The figures show that in East Hills, 12 per cent bought TAB shares; in Wagga Wagga, Smithfield and Bankstown, 11 per cent have bought shares; 10 per cent in Dubbo, Bathurst, Keira and Riverstone; 9 per cent in Badgerys Creek and Penrith. It is no wonder that Terry McCrann says this is a people's privatisation. Under the GIO float, which someone in the coalition was in charge of—they have not worked out who yet—things were shut down on the second day of the public offer, leaving tens of thousands of policyholders without a chance to buy shares. The Government, however, in this float provided shares for everybody who wanted them. In an article in one of today's newspapers, the Leader of the Opposition is quoted as saying:

If this had been a fair dinkum mums and dads float, the percentage going to ordinary investors would have been far higher.

I wonder if the Deputy Leader of the National Party agrees if he, as is rumoured, was in charge of the GIO float, because he and the coalition allocated exactly the same proportion of GIO shares to institutional investors as happened in respect of the TAB float. In both cases 65 per cent of shares went to public investors. The newspaper article today referred to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the cost of advertising.

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

Mr CARR: Let me draw a contrast between the advertising for the GIO float and the advertising for the TAB float.

Mr Collins: Tell us about the State Bank while you're at it. You spent 20 times what we spent.

Mr CARR: That is funny, because I have the figures.

Mr Collins: You spent 20 times what we spent on the State Bank.

Mr CARR: Twenty times what you spent! I have the figures. Only \$1.3 million will be spent on TAB float advertising, compared with \$7 million on the GIO float. That is the contrast.

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

Mr CARR: Despite the lack of hype there was a huge response to the float of the TAB.

Mr Photios: On a point of order. The question does not relate to advertising dollars; it relates to why mums, dads and grandmas missed out.

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

PARLIAMENTARY ENTITLEMENTS

Ms ANDREWS: My question without notice is to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. How is the Government improving accountability in the determination of parliamentary entitlements?

Mr CARR: All members of this House have a responsibility to the people of this State to carry out their duties with the utmost integrity. The public expects nothing less. In fact, the community is demanding greater accountability and openness from all parliaments. My Government has already placed superannuation entitlements of members of Parliament under the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal. A new code of conduct has been passed by the Legislative Assembly and is being considered by the Legislative Council. Today I can announce another measure aimed at improving accountability. Legislation will be introduced this week to clean up the system of administering members' entitlements.

The current arrangements are unclear, complex and confusing. Recent events have highlighted the need for a review and the Government is tidying up the system. The reforms will enforce accountability and transparency, and ensure that all members understand their entitlements. Decision making on these matters will be taken away from government and placed in the hands of an independent body. No longer will the Government or the Parliament have the ability to rule on members' entitlements. This will be the responsibility of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal, an independent body. The tribunal will have the power to make binding determinations about members' entitlements.

Over a number of years the system has developed in an ad hoc way into a hotchpotch of rules, recommendations and interpretations. In his report to the Parliament on 29 May, Justice Sully of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal referred to a byzantine complexity of non-salary entitlements. The Government is tidying this up. There will be a single set of rules. The honourable member for Manly will be pleased to note that the Government is giving the Industrial Relations Commission a role in the new arrangements, as he suggested in question time in this House. In two years the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal will be a judicial member of the Industrial Relations Commission. To ensure its smooth transition Justice Sully will retain his position in the interim.

The Government is strengthening accountability by expanding the role and powers of the tribunal, not by setting up a new bureaucracy or a new body. Under the new system the tribunal will make determinations on parliamentary duties such as service of the member's electorate, service on a parliamentary committee, staff, travel, communications and technology, maintenance and cleaning, and other aspects of office facilities. The definition of parliamentary duties is similar to that used by the Australian Taxation Office and adopted by the Commonwealth Remuneration Tribunal. As such it includes political party activity, such as attending annual party conventions. As I said during the debate on the adoption of the code of conduct, parties are part of the democratic system and have been part of the system of democracy in this State from the 1890s or early 1900s and, in the words of the code of conduct adopted by the Legislative Assembly:

Organised parties are a fundamental part of the democratic process and participation in their activities is within the legitimate activities of Members of Parliament.

Not only do I not resile from that proposition, I underline it and defend it at every opportunity. My Government will continue to vigorously pursue accountability and transparency in all these activities.

TOTALIZATOR AGENCY BOARD SHARE ALLOCATION

Mr PHILLIPS: My question without notice is to the Premier. Did he say in April last year that he would sell the TAB only if taxpayers got a better return than if the Government retained the business? Given that taxpayers will now be \$43 million a year worse off, has not the TAB privatisation turned into a costly bungle for New South Wales taxpayers?

Mr CARR: When the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was introduced by the Chair at the Liberal Party convention held at Surfers Paradise or somewhere—no doubt the reason for that spectacular Liberal vote in the recent Queensland elections—it is no wonder he was introduced as Rob Phillips.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for Vaucluse to order. I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order. He has asked a question. If he does not remain silent he will not be in the Chamber to hear the remainder of the answer.

Mr CARR: According to a newspaper report, following his address the convention burst into mass foxtrotting. The worst thing that could happen at a Labor Party conference is that they boo you, but the prospect of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union engaging in mass foxtrotting up and down the aisle of the Town Hall is too horrific for words.

Mr O'Doherty: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, I encourage you to read Standing Order 138 and then ask the Premier how that kind of nonsense is relevant to the TAB float losing \$43 million, which was the subject of the question.

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

Mr CARR: This is relevant to the credibility of the person who asked the question. The Opposition should be congratulated on drawing these matters to the attention of the House.

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

Mr CARR: TAB shares opened yesterday at \$2.16. They closed at \$2.16, and are trading today at about \$2.28. The price set by the Government was a good one, but not a greedy one. Investors saw a decent 7.3 per cent gain on the first day. Taxpayers received \$1 billion. All of that \$1 billion will go to the retirement of State debt—the debt Labor inherited from the former coalition Government. That means that in the past three years my Government has reduced the State's net liabilities by \$3.5 billion—that is \$3.5 billion carved off State debt. The honourable member for Gordon is seeking to interject, trying to draw attention to himself for his preselection. Imagine his preselection brochure: "Please vote for me. I am the best in the Liberals, I am the best for Gordon, but if you don't want to do it, promise you will put me in the upper House." What a convincing and confident performance!

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

Mr CARR: No wonder the honourable member for Northcott is saying nothing today. He has his head down.

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

Mr CARR: The TAB float enables the Government to boast that it is the first government in 50 years, probably ever, to have reduced rather than added to the State's liabilities.

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

Mr CARR: That \$1 billion will go into retirement of State debt.

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

Mr CARR: State debt will be reduced from 10 per cent of the gross State product, as it was when Labor took over from the coalition, to about 5 per cent, while New South Wales fully funds the Olympics. And the TAB privatisation is adding to that admirable progress.

TOTALIZATOR AGENCY BOARD PRIVATISATION

Mr O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Premier. Did a Pennant Hills family pay \$16,000 for TAB shares only to be told yesterday that they had missed out because there was no record of their application? Given that the Government actually cashed their cheque, will the Premier give an unconditional guarantee that they will get their money back, along with the interest earned on it?

Mr CARR: I would be happy to investigate that matter.

RICE INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

Ms NORI: 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 moves by the Howard Government to require New South Wales to deregulate the rice industry?

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

Mr AMERY: Bearing in mind that the theme of the Opposition today is mums and dads, I will be interested to know what the Leader of the National Party and his colleagues in Canberra are doing for the mums and dads in the rice industry who are under threat. This month the Government received a letter from the Chairman of the National Competition Council, Mr Graeme Samuel. That letter states, in part:

The Council is close to finalising its assessment of the issues identified as outstanding during the first tranche assessment of progress. The decision by your Government to retain the anti-competitive vesting arrangements for domestic rice marketing, contrary to a review recommendation, was identified as outstanding . . .

Of course, the council is seeking more information. The letter continues:

Accordingly, the Council is likely to recommend:

- the Commonwealth Treasurer deduct monies from the 1998-99 NCP payments to New South Wales, such deductions reflecting a lack of compliance with obligations in both the 1996-97 and 1997-98 financial years and not necessarily be limited to \$10 million deduction indicated in the Council's 1997 draft first tranche assessment;

I know that members opposite are not interested in this issue, because it deals with farmers in New South Wales, and they never show an interest in farmers. They moan and groan. To demonstrate the Opposition's lack of interest, last week the Leader of the National Party said, when defending the cut by supermarkets of dairy farmers' margins, that farmers are only being asked to take a slight reduction in their margins. The Leader of the National Party thinks \$10 million is a slight reduction! Members opposite are bored with the plight of rice farmers in the south-west of New South Wales because they have no interest in them.

The bottom line is that the State cannot afford to pay \$10 million every year to support the regulation of the rice industry. Unless the Federal Government, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy show some backbone and say that New South Wales will not be penalised for supporting the rice farmers, there will be no alternative but to abandon the industry regulations and protection to farmers. The threat by the National Competition Council, supported by the National Party—

Mr Jeffery: On a point of order. The Minister has been selectively quoting from a document. I suggest that he tables the whole document.

Mr AMERY: That is a brilliant suggestion. I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

It now appears that the National Competition Council is recommending to the Federal Government that the New South Wales Government pay a penalty of \$10 million a year. The council is holding a gun at our heads by saying that even if we do deregulate there will be no refund of any penalties incurred. If the Prime Minister, the Federal Treasurer, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy do not show some backbone and support the farmers in the electorate of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Fischer, there will probably be some candidates in that electorate—not only members of the Labor Party—who will be prepared to stand up for the farmers. One does not have to be a super sleuth like the honourable member for Monaro to know who I am talking about. If the Federal Government accepts the recommendations for the future of the rice industry—

[Interruption]

That was such a good one, I will give the man from ASIO the chance to do it again. No wonder the entry for the honourable member for Monaro in the KGB assassination handbook was marked, "Don't waste the head shot." If the Federal Government accepts this recommendation, the future of our rice farmers will be compromised. The Liberal-National coalition in Canberra will have to take the full political consequences if the recommendations of the NCC are implemented. The Government's decision not to deregulate the rice industry was soundly based. Estimates of the public benefits arising from deregulation of the rice industry were very low and subject to large errors. The rationale for the National Competition Council's \$10 million penalty is a mystery to everyone.

The Government recognises that the rice industry is a stable and prosperous industry, worth \$600 million to New South Wales. It is competitive in both the domestic and export markets. More than 85 per cent of the total rice production is sold on the world market, and 25 per cent of the rice sold on the domestic market is imported at world parity prices. Industrial relations in the rice industry are regarded by many as the model for the Australian employer, especially the National Farmers Federation. With more than 1,200 people employed in the industry there is a history of industrial harmony and commitment from the Rice Growers Co-operative and its employees. The market is supplied by 2,000 rice growers. The industry provides a stable, sound investment environment for a whole regional community and delivers high-quality product to the public at low prices.

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

Mr AMERY: All this contributes to the health of the Murray-Darling region. The rice industry underwrites the strong regional development and has created strong economies in Griffith and nearby towns. Regional development is a major plank of this Government, and the National Competition Council considers it can override this policy to ensure that its own ideology is imposed on the New South Wales Labor Government. The NCC has consistently refused to consider the damage that the imposition of its views causes to regional economies.

Do Opposition members who keep interjecting support the fact that New South Wales should be penalised for protecting the rice farmers? They should make a statement. Members opposite are apologists for the economic fundamentalists who are dictating the policy of the NCC. On the eve of milk industry deregulation we have another example of the supermarket buying power. The increase that occurred last week—the pressure of the free market on the dairy industry—means a \$60 million transfer to the retail sector.

I know honourable members opposite are bored with issues relating to farmers; they are not interested in farmers. Unless the Federal Government gives a clear undertaking not to penalise the State by \$10 million per year, the Government will not be able to sustain the orderly marketing of the rice industry, and the regulations which now support the 2,000 rice growers in New South Wales will be put in jeopardy. The industry understands that we cannot afford to be penalised \$10 million per year. I call on the Federal Government to secure the rice industry by saying that it will not penalise the New South Wales Government as a result of this decision.

BLUE MOUNTAINS SUPER HIGHWAY

Mr ANDERSON: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Energy, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts. How will the proposed Blue Mountains super highway affect tourism in the region?

Mr DEBUS: For almost 25 years members of the National Party in the central west of the State have been agitating for an autobahn across the Blue Mountains. Twenty-five years ago, in 1975, the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation proposed

a route across the Blue Mountains. It was a route with a certain rough, old-style Country Party honesty about it.

Mr Souris: You're against it.

Mr DEBUS: You bet I am. In its quest to bring the country to the city at breakneck speed, the corporation proposed more than 80 kilometres of smash-and-bash road construction, charging right through the middle of the national park for 40 kilometres from Glenbrook to Wentworth Falls.

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

Mr DEBUS: Koalas and feather gliders did not matter. There was to be enough landfill to create a perfectly straight road right across the Blue Mountains. This frank plan envisaged that at Wentworth Falls the road would leave the national park and roar along Jamieson Creek—the creek that Charles Darwin walked down and detailed in his diary. It would then swing around Yester Grange, an historic house, no doubt adding considerably to the ambience of the wedding receptions and artistic launches that are held there. It would dart across the railway line at Wentworth Falls, destroy a few streets of family homes, and go through the middle of Wentworth Falls golf course. Not satisfied with this attack upon the sport of golf, it would head north-west, across residential precincts and areas of great environmental significance in north Leura, north Katoomba and Medlow Bath before wiping out part of the Blackheath golf course. Warming to its work, it would smash right through the middle of Blackheath. What a great benefit for tourism! A lovely, traditional mountain village full of guest houses, and the vandals from the National Party would put a four-lane tollway right through the middle of it! Members of the Liberal Party seem to think it is an amusing idea.

Mr Armstrong: I think you've been drinking too much moonshine, Bob.

Mr DEBUS: It is your idea. This Godzilla of a road would lurch onwards, wiping out part of the rhododendron garden at Blackheath, proceed through the middle of Mount Victoria, wipe out the historical museum, and then descend the escarpment in the historic precinct of Mount York, no doubt with a gratifying sense that its mission of wrecking tourism in the upper Blue Mountains had been accomplished.

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

Mr DEBUS: This plan, for all its ugliness and vandalism, had at least the not inconsiderable merit of frankness. The plan made it plain that as far as the National Party was concerned the Blue Mountains was just one more inconvenient obstacle to development which would be better off flattened and cemented over. One might as well drop a bomb on Wentworth Falls or Blackheath or Mount Victoria as do what the National Party proposes.

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

Mr DEBUS: In August 1996 the Bathurst-Sydney road links committee revived this plan. The committee has a most vocal and active participant, the honourable member for Orange. The committee wrote a letter to the then Federal Minister for Transport, John Sharp.

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

Mr DEBUS: Without reference to the Blue Mountains City Council—which one might have thought had some passing interest in the matter—the committee urged Mr Sharp to adopt the proposal of an alternative route across the mountains. Lest Mr Sharp, or indeed the Leader of the Opposition, be under any misapprehension, the committee, full of members of the National Party, proudly attached to its submission the 25-year-old map provided by the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation. The letter to Mr Sharp actually paid tribute to the path-breaking, prescient work of that corporation and urged Mr Sharp to provide funds for a feasibility study.

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

Mr DEBUS: For the past year the honourable member for Orange has been telling anyone in the central west of New South Wales who will listen about the merits of this strategy that we might call the "bulldoze Blackheath and the national park" solution. But the National Party, in its dying throes, no longer has the brutal honesty of the great Country Party hardheads of yesteryear. Now, with breathtaking dishonesty, the Leader of the National Party is claiming that he can deliver a new route across the Blue Mountains without touching one square metre of national park. He claims that he can do this without tunnels, and he can do it for \$1 billion dollars. If the Leader of the National Party is not going to touch the national park, and he is not

going to tunnel, then he has no choice but to smash through the villages of the Blue Mountains. If members of the National Party had even the most rudimentary grasp of the geography of the Blue Mountains they would know that what I am saying is true. It is a narrow ridge with villages on it and a national park on either side. That is their choice: to smash my electorate.

Mr Collins: No-one believes that.

Mr DEBUS: Everyone in the Blue Mountains believes that.

Mr Souris: You should see the deluge of support we have received from your voters in the Blue Mountains.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Deputy Leader of the National Party that he is on three calls to order.

Mr DEBUS: The Opposition relies on a study by the Central Regional Organisation of Councils to support this proposal. The authors of that study make it quite clear that its estimate of \$1 billion, taken from figures given to it by the Roads and Traffic Authority, relates to the construction of a four-lane expressway through what it calls "tiger country" in the Blue Mountains. CENTROC does not dismiss the idea of actually putting the road through the Blue Mountains.

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

Mr DEBUS: It says that we should not choose a route at the moment because that will cause too much opposition from land-holders and others in the Blue Mountains. It says that the autobahn will gain 30 kilometres an hour in mean travel speed across the Blue Mountains. For a gain of 30 kilometres an hour, the National Party is prepared to knock down more houses in my electorate than were knocked down in London in the Battle of Britain. The National Party's new plan would wreak just as much destruction in Bullaburra, Lawson, Hazelbrook, Woodford and Linden as the original plan proposed in Blackheath, Mount Victoria and Katoomba.

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

Mr DEBUS: At Springwood there are two choices under the brilliant Armstrong-Souris plan.

The expressway can destroy residences on the south side of Springwood after it has cut round the Corridor of Oaks at Faulconbridge, where every Prime Minister since Federation has planted a tree, or it can destroy residences in Faulconbridge and Winmalee after crashing over the top of the Norman Lindsay Gallery. It may be thwarted in its blood lust for major tourist attractions in Warrimoo or Blaxland, but it will have to knock over a lot of houses as it passes through those villages on its way to the river.

Tourism in the central west is of vital importance. This Government is committed, as I am personally, to delivering outcomes for Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and beyond. The National Party thinks that the way to deliver for the central west is to blitzkrieg the Blue Mountains, to destroy every major tourist attraction between Springwood and Blackheath. I swear, a tourist travelling from Sydney to Bathurst along the route proposed by the National Party would not be able to see a sprig of vegetation between Emu Plains and Mount Victoria—a landscape would have to be painted on the concrete walls. The people of the central west of this State are far too smart to believe in the fairy tale from the National Party, and so is this House.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES STAFF REVIEW

Mrs STONE: I address my question to the Minister for Community Services. Given the Premier's promise of two years ago to weed out paedophiles in the Department of Community Services, will the Minister give an assurance that all staff have now been reviewed and that there are no known paedophiles working in the department?

Mrs LO PO': Whenever the Department of Community Services finds that people act inappropriately, we take the action that we should, as is expected by the community. We move swiftly and take those people out, so that children are not within their grasp. As I said before, the department is moving as quickly as it can to relieve anybody of dealing with paedophiles. Paedophiles are in every walk of life, as is well known, but we have a special duty of care to ensure that we do not put them in touch with families. When we find them, we remove them speedily. The Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service highlighted problems with the way in which people seeking child-related work are screened.

The Department of Community Services already conducts criminal record checks on new staff, students, youth workers, foster carers, people wanting to adopt and contracted staff working on

client databases. It has developed a new handbook to improve recruitment selection procedures, which was acknowledged by the office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment as a best practice guide. Last year the Government introduced the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Bill as an exposure draft. Community views are currently being sought on the bill. The bill makes it an offence for a person convicted of a serious sex offence to seek or remain in child-related work and for an employer to knowingly employ or retain such a person in child-related work.

Mr Phillips: On a point of order. Mr Speaker, you have made it clear that Ministers can give some preamble in response to a question, so long as it is relevant. The Minister is now going into great detail, but the question—

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

Mr Phillips: The question was simple: will the Minister guarantee that there are no known paedophiles in the Department of Community Services? The question related to known paedophiles.

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

Mrs LO PO': I do not apologise for giving an answer, surely. The bill makes it an offence for an employer to knowingly employ or retain such a person in child-related work or to fail to ask applicants to disclose convictions of serious sex offences. Work is now under way to ensure that the department and related agencies have measures in place to ensure that the bill is complied with when enacted. The Department of Community Services is also a member of the New South Wales Government task force working to improve pre-employment screening by all New South Wales agencies involved with child-related work. This process will assist work now under way at a national level, in which the department is involved, to ensure that screening procedures and probity checks are consistent across Australia and to help share information nationally, including information held on the national exchange of the police information system. The Department of Community Services will maintain its strong stance that staff alleged to have abused clients in their care will be withdrawn from client contact immediately.

SPORTING ORGANISATIONS PERFORMANCE

Mr STEWART: I ask a question of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the

Government doing to help improve the performance of New South Wales sporting organisations?

Ms HARRISON: This is certainly the best question I have been asked lately. Recently the shadow minister for sport and recreation asked me a question about a secret report from the Australian Quality Council—except that it did not relate to either the Australian Quality Council or a secret report.

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

Ms HARRISON: This morning the shadow minister presented Opposition questions for the estimates committee hearing. One question was about sport for the disabled, and I was able to advise the committee that the Government has increased funding for sport for the disabled by more than 400 per cent. Another great question was about the entertainment of Japanese cyclists. However, we have not—

Mr O'Doherty: On a point of order. I implore you to explain how it is that a rehash of answers provided to an estimates committee of the other place can be relevant to question time in the Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms HARRISON: I was responding to an interjection, and was pointing to the quality of questions asked recently by the shadow minister for sport and recreation.

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

Ms HARRISON: The performance of sporting organisations and industry peak bodies in the services they provide for members and the development of their activities at all levels will play a major role in the industry's ability to convert that interest to active participation. To help those bodies maintain the interest, the sports development program, which traditionally provided financial support for sporting organisations for the employment of administrative and coaching personnel, general expenses and development initiatives, has been reviewed. My department, in consultation with the New South Wales Sports Advisory Council, has revised the program. I have agreed to changes to make it more flexible and responsive to the priorities of government and the State sporting organisations and industry peak bodies themselves.

[Interruption]

Don't worry, the member for Ermington will graduate to long trousers soon.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have called the honourable member for Ermington to order on three occasions. He has continued to disrupt the House by interrupting the Minister. I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him.

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

Ms HARRISON: These changes comply with the guidelines and procedures of the New South Wales Treasury. They include many of the practices that have been adopted by the Australian Sports Commission and most other State and Territory departments of sport. In future, support provided through the program will be related to the achievement of agreed outcomes for priorities identified by each organisation in its three- or four-year business plan. It will also be related to outcomes associated with specific policies and/or priorities of the Government. Other features of the revised program include three-year funding commitments, formal co-operative arrangements between the department and State-funded bodies, and the introduction of a sports liaison system to improve communication between the department and each of the State sporting organisations.

The new sports liaison system involves the appointment of officers from my department as the main point of contact between the department and the nominated organisation. This initiative will give sports their first direct access to the department, with a responsible person, and all its resources are now easily accessible. It should serve to greatly improve the relationship between them and the department in a number of areas. The New South Wales Sports Advisory Council has endorsed the changes to the program and will be responsible for making recommendations to me in respect of the support given to State sporting organisations and industry peak bodies under the program. In summary, the idea behind the changes to the program is about shifting the old focus on inputs and processes of service delivery to a new focus of planning, reaching performance targets, measurable outputs and outcomes in priority areas for both the Government and the State sporting organisations.

INLAND FISHING LICENCES

Mr J. H. TURNER: My question is to the Minister for Fisheries. Why has the Minister created a raffle over the purchase of inland fishing licences, with some applicants able to win a \$20,000 boat-and-tackle prize, while others miss the boat altogether? Is his raffle legal under the gaming and racing regulations?

Mr Whelan: On a point of order. The question is argumentative and should be ruled out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House has asserted that the first part of the question is argumentative. That assertion is correct. I will permit the member for Myall Lakes to rephrase his question.

TOURISM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms MEAGHER: 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. What is the Government doing to tap into new tourism markets?

Mr DEBUS: For the past couple of years the tourism industry has been planning for the 2000 Olympics, but the industry has given less thought to the Paralympics, which will take place two weeks later. The Paralympics will bring 6,000 participants to Sydney, including an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 who use a wheelchair. Many participants will bring family and friends some of whom will also be disabled, to see them compete. Those who have travelled from overseas are likely to want to see more of New South Wales and Australia during their visit. With this in mind, Tourism New South Wales has today released a major new report on tourism for people with a physical disability called "Anxiety to Access". It has been put together by the University of New South Wales from questionnaires sent to people with a disability.

The report tracks the tourism patterns and needs of this very special market. It reveals that, unless tourism operators are providing facilities for people with a disability, they may be missing out on valuable business. The "Anxiety to Access" report has found that this group of people spends \$150 million a year on overnight trips and more than \$97 million a year on day trips in New South Wales alone. Australiawide, they take 3.7 million trips a year, generating \$472 million in spending. The vast majority of people travel with at least one friend or relative. In other words, they have major spending power. Significantly, 74 per cent said they were dissatisfied with their current level of travel and would like to travel more and 24 per cent said they would like to travel a lot more. Only some parts of the industry are tapping into tourism for people with a disability, which is a major market.

However, the report has also uncovered some problems. The people interviewed complained that many clubs, restaurants, motels, tourist attractions and modes of transport do not cater for their special

needs. Many of the places that have facilities for disabled visitors do not advertise that fact. The facilities needed range from the very simple, such as wheelchair access and shower seats, to more expensive and complicated, such as signs in braille for the sight impaired. The report recommends the tourism industry provide more detailed and accurate information about access and facilities for disabled people, where they can be found and what is available. This would greatly help people with disabilities and their travelling companions in planning a holiday.

Additionally, tourism operators should consider installing disabled facilities and advertising them. Although these can be expensive, evidence shows that they will attract visitors and, importantly, they are likely to show loyalty to the establishment that has so catered for them, returning many times if they have enjoyed themselves. I have asked Tourism New South Wales to find ways to help the industry implement the recommendations of the report, and to work closely with tourism operators and organisations for people with disabilities. This report should be seen as an opportunity for the State's tourism industry to target a new market. I trust tourism operators will show the same energy, commitment and initiative they have shown time and again when they have worked to boost the benefits of tourism in this State.

INLAND FISHING LICENCES

Mr J. H. TURNER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Fisheries. Has he created a lottery for the purchase of inland fishing licences, with some applicants eligible to win a \$20,000 boat-and-tackle prize, while others miss the boat altogether? Is his boat raffle legal under the gaming and racing regulations?

Mr MARTIN: I thank the honourable member for the sixth question he has asked on fisheries matters in 3½ years. Full marks to him! On 1 July, at the request of the fishing industry, inland angling licences will be reintroduced. They were previously in place from 1957 to 1988. I have insisted that the administrative fee incurred in issuing a licence be a maximum of 10 per cent of the cost of a licence. The entire cost of the licence will go into a trust account, but 90 per cent must be returned to the recreational fishing improvement. I notice that members opposite are not happy about carp reduction, stocking, voluntary fisheries officers or spending the money in the way recreational fishers wanted.

One efficiency is the issuing of either a blue licence or a gold licence. A gold licence will return the fees and commissions to the fund. A proposal for \$20,000 worth of prizes to come out of the fund will encourage people to buy gold licences. I am sure the raffle will meet all requirements. The question gives me a good opportunity to advertise gold licences. Carp reduction programs, stocking of fish, the repairing of habitat, voluntary fisheries officers and better compliance will be welcomed throughout New South Wales. The licences will be competitively and well printed by a firm in Lithgow. I hope people buy gold licences.

Questions without notice concluded.

GIO PRIVATISATION

Personal Explanation

Mr COLLINS, by leave: During question time the Premier repeatedly referred to me as the Minister responsible for selling the GIO. The Premier knows full well that that is not correct and that he has misled the House. I was not the Minister responsible. I was, indeed, the Minister responsible for selling the State Bank. It appears that yet again the Premier has got his financial facts wrong.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Supplementary Answer

LACHLAN RIVER INTERIM FLOW RULES

Mr AMERY: I wish to provide a supplementary answer to the question asked by the Leader of the National Party on 27 May relating to the Lachlan River interim flow rules. I am very pleased to report that since that question was asked the Lachlan River Management Committee, chaired by Mrs Audrey Hardman, has now achieved meaningful unanimous consensus on recommendations on the 1998-99 flow rules for the Lachlan. In a letter of 11 June Mrs Hardman said:

The Committee's goal to achieve a well balanced healthy riverine environment that will support socio-economically sustainable Industry and Communities along the Lachlan has strongly influenced and was central to our decision.

The Minister for the Environment and I have both endorsed the committee's recommendations, which will take effect on 1 July 1998. The recommendations will result in an estimated 3.7 per cent reduction in annual irrigation diversions, which is far less than the 10 per cent upper limit

RETIREMENT VILLAGES AMENDMENT BILL

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

*Schedule of amendments to the Fair Trading
Amendment Bill referred to in message of 17 June*

- The people of New South Wales are calling for water policies that are robust and deliver sustainable catchment for this and future generations which, I am proud to say, the Carr Labor Government has delivered. The Government has decentralised decision making to local communities, and has drawn on independent scientific experts, state-of-the-art modelling and the best available data to negotiate environmental flow objectives for the following five years. The Lachlan environmental flow rules for 1998-99 will, for the first time ever, provide irrigators with a five-year period of resource security, thus establishing a strong base from which we can work together in the future. The Leader of the National Party would do well to follow the leadership that has been shown by this department and the Lachlan River Management Committee. Otherwise he will, as I said in the House that day, be left behind and left out of this debate.

*Schedule of amendments to the Home Building
Amendment Bill referred to in message of 17 June*

- | | |
|-------|---|
| No. 1 | Page 2, clause 4, lines 10 and 11. Omit the clause. |
| No. 2 | Pages 5 and 6, Schedule 1[5], line 16 on page 5 to line 27 on page 6. Omit all words on those lines. |
| No. 3 | Page 8, Schedule 2, lines 1-7. Omit the schedule. |
| No. 4 | Long title. Omit "the issuing of penalty notices for certain offences, and in other respects; and to make a consequential amendment to the <i>Fines Act 1996</i> ". Insert instead "and in other respects". |

*Schedule of amendments to the Residential
Tenancies Amendment Bill referred to
in message of 17 June*

- | | |
|-------|---|
| No. 1 | Page 2, clause 4, lines 10 and 11. Omit the clause. |
| No. 2 | Pages 4 and 5, Schedule 1[4], line 8 on page 4 to line 15 on page 5. Omit all words on those lines. |
| No. 3 | Page 7, Schedule 2, lines 1-7. Omit the schedule. |
| No. 4 | Long title. Omit ", the termination of residential tenancy agreements, and penalty notices; and to make a consequential amendment to the <i>Fines Act 1996</i> ". Insert instead "and the termination of residential tenancy agreements". |

MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIRS AMENDMENT BILL

*Schedule of amendments to the Retirement Villages
Amendment Bill referred to in message of 17 June*

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL

No. 1 Page 4, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 14A. Insert after line 18:

- (3) For the purpose of determining an application made under this section, the Tribunal must have regard to the expenses incurred in operating the village in current and previous years.

No. 2 Page 5, Schedule 1[3], proposed section 14A(3)(f), lines 1 and 2. Omit all words on those lines.

Legislative Council's amendments agreed to on motion by Mr Whelan.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL (PARKING AND WHEEL CLAMPING) BILL

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 17 June

Page 3, Schedule 1. Insert after line 8:

- (7) It is the duty of the Director-General to establish guidelines to be followed by councils in relation to agreements of the kind referred to in subsection (6), including guidelines as to:

- (a) the circumstances in which a council may enter into such an agreement, and
- (b) the matters for which such an agreement must or must not make provision, and
- (c) the exercise by a council of any functions conferred on it by such an agreement.

Legislative Council's amendment agreed to on motion by Mr Whelan.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

COMPANION ANIMALS BILL

Third Reading

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police), on behalf of Mr E. T. Page [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a third time.

The House divided.

Ayes, 50

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

Noes, 42

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

Pair

Mr Woods Mr Tink

Question so resolved in the affirmative.**Motion agreed to.****Bill read a third time.****WORKPLACE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE BILL****Second Reading**

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police)
[3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Workplace Video Surveillance Bill. The object of the bill is to regulate the covert video surveillance of employees in the workplace by their employers. This is an industrial issue of great importance. Currently video surveillance in the workplace is unregulated. A number of major industrial disputes have arisen over video surveillance by employers, and the fact that it was completely unregulated has both surprised and concerned parties to the dispute. The Government has developed a balanced system of regulation to address the issue.

The proposed bill is the outcome of extensive consultation between employer and employee organisations. In 1996 the Attorney General, and Minister for Industrial Relations commissioned a working party comprising employer groups, trade union representatives and government departmental officers to inquire into the use of surveillance cameras in the workplace. The working party comprised representatives from the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, the Labor Council of New South Wales, the National Union of Workers, the Employers Federation of New South Wales, the Australian Chamber of Manufactures, New South Wales branch, the Retail Traders Association of New South Wales, the Registered Clubs Association of New South Wales, the Public Employment Office, the Privacy Committee of New South Wales, the Attorney General's Department and the Department of Industrial Relations.

The working party report was delivered in December 1996. The majority report recommended legislative changes to require employers to obtain a court order before secretly filming employees. In implementing the recommendations of the working

party the bill strikes a balance between the competing interests of different parties. The privacy of employees is important in the workplace. Workers should be able to undertake their duties with as little interference to their privacy as possible. The thought of being constantly surveyed or monitored is very off-putting for everybody. The thought of being secretly surveyed is of even stronger concern. It can unnecessarily introduce distrust and suspicion into the workplace. On the other hand, the employer should have the opportunity to investigate serious problems in the workplace. The bill defines what employers may investigate, that is, suspected unlawful activity by employees in the workplace. It is reasonable to provide a mechanism for employers to investigate unlawful activity. However, it shall not be at the expense of employees' privacy, any more than it needs to be.

The bill strikes the appropriate balance. The high degree of consultation that has been undertaken with unions, employers and other interested parties has helped finetune the balanced package into a workable system of regulation. Details of the bill are provided in the second reading speech delivered by the Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Shaw, in the other place. In addition to endorsing the comments made by the Minister I would like to inform the House about the amendments to the bill made in the other place. Firstly, in clause 4(2), the word "generally" was omitted. There was some confusion as to whether "generally" referred to "the premises or place constituting the workplace" or that an employee was agreeing to "surveillance". The Government intended generally to refer to the former, that is, the premises or place constituting the workplace. However, the Government also accepted that the placement of the word may have caused confusion, so accepted its removal.

The amendment was not intended to affect the substance of the clause. It remains the case that video surveillance of employees will not be considered covert surveillance and, therefore, will not be subject to the bill, if the surveillance is for the purpose other than surveillance of the activities of employees and the employees have agreed to the use of surveillance for this purpose. Secondly, clause 7(3) of the bill provides another exception employers may rely upon to conduct video surveillance. This security exception allows employers to persuade the court that the reason they were conducting covert surveillance without a covert video surveillance authority was for the protection of the security of the workplace or the employees in the workplace. The two amendments that were passed with respect to this subclause clarify its

purpose. The first reorganises the section and makes it clear that the court must be persuaded that not only was the surveillance conducted to protect the security of the workplace or employees, but that it was necessary for that purpose, that is, the clause now doubly ensures employers cannot use the exception as a means to circumvent the main aim of the legislation.

An amendment was passed that requires an employer who seeks to rely upon the clause to prove that he or she notified his or her employees in writing that covert surveillance was going to take place. This reinforces the idea that security threats that justify covert surveillance without a covert video surveillance authority generally come from outside the workplace and outside the employer's work force. Given the invasiveness of covert surveillance, an employer is required to notify employees that this kind of surveillance may be taking place at some stage in the future. In conclusion, the Government considers that this bill provides an appropriate balance between workers' expectations of privacy and the genuine concerns of employers to protect their workplaces from unlawful activity by regulating the use of covert video surveillance in the workplace. Employers have qualified access to covert video surveillance while being required to justify its use. This requirement for prior judicial approval is consistent with established public policy in analogous areas such as aural surveillance. The proposed bill represents a model that is workable and acceptable to all those interested in achieving a fair and equitable relationship in the workplace. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Rixon.

POLICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PROTECTIVE SECURITY GROUP) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [3.49 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Police Legislation Amendment (Protective Security Group) Bill implements the recommendations of the Police Integrity Commission report regarding the former Special Branch of the New South Wales Police Service. Its purpose is to set in place a legislative framework for oversight and scrutiny of the proposed Protective Security

Group of the Police Service. In March last year the former Special Branch was abolished following disclosure of a most disturbing kind at the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service, as catalogued in chapter 3, volume 2, of its final report. The Police Integrity Commission in a report released on 17 June 1998 confirmed that the former Special Branch was a law unto itself—that it seemed only accountable to itself but used its resources to keep records on persons in whom it should have had no legitimate interest.

In acknowledging that the legitimate functions of the former Special Branch would need to be maintained, this Government supports the recommendations in the PIC report, including the creation of a new, highly accountable agency to undertake the legitimate functions of the former Special Branch. After the abolition of the Special Branch, an interim very important person—VIP—security unit under the command of Carolyn Smith was established. However, the royal commission identified the need for an agency with a capacity to provide protective services and associated risk and threat assessments.

In addition, there was a recognised need for any new group to undertake operational and tactical analysis, intelligence gathering and liaison with relevant agencies in relation to persons who present a risk of politically-motivated violence or terrorism activity. This need is particularly critical given the number of official and distinguished visitors anticipated in New South Wales in the lead-up to the Olympics in 2000. There is also a need to protect holders of high office in this State and to co-ordinate investigations with other agencies tasked with preventing terrorism and politically-motivated violence. To meet these needs, Commissioner Ryan has proposed the establishment of the Protective Security Group.

Last week the PIC recommended that the creation of such agency should be a priority. The Government endorses the formation of the Protective Security Group, provided appropriate safeguards are put in place. The bill puts in place some of the key elements of the overall strategy for monitoring the operations of the Protective Security Group. The Government remains of the view that any unit with these unusual functions should be subject to high standards, and an even higher level of scrutiny than most. The Protective Security Group will operate strictly according to a charter which sets out the roles and functions of the group. In addition, the bill outlines strict accountability mechanisms relating to target selection, records and record management, and information dissemination.

The bill provides that the charter of the group will be determined by the Commissioner of Police and approved by the Minister. The charter outlines the activities that the group is authorised to engage in, provides a formal mechanism for approval of targets to be investigated, sets out criteria for approval of targets, and sets strict limits on the keeping of records and files by the group. Strict adherence to this charter is a critical test for the proposed Protective Security Group. The Government is not prepared to leave this to chance and is putting in place a mechanism to ensure that the charter is adhered to.

The bill amends the Police Service Act to require the Commissioner of Police to conduct an annual audit of the operations, policies and procedures of the Protective Security Group. The audit is to include an examination of whether the group and individual members are effectively adhering to its charter, whether proper procedures are in place and have been followed in the use and payment of informants, and whether proper procedures are in place and have been followed for the recording and use of intelligence gathered by the group. The bill also amends the Police Integrity Commission Act to provide that the PIC shall monitor and report on the conduct and effectiveness of the audit to be performed annually by the Commissioner of Police. This specific responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the commissioner's annual audit is in addition to the existing, more general audit power of the PIC outlined in section 14 of the Act.

This structure for annual auditing and monitoring, which has been developed in light of the recommendations of the royal commission and the PIC, will assist in ensuring that the Commissioner of Police takes responsibility for very close scrutiny of the Protective Security Group. The Commissioner's oversighting and auditing will in turn be specifically monitored and reported on by the PIC. In addition, the PIC will have the capacity to undertake investigations at any time into any aspects of the operations or oversight of the Protective Security Group in order to ensure that circumstances conducive to misconduct do not arise. If the PIC considers it necessary, this may be done using covert surveillance methods.

The audit and monitoring structure outlined in the bill will provide for close ongoing scrutiny of the operations and policies of the new Protective Security Group. In addition to the annual audit and monitoring structure I have outlined, the bill also puts in place a requirement for a thorough review of

the Protective Security Group after the 2000 Olympics. In supporting the creation of a group to carry out the functions of the proposed Protective Security Group, the royal commission also recommended that a review of the group's operations be conducted at the conclusion of the Olympic Games to ensure that it has remained within its charter and still has an effective role to perform.

The bill puts in place a legislative requirement for the review to be carried out. It amends the Police Service Act to require the Commissioner of Police to cause a deputy commissioner to carry out a special review after the conclusion of the Olympic Games. In addition to examining whether the Protective Security Group has adhered to its charter, the special review shall examine and make recommendations about any future role of the group. As with the conduct of annual audits, the bill will amend the Police Integrity Commission Act to require the PIC to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the review and its recommendations.

The royal commission identified the particular need for VIP protection, threat assessment and a soundly based counter-terrorist capacity in the lead-up to and during the Olympic Games. The PIC has reiterated the necessity for this function to be performed as part of an accountable agency within the Police Service. The Government concurs with the view of the royal commission and the PIC that these are essential activities during this period. However, the Government is not necessarily committed to the ongoing need for a group with all the functions of the proposed Protective Security Group after the completion of the Olympic Games.

The bill will ensure that the Government is put in the best possible position to judge whether there is still a need for the Protective Security Group when our international visitors have returned home at the conclusion of the Olympics. It will ensure that the reconsideration of the role of the Protective Security Group is undertaken with external oversight and in an objective manner. The cronyism that concerned the PIC, as outlined in its report last week, will have no opportunity to gain any foothold in the ongoing management of the Protective Security Group.

As members of this House are aware, the files of the former Special Branch are a matter of keen interest. Not surprisingly, some people have requested access to any files that may have been held about them. In deciding how to deal with the files, I have established a working party with representation from community groups to consider

matters outlined in the body of the PIC report and appropriate options. Some files will be of historical interest, others of concern to individuals, and some will need to be exempted because of confidential material they contain.

This bill makes a minor consequential amendment to the Freedom of Information Act to ensure that the Protective Security Group has the same freedom of information status as the State Intelligence Group and to continue the exemption in relation to the former Special Branch. This does not mean that such files cannot be released. However, it does mean that, where appropriate, access can be denied under the Act because files are of a type I have previously mentioned, such as containing information about informants or sensitive operational material. It may well be that after the working party completes its work further amendments will be needed. If that is the case, the Government would certainly make those amendments.

Thus far Australia has been relatively free from terrorist activity and politically motivated violence. However, the coming of the Olympics will focus intense attention on Australia in general and Sydney in particular. We cannot afford to take any risks with the level of protection and threat assessment undertaken in the lead-up to and during the Olympics. These tasks are properly the responsibility of an agency such as the Protective Security Group operating in close co-ordination with similar agencies in the Commonwealth and other parts of Australia. In approving the establishment of the Protective Security Group the Government has carefully scrutinised the charter under which it is to operate to ensure it enables the group to provide protection for the community of New South Wales, while at the same time minimising the risk of improper use of power.

The bill puts in place the legislative framework for the oversight of the Protective Security Group which the Government considers to be an essential element in the establishment of the group. No branch of the Police Service will be under closer scrutiny than the Protective Security Group. As I have outlined, that scrutiny will include external monitoring by the PIC. By establishing the oversight mechanism outlined in this bill the Government is giving effect to the recommendations of the royal commission and the PIC and is acting to ensure the protection of citizens of this State from terrorist violence and from rogue police misusing their powers. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Rixon.

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 19 June.

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the honourable member for Oxley to speak again to the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills.

Mr JEFFERY (Oxley) [4.00 p.m.]: During my contribution last week I mentioned that in 1996 the Premier promised to produce rural impact statements on the effects of services to country regions. Of course, that is another broken promise and backflip by this Government. In the past three years under this Government country regions have lost many services. The 1998-99 budget papers do not include an allocation for the construction of a new Macksville courthouse. The local community has all but given up hope of ever having a new courthouse, despite government acknowledgment that the existing structure is inadequate and often overcrowded. A new courthouse is a necessity for the local community and court staff. When the coalition was in government tenders and expressions of interest to construct a new courthouse were called for, but this Government shelved those plans.

In October 1997 fire destroyed the Macksville High School grandstand and hall. Through insurance self-assessment, \$600,000 in replacement funds were provided for the restoration of performing arts space and grandstand facilities. Time and again I have spoken to the Minister for Education and Training about Bowraville Central School. The budget makes no reference to maintaining the school in its present form. The proposal to remove secondary pupils from

the school sent shock waves through the community. Bowraville Central School provides high-quality secondary education. This is evident by student numbers having almost doubled in the last five years. A feature of this wonderful school is that it is a positive environment for Aboriginal students. To remove years seven to 10 would be a backward step. I ask the Minister to seriously consider revoking the proposal for Bowraville Central School.

Recently I presented a petition to this House that showed overwhelming support to maintain kindergarten to year 10 education at the school. Approximately 1,300 people signed the petition for the retention of Bowraville Central School in its present form. The Minister for Education and Training informed me in a recent letter that a demographic study of the primary and secondary school requirements of the Bowraville, Nambucca Heads and Macksville area was currently under way. In that letter he said that at this early stage there appeared strong reasons to retain facilities for years seven to 10 in Bowraville. At least that is a positive signal from the Minister! It may put the school in a stronger position to apply for capital funds to upgrade its facilities.

The Minister promised also as part of the planning process to address issues raised by the parents and citizens association. That is a start, but the process must be completed. I have been informed further that the needs of Bowraville Central School will be considered along with other competing demands for capital funding. Though that funding was not included in this year's budget, I shall look to the new government to commit capital funds to allow the necessary construction of buildings at Bowraville school. I am sure that soon after the Treasurer presented the budget Government members received papers outlining the gains for their electorates. Opposition members received that information only today. Clearly, in this lack of equality the Treasurer shows discrimination against some members of this House.

When the school cyclic maintenance program was abolished in 1996 and replaced with a contract-by-district process, very little maintenance work was carried out on schools in rural areas. Since then rural school maintenance budgets have gone haywire, work has been delayed, and schools have been left in run-down condition. The Government must get its priorities in order and provide proper maintenance to government schools. Poorly maintained school buildings can hardly be conducive to a healthy learning environment. While this Government caves in to union demands and performs its now commonplace backflips, rural New

South Wales waits until the March 1999 election, when the coalition will be sent in to fix up Labor's mess. Sadly, this will be the last time I shall speak in a budget debate—perhaps I should have said gladly!

Mr E. T. Page: Don't take a poll!

Mr JEFFERY: The Minister for Local Government says, "Don't take a poll"—

Mr E. T. Page: No, I'll miss you.

Mr JEFFERY: You will miss me. So will cat and dog owners in New South Wales! I thank everyone in this House for their assistance because this is a hard job.

Mr Markham: Don't forget Wes.

Mr JEFFERY: Yes, I remember Wes Davoren got lost at the top of my electorate some years ago! We had to search for him. He spent the night in a very cold environment.

Mr E. T. Page: You moved the trees!

Mr JEFFERY: The Minister would not even allow us to have the trees. If he had allowed us to cut down a few, Wes would have been found much sooner. I did help in the search for my colleague who sat opposite. I was concerned for him. He did not look too good the next day. When I arrived to take part in the search he had just been found. I suppose it could not be called a funny occasion, but it turned out all right. I remember in this Chamber presenting him with a monumental piece of timber with a placard that I believe still hangs in his house. I thank members opposite for giving me this additional time to speak on the budget. I should like to set the following goals that, hopefully, my successor will continue to fight for and will achieve when the coalition returns to government.

Construction of the new Macksville courthouse is a need, if not a must. Rural roads need to be maintained and improved through government funding. Decentralisation, particularly of government departments, is an issue close to my heart, I would like branches of departments to be established in places such as Kempsey, Macksville, Wauchope, Nambucca Heads and other country centres. This will return relevant services to country people who are sick of dealing with bureaucracy and regulations. Problems seem to arise when people seek assistance, especially when they call 1800 numbers. On many occasions I have dialled those numbers in an endeavour to make appointments for many of my

constituents and seek assistance on gun laws, fine default payments and so on, but I have been put on hold for up to 20 minutes. These services should be returned to country areas so that time is not wasted.

Our health system needs to be strengthened and repaired. It is vital that management of hospitals is returned to the community. Doctors must be attracted to country areas. In South West Rocks, where I live, there were five or six doctors, but that number has since been reduced to one. The resident population of 4,000, comprising mainly the elderly, swells during holiday time and the doctor has had to close his doors because he could not cope with the demand. Problems in country areas are a mixed bag and are not simply racially based. Removal of rural services, reduction of doctor numbers, improvement of our health service and creation of employment are all issues that country people have at the forefront of their minds.

Jobs are needed to maintain and expand established industries and to encourage new industries and services. I thank the House for allowing me the opportunity to express my thoughts. A coalition government will ensure that country people have access to the same level of services that city people take for granted. For instance, country pensioners do not have the same access to transport as people do in the city. I have great pleasure in making those few remarks in my last address on the budget.

Mr MARKHAM (Keira) [4.10 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to debate the 1998-99 budget, from which the Keira electorate received \$10,359,000 for housing and roads. During the next 12 months in Keira the State Government will invest \$1.5 million to build 21 new public housing units and complete four that had already been commenced; of this, \$823,000 has been allocated for 12 units at Balgownie, \$475,000 for nine units at Bellambi, and \$264,000 to complete the construction of a \$434,000 four-unit project at Gwynneville. I am also delighted that the Keira electorate will benefit from \$600 million committed by the Carr Government toward public and community housing initiatives throughout New South Wales, of which the small proportion expended in Keira is part. The Carr Government has demonstrated its commitment to public housing by putting more money than ever into maintaining and upgrading the existing public housing stocks in the face of the \$50 million already slashed from public housing by the Howard coalition, which has forced the State capital works program to remain static.

Roads and Traffic Authority programs in Keira will receive almost \$8.8 million, with \$6.5 million

being spent on widening the southern freeway and \$142,500 on other minor works. A further \$919,080 will be spent on infrastructure maintenance in the electorate. Almost \$1.25 million will be spent to fund additional works under the road safety and traffic management program, including \$5,880 to improve existing cycleways in the electorate; \$77,000 to complete five kilometres of cycleway between Gwynneville and North Wollongong; and \$75,000 on improvements to Mount Ousley to expand the road to three lanes at the Mount Pleasant overbridge, which will improve safety for vehicles travelling north on the freeway. The RTA will also continue the planning process for extension of the Northern Distributor from Bellambi Lane to Bulli. A value management study and traffic study are continuing and should be completed before Christmas 1998. Extension of the Northern Distributor was high on the list of priorities put forward by the five local members when they met to identify regional priorities before the 1998-99 budget was brought down.

Wollongong TAFE College, one of the major TAFE colleges in the Illawarra, is in the electorate of Keira. It has been allocated \$1.26 million to commence stage 12 of Wollongong TAFE to provide training areas for building and construction courses in the upper Illawarra area. The \$8.9 million project is due to be completed in August 2000 and will help to meet growing demand in the construction industry as well as meet national training requirements. A further \$93,000 will be provided to continue work on vehicle trades training at the Wollongong TAFE campus, which is due for completion in October 1998. I was pleased that \$982,000 will be spent to complete refurbishment of space at Wollongong TAFE College following transfer of heavy vehicle courses to new facilities at Shellharbour TAFE campus.

This is a matter very dear to my heart. I campaigned strongly to maintain heavy vehicle training in the Illawarra. In 1993 the Fahey coalition Government planned to close the heavy vehicles course in Wollongong and transfer it to Goulburn, in John Fahey's electorate. But the coalition Government, under pressure, saw sense in keeping the course in an area where local heavy vehicles are used daily. The refurbishment of the space at the campus is expected to be concluded by December this year.

I am very interested in safety in New South Wales coalmines, and I have spoken on a number of occasions in the House about the coal industry and my dedication to the workers who participate in that very dangerous industry. The allocation of \$8.2

million over the next three years in the budget of the Department of Mineral Resources for the implementation of the mine safety review recommendations is a concrete example of the Government's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of the work force in the mining and quarrying industries and their families across the State. I am proud that a number of those families live and work in my electorate.

Mining is a dangerous occupation but it is not good enough to accept that fatalities and serious injuries will occur. The industry can be made a whole lot safer and this State can lead the world in best safety practice in this valuable industry. My colleague the Hon. Bob Martin, Minister for Mineral Resources, is to be congratulated on commissioning a review of mine safety in late 1996 in response to the unacceptably high number of deaths and injuries in the mining industry. The report of the review was tabled in Parliament in April 1997, all 44 recommendations were accepted, and a tripartite group comprising industry, unions and the department was set up to implement them.

The recommendations were very clear: they called for a new mix of performance measures; greater responsibility for safety at mine sites; better training and work force involvement; use of risk assessment and management approaches; improved data analysis and use of information; a review of the regulatory model; additional inspectorate resources, including specialist mine safety officers; devolution of environmental responsibilities; improved policies; a discrete accident investigation unit within the inspectorate; improved prioritisation of work; targeted physical and unannounced inspections; and the need to prepare mine safety management plans to cover all risks. I believe that the \$8.2 million will be well spent.

The provision of \$2 million in 1998-99 and \$3.1 million in each of the following two years will allow the department to work with the industry to bring about these improved measures. The additional funds will enable the Department of Mineral Resources to engage an additional 20 staff in the financial year 1998-99 and 31 staff in the two subsequent years. These additional resources will be used to employ more inspectors and specialist mine safety officers to undertake inspections and audit work and concentrate on high-risk areas such as ventilation, spontaneous combustion and gas management. They will also allow the establishment of a new, discrete investigation group to conduct major investigations, a new information group responsible for establishment and analysis of an industry database for better communication to the

industry and for the devolvment of environmental activities from inspectors to additional positions of environmental specialist located in regions. This is important.

The new database will enable a number of new and useful performance measures to be set up, including the conducting of a cultural survey of the industry. The analysis of this information and the development of trend data will provide valuable insight into the incidence and cause of accidents. It will also provide much-needed feedback to mines and enable industry comparisons to be made and benchmarks to be established. In addition, resources will be provided to review the actions of the new regulatory regime, which will be based on risk management plans and, under a tripartite arrangement, will develop a detailed recommended model.

In the southern coalfields resources will be provided to enable an inspector to specialise in the very important area of ventilation systems in underground coalmines. Action is also being taken, as recommended by the mine safety review, to prioritise the work of inspectors to ensure they concentrate their time and efforts in the areas of greatest risk. Mine site profiles will be developed and inspectors will develop work plans based upon risk assessment. These work plans will be implemented early in the financial year 1998-99. Recently a planned approach was successfully used to deal with the serious problem of outbursts in gas-prone mines in the southern coalfields.

A dreadful tragedy occurred at South Bulli coalmine, which is in my electorate, when three mineworkers were killed; and 14 men were killed in a methane gas explosion at Appin mine a number of years ago. That is the mine at which my eldest son works the dog watch, so I have a deep and abiding interest in safety in the coal industry. An audit was undertaken of all mines to ensure that appropriate systems were in place and implemented to minimise the risk and create a safe working environment. The mine safety review made a wide range of recommendations aimed at the industry generally, mine sites and the Department of Mineral Resources, to shift the accountability for safety to mine management and to introduce a systems approach based on risk assessment. This requires greater support from the department in the short term, and a change in its role to ensure it happens.

It was pleasing that the Government initiated that review and fully supported its recommendations, and has provided the necessary resources to make mining a much safer industry in this State. Funding

has also been made available in the budget for State and regional development. It is unfortunate that the Federal Government does not pay sufficient attention to these regions that provide so much economic benefit to this great country—as demonstrated by that Government's attitude to, and action on, regional development. In fact, the Federal Government will withdraw from the AusIndustry enterprise development program from 1 July 1998. That will effectively end the program Australiawide, and that will bite hard on new enterprises in the Illawarra region.

The New South Wales Government has recognised the importance of these types of programs to the State, and indeed the nation, and in its 1998-99 budget it announced initiatives to help the small to medium enterprise base of New South Wales. If it were not for the Carr Government's intervention, the Federal Government's withdrawal would stop programs that generated new jobs, increased New South Wales exports and attracted new capital investment. Under the AusIndustry program in 1996-97 New South Wales firms generated 8,500 new jobs; exports increased by more than \$200 million; \$230 million was expended on new capital investment; average annual growth rates in sales exceeded 15 per cent per annum; and an average annual growth rate of 19 per cent per annum was achieved.

In the Illawarra region, figures relating to firms assisted by the National Industry Extension Service-AusIndustry program were as follows: total number of firms assisted, 165; total value of assistance, \$1,925,060; total company turnover, \$2,969,000,000; and total company employment, 8,755. Cram Australia Pty Limited is a good case study of the success and importance of the NIES/AusIndustry program. In 1990 three young engineers—Graham Chapple, Mark Finlay and Brad Neilson—took over an old Wollongong mine development company to design and manufacture technically advanced underground mining equipment for Australia's coalmines, and it now exports to 16 countries around the world.

I have had a long involvement in, concern about, and total commitment to, Aboriginal affairs. I refer honourable members to the Social Justice Budget Statement that accompanies the budget papers. Social justice is based on the four interrelated principles of equity, access, participation and rights. The Government has identified key objectives for its social justice strategy as follows: promotion of a more inclusive community, caring for families and communities, educating for the future, improving the justice system, and creating an

environment in which everyone can take an active role. The programs and priorities listed in the Social Justice Budget Statement reflect the principles and objectives of the Government's social justice strategy as it relates to Aboriginal affairs.

The New South Wales Government's social justice initiatives for 1998-99 focus on key priority areas. The initiatives do not provide an exhaustive list of the Government's social justice activities and programs, but they do reflect the key priorities for expenditure in 1998-99. I do not have time tonight to detail all of those social justice programs, but I will touch on just a few that have been put in place and for which funding has been allocated in this year's budget. The budget has offered an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate its commitment to Aboriginal communities throughout New South Wales, as part of its statement of commitment to Aboriginal people released in November last year.

The Government is particularly interested in the provision of basic services and infrastructure in Aboriginal communities. Therefore, indigenous health and social welfare are priority areas. Funds amounting to \$200 million have been allocated over seven years for the social welfare Aboriginal community development program, commencing on 1 July. The program will be administered by the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and will provide necessary housing and infrastructure to priority Aboriginal communities. As part of the Government's partnership approach with Aboriginal communities, a consultative process involving Aboriginal community groups and representatives, local government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and State or Federal agencies will be set in train.

This program is the first of its type in New South Wales and it is designed to address housing and infrastructure needs—that is, what most of us take for granted, water and sewerage, community facilities, rubbish disposal, et cetera—in a co-ordinated manner and on a sustainable basis, with Aboriginal involvement. The Government will continue its commitment to improving the health status of Aboriginal people, with \$18.8 million allocated in the budget for Aboriginal health services. Particular health areas to be examined include immunisation, renal disease, cardiovascular disease, infant mortality, diabetes, cancer, substance abuse and—significantly, I believe—improved access to general practitioner services and improved cultural awareness training.

Aboriginal education is another area in respect of which the Government has allocated a significant

amount of resources and money in the 1998-99 budget. The total expenses budget for Aboriginal education in 1998-99 will be more than \$25 million. That includes more than \$10 million from the Commonwealth's indigenous education strategic initiatives plan, which implements the Aboriginal education policy. It is encouraging to note that included in the budget is a component that will ensure that an Aboriginal perspective is incorporated into school curriculae. An additional 82 Aboriginal education assistants will be employed in the school system. This will not only make the school environment more inclusive of Aboriginal students but also generate employment for Aboriginal communities.

As I have stated before, the 1998-99 budget reflects the commitment of the Government. This is shown in some key areas of Aboriginal affairs that I have briefly touched upon. It is important that these moneys are expended appropriately in order to ensure as much as possible that the assets provided are sustainable and well managed, that outcomes are there for Aboriginal people, and that the developments occur at the community's pace. This will require a well co-ordinated and well planned approach with the needs of the community being paramount. Significant Aboriginal budgetary funding has been provided for Aboriginal environmental infrastructure projects, on which \$3 million will be spent over three years. A pilot interagency program will address neglected infrastructure and basic services in three Aboriginal communities. This initiative has a strong emphasis on sustainable infrastructure and on training local Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal business enterprises are an important funding area, and this year's allocation of \$200,000 for the Aboriginal business development program will provide a co-ordinator to review and refine Aboriginal small business programs and services and to promote Aboriginal business development in New South Wales. Recently I was invited to Moama in the Murray shire to open an Aboriginal business enterprise staffed by 14 young Aboriginal people who are turning old river red gum into beautiful furniture. I congratulate John Kerr, a young Aboriginal person, on his initiative in leading the program and working hard to provide employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within the Murray shire. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BECK (Murwillumbah) [4.30 p.m.]: The 1998-99 Carr Labor budget is a sweetener for the city and crumbs for the bush and the rest of the State. I would like to address the budget's neglect of the far north coast, and the Murwillumbah electorate

in particular, and the lack of funding for roads on the far north coast. I should like to go back a little in time to explain about the Pacific Highway. In about January 1993 the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Wal Murray, launched the initiative to build a dual carriageway from Tweed Heads to Hexham. This was welcomed by the Murwillumbah electorate because of the notorious Burringbar Range and the coast road.

The roads from Chinderah to Billinudgel and Bulahdelah to Coolongolook were identified as the number one priority for roadworks funding. An environmental impact statement in both those areas was completed in approximately October 1994. However, this work was put on the backburner in the lead-up to the March 1995 elections. Concern about the route was expressed by the Tweed Shire Council, the cane industry and other agricultural industries. As a result, the Chinderah to Billinudgel road did not go ahead at that time, despite \$1 million expenditure and considerable studies. There was a change of government in March 1995, but before that occurred an agreement was signed between the Federal Government and the State Government to fund a \$2.2 billion dual motorway between Brisbane and Sydney over a period of 10 years.

Priority number one, the Bulahdelah to Coolongolook project, was due to be finished in 1999, the same time as the Chinderah to Billinudgel project, which has now been renamed the Chinderah to Yelgun road. This name change has involved another environmental impact statement, another \$1 million, another delay and many accidents on the notorious Burringbar Range. The speed limit has been reduced to 70 kilometres an hour and there is no longer an open road through the Tweed Valley. The coast road has traffic calming measures from the north coast to the sunshine coast of Queensland and travellers are slowed down because the State Government has not provided the necessary funds.

As the project is worth \$230 million, one would have thought that the first Carr Government budget would have included significant funding, but that was not the case. Last year's budget allocated only \$4.2 million. The completion date for the project was 1999, so when the Treasurer handed down his budget a few weeks ago I waited with bated breath. Unfortunately, the budget papers revealed that the project is now due for completion in 2002 and that the State Government has allocated a measly \$11 million.

Mr Fraser: It is a disgrace.

Mr BECK: It is a disgrace, as the honourable member for Coffs Harbour says. Metropolitan and local newspapers have listed 10 other projects that are being built but do not have such a high priority as the Chinderah to Yelgun road, which is still not being built. I am disgusted and all I can say is that with the change of government next March projects such as this will be fast-tracked and built so that lives can be saved.

Health in the Tweed is another area of concern. Over the past three years this Government has made many promises to build stage three of the Tweed Heads District Hospital, which services a fast-growing area of this State and Currumbin Valley in Queensland. A sum of \$1 million was allocated in last year's budget for planning work to get the project up and running, and as the project is estimated to cost \$31 million I had expected that the allocation this year would be \$25 million or \$30 million. However, at page 58 of Budget Paper No. 4 the State asset capital works program shows an allocation of only \$4 million for this project, which will now not be completed until 2002. This is the second project I have highlighted that will not be completed until that time. Apparently the Carr Labor Government does not wish to do anything for Murwillumbah and the Tweed Valley until 2002.

I am concerned at the small allocation for health in my electorate. I repeat: this budget gives sweeteners for the city but only crumbs for the bush and the rest of the State. Allocations of only \$11 million towards a \$230 million road project and \$4 million towards a \$31 million health project are crumbs. I sincerely hope there is a change of government next March so that these two projects can be fast-tracked to provide the Tweed area with adequate services. Following the announcement of this year's budget, the *Daily News* of 18 June had the headlines "Tweed Faces Health Cuts" and "Tweed medics warning over health funds". The budget has not provided sufficient funds for a decent health service for the Murwillumbah electorate through the Tweed Heads District Hospital and the Murwillumbah District Hospital, and I am disgusted.

I am also alarmed at the lack of funding for additional police and the construction of new police facilities in the Tweed Valley. The population of the Tweed may be only 66,000 but it adjoins the Gold Coast, which has a permanent population of 500,000 plus a major tourist trade. The area services people from Queensland, but it does not have sufficient police. I also seek an explanation of what has happened about the 24-hour police station in the area. The police station situated in Recreation Street is unable to meet the needs of the people of the

Chinderah region. I refer honourable members to an article that appeared in the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, a cross-border newspaper, on 23 March 1995, which was fairly close to the date of the last election. The article carried the headline "ALP plans new base for police," and the caption under the accompanying photograph reads ". . . Opposition police spokesman Paul Whelan takes a first hand look at the proposed Chinderah police station site." The article stated:

The Kingscliff police station site will be sold and a new police and emergency service centre built at Chinderah if a Carr Labor government is elected on Saturday.

That statement was made a week before election day three years ago. I looked through the budget papers for the past two years and could find no mention of a new police station; however, I thought provision would be made in the last budget of this Government. The Minister for Police must have a guilty conscience. The photo of him in the newspaper is a good one; he has not aged very much, because he has not been working hard enough—in this Parliament or for the people of the Murwillumbah electorate—to get them a 24-hour police station at Chinderah. I am pleased he is paying attention to what I am saying. I remind him that three years ago the newspaper reported that he said:

We have committed \$1 million to underpin the viability of the proposal even though it is intended to be cost neutral.

That was to be achieved by selling the Kingscliff police station. Since then the number of police has not increased at Murwillumbah, Kingscliff or Tweed Heads, and there has been no capital expenditure on this promised 24-hour police station and emergency centre, which was going to be built when the Carr Government was elected. I repeat: each year the Labor budget provides sweeteners for the city, and only crumbs for the bush and the rest of the State.

Queensland has a progressive government. Honourable members should take note of that Government's positive achievements. A couple of years ago that Government funded construction of a new electric train line down to Helensvale, and recently that line was continued as far as Robina. The project had bipartisan support. Some of that line was built by the Goss Government, and it was extended by the Borbidge Government. Vaughan Johnson, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads in the Queensland Government, is extending that rail link to Coolangatta airport, which has just been privatised and taken over by a progressive company that wishes to make it into an international airport. It intends to extend the runway by 500 metres, and that will be a wonderful boost for tourism.

Even with electric trains coming as far south as Coolangatta there is still a missing link: the rail line in New South Wales stops at Murwillumbah. One can catch the XPT at Spencer Street station in Melbourne or at Central station in Sydney, but one has to leave the XPT and board a coach at Murwillumbah to be taken to one's destination. What a terrible way to start a holiday. I ask this Government what plans are on foot to extend that line from Murwillumbah to Coolangatta airport, because I see nothing in the budget. That extension must be built and it must be planned now, because it takes so long for governments to make these things happen. I remind honourable members of my earlier story about roads that were supposed to be built in 1993 but have still not been built in 1998.

I shall make a brief comment on agriculture. I note from page 26 of Budget Paper No. 4 that video surveillance cameras are in place on the New South Wales-Queensland border. The cameras were installed quite some time ago and a further \$300,000 is being spent on their enhancement. Those cameras are needed for the detection of livestock transports passing across the border, as there are quite a number of border crossings. Cattle tick is of grave concern to beef producers and dairy farmers in the region. The Tweed and Richmond—represented by my colleague the honourable member for Lismore—have always been buffer zones, protection zones, for keeping cattle tick out of New South Wales. I hope that the Minister for Agriculture is mindful of the cattle tick outbreak in the north of the State and that the search and destroy program that is in place will work. Cattle tick outbreaks will need to be closely monitored and addressed in future years.

Tonight I have raised a number of concerns about road and rail. The Government must provide a greater level of funding to local councils. The high rainfall—up to 75 inches a year—in the Tweed damages the roads and causes massive maintenance worries. Local councils need adequate funding from the Government to enable them to maintain the roads, especially in extremely wet seasons. If a few dry years are followed by a wet season, the deterioration of the roads is worsened and causes grave concern. The Tweed is a major growth area and the population is rapidly increasing. Councils require adequate funding for infrastructure such as water augmentation and sewerage systems. To avoid councils having to impose a heavy section 94 contribution on those who are developing growth areas and on those who wish to live in the beautiful Tweed Valley, the Government must provide adequate funding so the necessary infrastructure can be provided and maintained.

The Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries is fixing the fishing problems in my electorate. I thank him for the assurance he gave me in response to a question in the House last week. This year in this debate members are allowed to speak for only 20 minutes, with no extension. The speech of each member has been reduced by 10 minutes. The issues of concern are health; agriculture; police; infrastructure; funding for local councils, including funding for roads; main roads; and rail. All of those matters are important. I shall conclude where I started: the Carr Labor Government budget has been a failure for the bush and the rest of the State. It has been a sweetener for the city, but crumbs for the rest of us.

Mr McMANUS (Bulli) [4.50 p.m.]: I support the Government's budget, and I congratulate the Premier and the Treasurer on the delivery of a budget for the people of New South Wales. Both the Premier and the Treasurer have made the hard yards over the last two years and have done a tremendous job in getting the State to the point at which it is today. I am proud that the Carr Government is the first government in the last 50 years—and probably ever—to have reduced the State's net financial liability instead of adding to it. The net general government debt is down by \$1.9 billion on the figure of three years ago; the total public sector net debt is down by \$1 billion; the total net liability, including debt and unfunded liabilities, is down by more than \$3.5 billion, that is, more than \$1,600 per family; and the State's assets continue to grow. I am proud that my electorate, in particular, gained significantly from the Carr Labor Government's budget. Over the past couple of years members of the community of Bulli, like everyone else, have had to tighten their belts. But the Labor Government and I have been able to take great strides in order to deliver to the people of Bulli, and to those of the new electorate of Heathcote, the things that are important to them.

I refer first to education. The people of Engadine, a suburb in the heart of my electorate, was let down by the coalition Government from 1988 to the time when the Carr Government came to power. Engadine Public School, a small community school, was desperately in need of facilities to ensure the wellbeing of its students. Those facilities will now come to fruition by virtue of this year's budget. An amount of \$855,000 has been allocated towards the total cost of \$950,000 for the construction of a new hall, canteen and outdoor learning area for the school. A large number of people had input into the project, including the principal, Paul Baumer, the teachers, and former

presidents of the parents and citizens association. I congratulate the principal, Paul Baumer, on his initiatives in ensuring that pressure was brought to bear on the Government and me to make provision for those facilities.

In 1987 June Scott, a former president of the parents and citizens association, raised with me the school's concerns. At that time I invited the then Premier, Barrie Unsworth, to visit the school to observe the dilemma it faced in relation to student requirements. Action was then taken to secure the facilities needed. I congratulate also Dianne Elliott and Tania Bordon, former presidents of the parents and citizens association; the former parents and citizens association president and current school council representative, Lisa Lawrie, who is still working hard to achieve the needs of the school community; and current joint presidents of the parents and citizens association, Cindy Moore and Cheryl Scott. Recently many of those people were part of a deputation which put the case to the Minister for Education and Training. I am sure that their participation in that meeting went a long way towards ensuring that funding was made available for this project. That is pleasing, considering that nothing was done in 1988 when the Liberal Party came to power and Mr Andrews, the member for Heathcote at that time, took up the cudgels.

After I left the area in 1988 Mr Andrews did nothing for the people of the region. That was how the Liberal Party treated my constituents during my absence for that one term. But now the Labor Government is back in power and it intends to continue to give support to the people of the Sutherland shire. I shall now speak about roads in the electorate of Bulli—an issue that has also been given a great boost in the budget. Working with my community certainly achieves results. A vote of \$9.8 million has been provided for roads in the Bulli electorate. That funding will facilitate ongoing improvements to the road network and allow for the commencement of new projects. I shall outline some of those projects, because I know you, Mr Speaker, have a great interest in my electorate. An amount of \$1 million has been allocated for planning of the F6 freeway interchange at Helensburgh.

That initiative will not only go a long way towards resolving problems of road safety but also boost tourism to the region by giving tourists the option to traverse the old road to the south coast. Access to and egress from the F6 will also be greatly improved, which is welcome as over the years many deaths have occurred on the Old Princes Highway between Helensburgh and Waterfall. I congratulate the Government on its commitment to

provide funding for the extension of the Northern Distributor, at the northern end of the electorate—a project that has been on the books for almost 40 years. That initiative is welcomed by people of the northern suburbs of Wollongong who travel to the city for work. This commitment also includes ongoing construction of the Northern Distributor at Bulli.

One of the budget's most important provisions relates to the suburb of Engadine itself. An amount of \$40,000 has been allocated for the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of the Old Princes Highway and Stephen Road, Engadine. Also, \$200,000 has been allocated for noise reduction measures along Heathcote Road. I wish to brief the House on the need for this infrastructure. Now that Heathcote Road is a major thoroughfare between the north coast and the Illawarra, Heathcote residents who live on the corner of the Princes Highway have been overwhelmed by the noise of trucks both backing down the hill at Heathcote Road and manoeuvring their loads up Heathcote Road on their journeys between the north and south of the State. The noise has driven some of my constituents to the point of distraction. I am pleased that the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads has signified that he realises there is a problem at Heathcote Road and is taking the initiative to ensure that noise reduction programs are put in place as a matter of urgency.

Another important budget initiative is the \$12 million allocation for the Woronora bridge, the total cost of which is \$30 million. Though that site is just on the border of my electorate, it is important to the people of the Sutherland shire. The construction of the bridge is an issue not only of electorate responsibility but of regional responsibility. It has significance for road safety and congestion. It also has relevance to my responsibilities as Parliamentary Secretary for police and emergency services and to safety in times of crisis for the people of the Sutherland shire, Menai, Woronora River, Bonnet Bay and Como West. I have today placed an advertisement in the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* calling on the people of the Sutherland shire to support me in expressing gratitude to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads for having committed the \$12 million. But it is not good enough. I demand that the Government make a commitment to provide funding, by the end of this year, for a four-lane bridge. I will ensure that the people of the Sutherland shire get what they deserve: safety—

Mr Kerr: That should have been done quite a while ago.

Mr McMANUS: Perhaps the House should consider what was achieved by the coalition when it was in office. The coalition managed to get a couple of pylons stuck in the water but it did not have a red cent in the bank to continue the job. The coalition did a snow job on the people of the Sutherland shire in its attempt to get re-elected. It was the Labor Government that fixed the problem. The coalition supplied the money for only a few lousy bricks and mortar for the bridge over Woronora River. The Labor Government has supplied \$12 million to get the first stage of the project up and running. As the member for Bulli I will ensure that the Government provides the rest of the money so that the people of Menai, Sutherland and Cronulla get the amenities they deserve—something the coalition did not do. I am pleased to have been able to report to the House on issues of road safety in my electorate.

There is good news on another issue on which the coalition Government was not able to deliver. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the former Minister for Health, totally ignored health issues in his electorate of Miranda. The present Federal Government has not helped much, either. Federal Government contributions to the New South Wales health budget have decreased by more than \$200 million. Howard has abandoned the public hospital system across Australia, and in the May budget continued cost-shifting penalties to New South Wales. Howard's cuts, shown by a Senate inquiry to be totally unjustified, have now cost New South Wales public hospitals \$103 million. But the Labor Government has done better. The Deputy Premier, understanding the problems, has dug deep into his pockets. Two major health issues affecting my electorate are worthy of mention.

The \$79 million redevelopment of the Sutherland district hospital announced in the Carr Government's 1998-99 budget will bring new benefits to thousands of individuals and families in the region. The redevelopment is a major boost for the people of Sutherland and will provide a new hospital on the existing campus, replacing outdated accommodation with a modern, comfortable, purpose-built facility. Planning is already under way, with an emphasis on full staff and community consultation to create a world-class hospital with the highest possible standards of care and efficiency for patients and families. That is a far cry from what happened when the coalition was in government.

I have first-hand experience of events that have taken place at the Sutherland hospital. My mother, an aged woman with emphysema, was a patient at the Sutherland hospital some years ago, during the time of the coalition Government. In the

middle of the night in the middle of winter, when it was discovered that the hospital had no beds available the hospital called my sister from Helensburgh—a distance of 30 kilometres—to say that my mother was being sent home. That is how I have my information about the hospital, that is how I know that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Health at the time—a local boy who lived next door to the Sutherland hospital—had plenty of money for private enterprise in places like Port Macquarie but neglected his own hospital and his own people to the point of distraction.

The present Deputy Premier, the Minister of Health in the Labor Government, has recognised the dilemma facing the people of the Sutherland shire and has allocated \$79 million over the next five years to do something with the hospital that should have been done in the time of the coalition Government but was not done. The Government will spend \$18.3 million on enhancing the New South Wales Ambulance Service. Families and patients will benefit from more modern ambulances, a series of new ambulance stations in key rural areas, the refurbishment of a number of existing stations and equipment upgrades. Again, that action is a far cry from what happened during the years of the Greiner and Fahey governments. At that time there was not much movement—other than a backwards movement—in health.

I am very pleased that the southern part of my electorate has also gained a boost in terms of Illawarra Regional Hospital. Families in Wollongong, Kiama and the Shoalhaven have been given clear priority in the Government's budget, with a \$62.5 million commitment to new capital works in the Illawarra. This commitment builds on the work the Government has already done to bring better care and greater funding to a growing region. It includes stage 2 of a major redevelopment of Illawarra Regional Hospital, replacing the outdated Hickman House and refurbishing the clinical services building. The work will provide state-of-the-art accommodation and treatment for patients and their families, as well as a comfortable, efficient work environment for staff. This program is very much welcomed by the people of the Illawarra, Kiama and Shoalhaven.

I turn to the recent announcement of jobs for my region. I have been promoting a proposal for the construction of a Transrapid rail link between Sydney and Canberra, with stops in the Sutherland shire and in Wollongong. The proposal, if given the go-ahead by the Federal Government, will provide a major boost for tourism and jobs for the region. Only last Friday the Premier announced a rescue

package for the coal industry which will secure 500 jobs in the coalmining regions of the west and south of the electorate. The Premier announced a \$7 million rescue package this financial year for the Port Kembla coal loader terminal and coalmines exporting through Wollongong. That is very pleasing, because the package will immediately secure about 500 jobs. Almost 2,700 people work in the southern coalfields of this State. Thousands of families and businesses will benefit from the decision because it will support the regional economies, which depend so much on the coal industry.

The Illawarra region has a long and proud history in the State's coal industry. My father worked in the coalmines for 30 years, so I understand the necessity of coalmining for the region's economies. From my perspective as a local member of Parliament and as the son of a coalminer, I am particularly pleased about the announcement of the \$7 million package this year for the coalfields. In the Chamber this evening is the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries, who is a particularly good friend of mine. I congratulate the Minister on taking decisive action last year in relation to the Metropolitan Colliery in my home town of Helensburgh. At that time the colliery was in a great dilemma and it seemed that the mine would have to close. At that behest of the Minister for Mineral Resources, after I had pleaded with him for assistance, the New South Wales Government, in recognition of its ongoing commitment to jobs in the region, loaned \$1.2 million to the company to ensure the viability of the mine. That money is being paid back progressively.

On two occasions in 12 months this Labor Government has shown the compassion needed to govern this State. It has taken decisive action and has made fair and compassionate decisions based on the needs of our community. Let us face it: government is not about big business. This Government is running a business and running a budget whilst at the same time realising that some decisions result in hardship for the community. Ministers, the Premier and the Treasurer have pulled out all stops to ensure that they deliver to the people of the regions. The Government has delivered to the people of New South Wales and to the people of the Sutherland shire. I am very proud to be a part of that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It being close to 5.15 p.m., pursuant to sessional orders business is interrupted for the taking of private members' statements.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Quorums and Divisions

Motion by Mr Martin agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that from the commencement of private members' statements until 7.30 p.m. at this sitting no quorums or divisions shall be called.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARSDEN PARK LANDFILL

Mr GIBSON (Londonderry) [5.10 p.m.]: I would like to speak on behalf of my constituents Mr and Mrs John Saliba, Wayne and Wendy Palmer, Tania and Angelo Couchi, Sam and Sylvia Couchi, John and Noelene Able, Trish and Phillip Hall, Mr Debona, the people of the Town and Country Caravan Park and many others who live around Marsden Park. For 15 years they have unsuccessfully fought Blacktown City Council, environmental departments and governments against the Grange Avenue tip, which has ruined their lives in many ways. But finally, the closure of the tip is imminent.

Recently they were told that Galian Pty Ltd proposes to undertake landfill and site restoration on an existing quarry site; they have had a tip on one side and it is proposed to build another tip on the other side. These people need some help. Galian sought development consent to operate, firstly, an extractive industry for the quarrying of road-base materials and, secondly, a solid waste landfill. The existing excavation will be deepened and extended to the north, east and south. The operations will proceed in a southerly direction for approximately 400 metres.

The material to be extracted comprises volcanic breccia and clay shale. The volcanic breccia will be processed in an on-site crushing and screening plant to produce a range of blended quarry products for road-making purposes. The clay shale is suitable for brick making, and will be sold to brick manufacturing plants. Up to 300,000 tonnes of material will be extracted per annum. Landfill operations will follow the quarrying operations to fill the quarry void. Up to 30,000 tonnes per month of class 2 waste—non-putrescible—will be used for landfill.

Access to the site for both quarrying and landfill operations will be from Richmond Road,

which needs a lot of work and a lot of money spent on it. I am told the road will be upgraded and sealed. The quarry will operate from Monday to Friday from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. and on Saturday from 6.00 a.m. to noon. No quarry operations will take place on Sunday. No doubt it is a relief to those who live in the area to know that no noise will be made on a Sunday! Landfill operations will take place at the same time during the week, from 7.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on Saturday and from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on Sunday.

Maintenance of plant and equipment will take place on Saturday afternoon until 6.00 p.m. But that is not all. The residents have also been told that blasting will be required to loosen the materials. At peak times the quarry will generate an average of 40 loads per day, and the landfill will attract an average of 120 loads per day; that is 320 truck movements per day on a road that is virtually a goat track. The quarry will operate on 300 days per year and will produce approximately 1,000 tonnes a day of quarry products. The quarry has an expected life of 15 to 20 years.

Landfill waste will be received to a maximum of 30,000 tonnes per month; that is 360,000 tonnes per annum. At this rate, the landfill will have a life expectancy of some 20 years. Land values in the area have been reduced by many thousands of dollars. Most of the people in the area are poultry farmers or market gardeners. The quality of their lives has been ruined because of the Grange Avenue landfill. They have fought a very good fight for more than 15 years, but it was one they knew they could not win. They could not beat the bureaucracy or the government. They now find, when Grange Avenue is just about to be closed, that they have to fight another fight. It is totally unfair. I ask the Minister to ensure that it does not happen.

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries) [5.15 p.m.]: As the Minister for Mineral Resources I have responsibility for rehabilitation to a certain extent and for occupational health and safety in quarries, although it is my colleague the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation who has non value added components of quarrying in his administration. We have taken on board the matters raised by the honourable member. We will have to consider all the conditions and ensure that they are complied with. It is only fair that the honourable member raises such matters in this House and that he gets a fair hearing not only for himself but also for his constituents.

UNREGISTERED BUSH FIRE VEHICLES

Mr SCHULTZ (Burrinjuck) [5.15 p.m.]: I would like to refer to a circular headed "Unregistered Bush Fire Vehicles" issued by the New South Wales Rural Fire Service on 1 June this year to the general managers of councils. The circular reads as follows:

Over recent weeks a number of Councils have received correspondence from Jardine Australia Insurance Brokers concerning unregistered bush fire vehicles.

Unfortunately this has generated a degree of uncertainty about insurance coverage particularly third party personal injury.

The position is as follows:

- Bush fire vehicles are exempt from registration under the Traffic Act . . .
- Compulsory third party coverage is provided by the Nominal Defendant. This insures the owner of the motor vehicle and any other person who at any time drives the vehicle (whether or not with the consent of the owner) against liability in respect of the death of or injury to a person caused by the fault of the owner or the driver of the vehicle on public roads.

Accordingly there is no need for these vehicles to be registered or for Councils to undertake compulsory third party personal injury insurance coverage if they are used for the purposes identified in circular 23/98.

The problems identified by Jardine Australia have arisen as a result of one particular case which is now the subject of court proceedings where the Solicitors acting on behalf of QBE are seeking to involve others in cross claim action. This is yet to be resolved.

Section 31(3) of the Motor Accident Act states that the nominal defendant is not entitled to recover any amount under this Section from the owner or driver of a motor vehicle which, at the relevant time was not required to be registered or was exempt from registration or if required to be registered was not required to be insured under the Act.

The difficulty would appear to be Section 30 of the Motor Accident Act which authorises a licensed insurer (in this case QBE) to whom a claim is allocated on behalf of and in the name of the nominal defendant to deal with the claim (and any proceedings relating to the claim) in such manner as it thinks fit. The Motor Accident Authority's position is that this provides for the Nominal Defendant Insurer to handle the claim within its normal administrative process, but does not override 31(3) of the Act.

Until this issue is resolved Treasury Managed Fund will, without prejudice, provide cover to the Rural Fire Service in respect of all Service's indemnifications to Councils for any adjudicated legal liability breaching the provisions of Section 29, 30(1), (2) and 31(3) of the Motor Accident Act against local councils through their obligations under the provisions of the NSW Rural Fires Act.

In summary, provided the bush fire vehicles have not been modified in a manner which would deem them to be unsafe, are properly maintained and are in a roadworthy condition,

compulsory third party personal injury protection is afforded and exemption from registration applies.

The circular prompted the Harden Shire Council to write to the Minister for Emergency Services, who I am pleased is in the House. The council said in its letter of 12 June:

Council has received advice on the measures implemented by the Treasury Managed Fund to provide temporary cover for unregistered bushfire vehicles subject to them being in a roadworthy condition and are properly maintained.

There is still a great deal of concern with the specific condition that the vehicle be "properly maintained" as the opportunity exists for a vehicle involved in an accident through malfunction to be deemed not properly maintained and therefore councils would again be rendered liable.

Council's bushfire vehicles are inspected annually prior to the fire season to ensure their roadworthy condition but hypothetically if a roadworthy vehicle suffered a malfunction shortly after the inspection and was involved in an accident, the potential exists for the vehicle to be deemed not properly maintained and therefore the cover arranged by the Treasury Managed Fund may not apply. This could also apply to private vehicles supplied by the Brigade members.

The issue is of extreme concern to Council and the Bush Fire movement and legislative action is urgently requested to rectify the anomaly which has arisen.

Council would appreciate such suggested action to be taken by 31st August 1998 to ensure that Councils as well as Brigade members providing private vehicles albeit in a roadworthy, properly maintained and otherwise safe condition can attend to their bush fire duties confident that they will not be the subject of third party claims through circumstances of which they may have little or no control. Failure to have the position rectified may see volunteers reluctant to attend fires in the forthcoming season which would be disastrous for bush fire control.

Council is also a member of the South West Rural Fire Group which has expressed similar concerns and Council's representations are fully supported by that Group and are provided on behalf of that body.

I ask the Minister to ensure that the anomaly is rectified and appropriate changes are made to the legislation to ensure that such a serious matter cannot arise.

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) [5.20 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Burrinjuck for his courtesy of letting me know that he would raise this matter at this time. It is true that Harden Shire Council has written to me and expressed its concerns. As it happens, and in consequence of that letter, in part at least, I can assure the House that officers of the Rural Fire

Service today have actually been in consultation with the Crown Solicitor about this issue.

It appears that it will be possible to deal with the loophole referred to by the honourable member for Burrinjuck if the Treasury Managed Fund deems a vehicle roadworthy once it has received its annual Roads and Traffic Authority certificate of inspection. I am advised—and I do not wish to entirely pre-empt the question—that the matter will probably be able to be dealt with not by legislation but merely by a change in the instructions and conditions that appear in the guide to insurance protection for volunteer bush fire fighters, issued by the Rural Fire Service on behalf of the New South Wales Treasury Managed Fund. In any event, during the coming days we shall pay attention to the matter and resolve it as is necessary. I acknowledge the important concerns of both Harden Shire Council and the honourable member.

ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr MARKHAM (Keira) [5.22 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a rally that was held in Wollongong on Saturday, 20 June, to protest against the shortage of funding to meet critical care needs. Approximately 350 people with disabilities and their families and friends attended the rally, which was organised by the Illawarra Disability Trust and groups in the Shoalhaven. The rally adopted the theme, "A time to care". I had the privilege to be part of that demonstration and to march through the Wollongong mall. People with disabilities and their families marched through the mall to Wollongong Town Hall holding purple balloons which carried the theme, "A time to care".

The meeting was chaired by Mr Roger West, Commissioner for Community Services, at Wollongong Town Hall. Several people, representing local people with disabilities or their families, spoke at the meeting. Mr Alex Traill, Regional Manager for the Australian Quadriplegic Association, spoke about the need for attendant care services which allowed people with physical disabilities to retain their independence and choice. Since 1992, when the program moved from Commonwealth to State funding, it has been eroded through continual underfunding. The review of home care also resulted in fewer opportunities for people with disabilities to have their personal care needs met through that source.

Mr George MacKenzie spoke on behalf of the Shoalhaven area. As the parent of a person with a disability, he outlined the critical lack of funding to support services for people with intellectual

disabilities. Mr MacKenzie suggested that the system, which is overloaded with demand and undersupplied with resources, is in crisis. He spoke of a demoralised Department of Community Services, from which good staff leave in droves because of their inability to address real needs with inadequate resources.

Mr MacKenzie also said it was cruel that the only way to attract resources to the system was by forcing parents to abandon their children at respite centres. The Ageing and Disability Department estimates that between 4,000 and 7,000 people with profound disabilities in New South Wales require supported accommodation but cannot get it. In 1997 the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggested that 14,000 people with severe disabilities throughout the country failed to get appropriate accommodation or services in the previous year. Care provided by family members was estimated to be valued at \$16 billion nationally compared with a total Government contribution of \$3.5 billion.

Mrs Brenda Hewitt, the parent of a young child with a disability, outlined the significant family monetary costs associated with aids and services for children with a disability. Her own experience was of a lack of support options funded by the Government. Mrs Hewitt particularly outlined the drastic shortage of therapy services which should be a critical part of any early intervention program. She indicated that a lack of funding to respite services compounded the stresses placed on families. She also spoke of her fears for the future given the lack of funding to day centres and accommodation options.

Several members of the Shoalhaven self-advocacy group said that they were unable to attract even the modest amount of funding required to support their group and keep it going. The last Carr Labor Government budget allocated an extra \$96 million for disability funding. It is important for everyone to realise that in relation to accommodation and respite support, for every \$1 that the Federal Government contributes through the Commonwealth-State disabilities program, the State Government contributes \$3.

In the current financial year the Federal Government will provide \$107 million while the State Government will contribute \$318 million. The Federal Government's contribution represents an increase of just \$15 million over five years for New South Wales, a paltry amount considering that the Federal Government's own research, prepared by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, indicated that New South Wales needs an extra \$100 million per annum.

The Wollongong rally and march demonstrated that people with different types and levels of disabilities, and their families, were united in their efforts to gain a greater commitment to funding services. There were many important messages to the Government. The current system is in crisis. There is an urgent need for accommodation support, day care programs and therapy services. Major gaps are emerging in personal care support for people with physical disabilities. Access to home and community care services, transport, viable employment options and adequate support in schools and health services are all areas of concern.

People with disabilities and their families are asking governments to demonstrate that they care for all members of the community by adequately funding the services that they require. The votes of people with disabilities count. I thank Margaret Bowen for the invitation to attend the rally. It was enlightening to hear about the problems faced by our community and by people with disabilities. I know the Minister will make some contribution to this debate. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [5.27 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Keira for advising me that he would raise this matter today. It is true that for every \$1 the Federal Government contributes the State Government contributes \$3.50. The tragedy is that the Federal Government collects the taxes, and we really should get more of that money, which is really our money. After carrying out a study, the Federal Government said that New South Wales needed an extra \$100 million per year for the next five years to meet the growth and backlog.

This year the meeting of health Ministers was cancelled, and we could not bring pressure to bear on Warwick Smith. Although the State Government was entitled to \$100 million for five years, the Federal Government gave it a paltry \$2.3 million over four years. The Federal Government is boasting about its \$2.6 billion surplus. The surplus is made from cuts to child care, aged care and disability services. The surplus is not a proud boast in the lucky country when people with disabilities go without so that Peter Costello can strut his surplus on the world stage.

Only those who have lived with somebody with a disability can understand the problem. I am determined to meet again with Warwick Smith. But I am not the only Minister against Warwick Smith; State Ministers of all political persuasions are against him. We say to Mr Smith that the Federal

Government has our money, it should give it to the States as they need it. He is making political victims of people with disabilities.

MULLUMBIMBY AND DISTRICT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL OPERATING THEATRE CLOSURE

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [5.29 p.m.]: Last Thursday approximately 800 people from the Brunswick Valley staged a rally in Mullumbimby to voice their concerns about the impending closure of the operating theatre at the Mullumbimby and District War Memorial Hospital. In the decade that I have represented that area in this Parliament there has not been such a big rally on any issue. The fact that so many people rallied to try to save surgical services at Mullumbimby hospital is a measure of the support members of the local community have for their hospital and their determination not to have it downgraded in any way. Speakers at the rally gave an outline of the work of the Brunswick Valley health planning committee and the financial restrictions placed on it. Dr James, the current surgeon, spoke of his work and the difficulties he had encountered. A local general practitioner, Dr Pelmore, also spoke.

Unfortunately, because Parliament was sitting last Thursday I could not attend the rally. However, I made my views clear on this issue, both in the Parliament on 2 June this year and in the local media. I oppose the closure of surgical services at Mullumbimby and oppose the downgrading of any health services at that hospital. First thing last Friday I drove to Mullumbimby, where I was presented with a petition containing the signatures of 5,870 local people, all of whom oppose the loss of surgical services at the hospital. As the member for Ballina I presented that petition to the Parliament today and the Clerk read out its contents prior to question time. I trust that the Carr Government will take notice of such a large display of community support for the retention of the operating theatre at Mullumbimby. The petition specifically calls on the Carr Government to continue the services of the local surgeon beyond 30 June for an indefinite period.

The State Government, via the Northern Rivers Health Service, announced that surgery will cease at Mullumbimby hospital as from 30 June this year. I point out that 5,870 signatures represents a large proportion of the Brunswick Valley community. I estimate that around 50 per cent of the local community signed this petition and these signatures were collected in less than three weeks. Both the short period of time taken to collect these signatures and the almost 6,000 signatures obtained, including

my own, highlight the depth of feeling about cuts to surgery at Mullumbimby hospital in the Brunswick Valley. The Northern Rivers Health Service advised that the cost of maintaining surgery at the hospital is a mere \$200,000 a year, a minuscule amount in the context of the \$6 billion State health budget. Clearly, extra funding is needed on the north coast to keep health services abreast of demand.

In February this year Ballina hospital also had to cut back surgery by half—again an unacceptable situation. Brunswick Valley is an area of rapid population growth and many people are in their retirement years. The population is ageing, therefore these residents are high users of the health system. If surgical services are removed it will mean that local people will have to go to Lismore or to Murwillumbah hospitals, which are much further away than Mullumbimby for Brunswick Valley residents. Public transport between these areas is virtually non-existent. Not only will surgery be less accessible—and this could be critical in an emergency—it will add costs for people who cannot afford it. A local doctor, Dr Pelmore, made the point that the loss of surgery could have flow-on effects. For example, without surgery there could be an impact on obstetrics, where surgery may be required. Dr Pelmore, when speaking at the rally, said that not only could birthing be jeopardised; accident and emergency services could be the next to go. He is reported to have said at the rally:

The next step is they'll say you haven't got acute care services. Let's turn it into a nursing home.

There is widespread concern that loss of surgery at Mullumbimby will lead to further cuts in other health services. Over the past two decades members of the local community have contributed \$800,000 towards new equipment at the hospital. They believe that they are justified in asking the Government to put up an extra \$200,000 a year to keep the operating theatre open. I acknowledge that the Northern Rivers Area Health Service proposes to introduce a number of new services to compensate for the loss of surgical services. Whilst these services are needed and are welcomed, nevertheless they are simply a recognition that they are needed in the area in their own right and that they should not be regarded as an offset to compensate for the loss of surgical services.

In short, Brunswick Valley community needs the new services and the continuation of surgical services. I ask the Government to provide the \$200,000 to enable this to occur as a matter of urgency. I have asked the Minister for Health for an appointment—I hope he will be able to see me some

time this week—to discuss the issue further. Finally, I am advised that the Northern Rivers Health Service currently has a budget of around \$161 million a year and it needs approximately \$175 million to meet health needs in the area to put it on an equitable basis with the rest of the State. I call on the Carr Government to provide this extra funding to meet the genuine health needs of my constituents.

LUCAS HEIGHTS NEW NUCLEAR REACTOR

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.34 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a matter of considerable concern to me and to many of my constituents. I refer specifically to the decision by the Federal Howard Government in September 1997 to construct a new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights. This site is now effectively adjacent to substantial residential development. Fears of the consequences of the new nuclear reactor are, however, not restricted to those suburbs immediately adjacent to the site. People across the whole of south-western Sydney and beyond are concerned at the potential problems the new reactor might bring. It is a real issue for residents in the greater Liverpool area. A friend of mine, Councillor Alison Megarrity, said to me at the weekend that the new suburb of Wattle Grove is only six kilometres away from the reactor site. The development and construction of a new nuclear reactor so close to dense, residential development is, in my view, clearly wrong.

The argument contrary to this, of course, is that the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation establishment has existed at Lucas Heights for many years. It was there first and thus should have precedence over newer residents. That facility was established in 1958. At that time the area, which was largely remote bushland, was well away from residential development. The difficulty with that argument, however, is that we are no longer talking about the continuation of an existing and well-established facility; we are now talking about whether a new facility, a new reactor, should be built on that site. In my view, it should certainly not be built there now. It is worth noting that, without the construction of the new reactor, the current reactor is likely to be decommissioned in 2003-2005. There are, of course, larger and broader considerations. Obviously, if a new reactor is needed, it should not be built in a developed residential area. But there is a prior question: that is, whether a new reactor is really needed. Many people would answer no to that question.

The haste with which the present Federal Government has dealt with the issue would have done nothing to assuage the concerns of the sceptics.

The cost of the proposal is \$300 million. That, in the context of the flurry of budget cuts by this Federal Government, is a huge amount. It is greater than the cuts nationally to the housing budget and many times the cost of the dental scheme slashed by the Federal Government. It would substantially fund the western Sydney orbital roadway, which is so needed for economic, employment and environmental reasons and which the Federal Government has shamefully deferred to the far-off future. I have serious doubts about the desirability of the money being spent in this way. Five years ago a review of the reactor was established. Its conclusion was that a new reactor should be pursued only if our national interest justified it, that is, if our foreign affairs policy and our ability to participate in nuclear safety debates justified it. I am not persuaded that it does.

The world is now a very different place from what it was in 1958. With the end of the Cold War, any Dr Strangelove justification for the Lucas Heights facility is long gone. The worldwide reaction and opposition—and indeed Australian reaction and opposition—to French nuclear testing and to recent Indian and Pakistani activities should rule out completely any foreign affairs justification for Australia developing a new reactor. The other arguments in support of the development of the new reactor are highly emotive but far from compelling. The most often used is the alleged medical need. That argument is far from conclusive. There are many alternative mechanisms for generating radioisotopes rather than a nuclear reactor. There are also many alternative diagnostic methods to radioisotopes. As I understand it, only 2 to 3 per cent of radioisotopes are used for therapeutic purposes; the rest are used for diagnostic purposes. Likewise, there are many alternatives to much of the reactor uses for scientific and industrial purposes.

Against the alleged benefits must be weighed the risks and disadvantages that arise from a nuclear reactor. To date there have not been catastrophic accidents at Lucas Heights. However, there have been many of what ANSTO euphemistically refers to as "incidents". In this context the argument in favour of Lucas Heights is that it is only a research reactor and, therefore, it is unable to generate disasters of the scale of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. I do not want to be particularly alarmist about this and elevate Lucas Heights to the level of Chernobyl or Three Mile Island, as that would be unfair and unreasonable. However, some of the material I have seen and which has been provided to me by the Sutherland Shire Environmental Centre points to significant international experience of serious accidents at research reactors.

The Sutherland centre describes this site as having a history of a litany of accidents. Additionally, the problem of nuclear waste has not been solved, and does not look like being solved. History would seem to be against the new reactor. Of the 600 research reactors built worldwide since 1945, only 270 remain in operation, and many of those will close without replacement. Public opinion is also against the new reactor. In an ANSTO poll 88 per cent of people polled in the Liverpool area considered that a new reactor should be built in a remote location. Lucas Heights is no longer considered a remote location.

ASSISTANCE DOGS FOR INDEPENDENCE

Mrs STONE (Sutherland) [5.39 p.m.]: Assistance Dogs for Independence—ADFI—is a new charity, which I am pleased to mention in this House. The mission of this not-for-profit organisation is to obtain, train and maintain dogs in community settings to assist people with physical disabilities to achieve a greater level of independence. The concept is 22 years old in the United States of America but new in Australia. Now there is a better way for people with a physical disability to maintain their independence and to carry out their day-to-day activities with far more ease. Whether it is turning on a light switch, picking up a dropped mobile phone or pen, opening or closing a door, or speaking on command to alert a neighbour or passer-by to an emergency, an assistance dog helps make independent living a reality for people with a physical disability.

An assistance dog starts its specialised training in a volunteer puppy raiser's home. The puppy raiser is responsible for the young dog's care, socialisation and the teaching of basic commands. At about 1½ years of age the future assistance dog is returned to the ADFI training centre for six months advanced training. The dog is then ready for team training and an intensive two-week training course during which the new owner learns to work with the fully trained dog. Assistance Dogs for Independence provides these highly trained and loving dogs free of charge to recipients. The support of volunteers and the generosity of donors make this remarkable program possible.

Many volunteers work in various ways to help fulfil ADFI's mission. Service clubs, registered clubs, veterinary pharmaceutical companies, pet food organisations, local councils, large and small community-minded businesses, individuals and foundations are among the many supporters that provide financial and product assistance and human resources. This partnership of volunteers,

contributors and dedicated staff makes ADFI possible. The patron of the charity is the well-known and well-respected Olympian Betty Cuthbert, who is most supportive of the work of the charity. When visiting the national training centre at Heathcote the four times Olympic gold medallist said that she could appreciate the significance of a simple act such as opening a door for a wheelchair-bound person.

Restricted to a wheelchair by multiple sclerosis for more than 30 years, Betty Cuthbert, known as the "Golden Girl", was once the fastest woman in the world. As the track star of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics she blazed into the record books with gold in the 100 metres, 200 metres and 4 X 100 metres relay. Even more amazing was her comeback win in the 400 metres at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. Well accustomed to life in a wheelchair and a key force in raising awareness of MS, the former sprinter has never let fade the fighting spirit that won her the medals and the hearts of a nation. However, she admits that life would be easier if she could manage some of life's more basic tasks such as picking up a dropped pen, opening doors or ringing a doorbell.

Betty Cuthbert, being well aware of the challenges facing people with disabilities, has agreed to be the new organisation's patron. It is always exciting to be involved with a project from the beginning. This new charity offers the opportunity to provide a level of independence to people with a disability that able-bodied people take for granted. Unless incapacitated, we give little thought to moving about our everyday activities. Let us pause for a moment and give thought to Melina, the first recipient of a fully trained, accredited assistance dog and what it has meant to her life.

Melina is confined to a wheelchair. She can now continue her work because her assistance dog can retrieve a pen, get her a drink, take her out to the patio and give her freedom that would otherwise not be available. Melina has a wonderful feeling of independence now that she has the capacity to take control of these simple aspects of her life with the assistance of her dog. She has an added dimension to life, the sense of being in control and, above all, a return of a degree of independence. It is also appropriate that legislation is now in place that recognises the special needs of people with disabilities and their assistance dogs.

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [5.44 p.m.]: I am delighted to support the honourable member for Sutherland in her representations about this charity,

which provides assistance for people with specific disabilities. I also take this opportunity to commend Betty Cuthbert—Australia's golden girl, who won four Olympic gold medals—for her charity activities. Having been afflicted with a disability, she continues to battle on behalf of less fortunate and less able members of our society. The honourable member has drawn to our attention the specific needs of these people and has also referred to legislation that has been put in place to assist disabled people. She has commended this charity for our support and attention, and I am sure that all honourable members would heed her calling.

DEATH OF Mr DONALD GORDON BARWICK

Mr WINDSOR (Tamworth) [5.46 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the recent death of Donald Gordon Barwick, OBE. Don Barwick was born in 1914 and recently passed away at the age of 84 years. Many people with an agricultural background would remember Don Barwick as one of the great leaders in agripolitics, particularly in relation to the determination of the eventual direction of the wheat industry in Australia. At 18 years of age Don Barwick took over the management of his family farm, "Lloma" at Loomberah, near Tamworth, and resided there for most of his life. His two sons, with their sons, still operate the family property.

Don Barwick had a great career in agripolitics from 1942 to 1974. In 1947-48, at the age of 33, he led the charge in a bitter battle to implement a Wheat Stabilisation Plan, which was the formative process that led to the wheat industry we have today. He led through example and addressed 47 meetings across New South Wales, engaging in battles with other farming organisations at that time. Don Barwick represented on the Rural Assistance Authority for 42 years, and during that time was able to assist many of his fellow farmers through his dealings with many Ministers from different political persuasions. In 1955 he was General President of the Wheat and Woolgrowers Association of New South Wales and he also sat on the Grain Elevators Board.

When I first came into Parliament I was involved in negotiations with the then Premier Nick Greiner which prevented the sale to overseas interests of the grain handling system in this State. Don Barwick played a role in advising me at that time and obviously played an important role in the establishment of the grain elevating system in New South Wales. He was a leader who could think outside the circle, yet he never lost touch with his

fellow farmers—often when people move up the tree of life they lose sight of the very reason they became involved in the political process.

Don Barwick leaves his wife of 57 years, Ella; his two sons, John and Albie; and his two daughters, Noreen and Carolyn. He was devoted to his family and his industry. He was an outstanding farmer and his family reflects the type of man he was. He gave me great personal support when I first ran for the seat of Tamworth in 1991. At that stage he was not a well man and it was believed that my election was a contributing factor in keeping him healthy during that period. I will always have a fond memory of this giant in agriculture in the Tamworth district in full stride, coming around the corner where the Treloar building currently stands on his way back to the campaign office. He brought with him directions, information and gossip that he had heard in the streets. It was a very exciting time. Don was one of the leaders of the community that decided to back me. He was an example to us all; a man of great integrity and standards. Above all, he was a man who believed in a fair go for all.

ORANGE ELECTORATE TENANCY PROBLEMS

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [5.51 a.m.] I raise the concerns of two families in Orange and the problems they are having with what they perceive to be the excessive powers of the Tenants Advisory Service. I have received a letter from Mrs Suzanne Thompson, of Trunkey Creek, which stated:

Further to our conversation last week, I offer the following to support my claim of a distinct bias against landlords in the Residential Tenancy Act.

The tenant in my property in Orange was given notice to vacate at the beginning of March because she was behind with her rent and several complaints had been received from her neighbours about her abusive and abrasive behaviour.

She requested and was given permission to stay on until the end of March to allow her to find alternative accommodation, but eleven weeks down the track she is still there!

The case finally came before the Tribunal on 1st June where she was represented by an advocate from the Tenants Advisory Service (which I help fund) who claimed hardship and absence of any alternative housing so she was given permission to stay on and ordered to pay her rent fortnightly plus an extra \$30 per fortnight off the arrears, at which rate she will be almost a year catching up! She is now six weeks behind with her rent and has run up a large excess water bill which she claims she cannot pay and which consequently I must.

So while all this is going on I still have to find the money to pay the bank, the rates, the insurance and the excess water rates, as well as subsidise the Tenants Advisory Service to plead my tenants case against me!

This property was not given to me nor did I inherit it, I have worked and saved to buy it and it must return an income if I am to retain it. Surely to reduce the pressure on Public Housing people must be given some incentive to invest in residential property, not possible with the present Act which works as a deterrent and will remain so without a substantial and prompt overhaul.

Two of my constituents, Mr and Mrs O'Connell of Orange, purchased a small block alongside their rural property on the outskirts of Orange. On that block was a small, neat cottage which they let out to a couple, who paid the first four weeks rent and bond—everything seemed fine. After about three months the tenants started falling behind with their rent. They came up with the usual excuses of ill health and that the husband had become unemployed. Mr O'Connell offered part-time work to the couple on his property, which consisted of a couple of hundred acres, in lieu of the rent which had fallen behind. That offer was never taken up.

On another occasion Mr O'Connell agreed to supply paint, brushes, scrapers, et cetera, for the tenants to paint the cottage in lieu of a few weeks rent. However, the paint was opened and left to dry, the paint brushes were allowed to go hard and the ladder was broken. Mr O'Connell went to retrieve what was left of the paint and brushes but was threatened with trespass when he entered the property. On inquiry, Mr O'Connell was advised that a landlord is able to inspect a property if he is concerned about its internal condition and that a landlord is allowed to inspect his property four times a year. A landlord has to give seven days notice of an inspection but the fine print states "subject to the tenant's approval". Mr O'Connell's tenants will not agree to an inspection.

Finally a notice was obtained to inspect the property provided that it was agreeable and convenient to the tenants. At 10.30 one morning the O'Connells went along with the appropriate legal approval to inspect the property. However, the lady tenant was still in her pyjamas and dressing gown and said that it was not a convenient time for inspection. At this stage the O'Connells still have not been given a time that is convenient for inspection. Mr and Mrs O'Connell have stated that they do not want the law to return to the dark old days in which a landlord was supreme, but they believe that this conflict has gone too far. [*Time expired.*]

SOMALI ISLAMIC CENTRE

Mr STEWART (Lakemba) [5.56 p.m.]: I raise strong concerns regarding the present plight of the Somalian community in my electorate and surrounding areas. I pay credit to the Somali Islamic

Centre, which has worked tirelessly to address some of the concerns that I will raise this evening. At present between 1,500 and 2,000 refugees from Somalia have settled in New South Wales under the refugee settlement program, many in the Lakemba electorate and surrounding areas. They came to Australia fleeing the ongoing conflict and persecution within Somalia. The concerns I raise regard the lack of resources and infrastructure available for the special needs of that community.

The Somali Islamic Centre has set up an association within my electorate, which has addressed many of the concerns of the community. That association encompasses all the Somalian tribes and groups within my electorate and has worked to develop programs to address their concerns. In particular it has initiated improved access to government, education, health and recreational services, which are currently available to the wider community. For example, many Somalian women have come from broken family backgrounds in which the husband has died or cannot be located because of the dispute occurring in Somalia. The mothers and children who migrated to Australia have had to settle in quickly using available resources.

The children, however, often wander out of the schools. Their need for specialised teaching has created many difficulties for the local education service providers. At present this is being met through the facilitation of the Somalian community. The community runs a weekend school at which between 80 and 100 students attend on both Saturdays and Sundays. In true multicultural spirit the students are taught the Somalian language and aspects of the Somalian culture. During the school holidays the school operates six days a week. As many refugee Somalian women have never attended school, the association runs classes for mature women in which they are taught about the Somalian language and culture. The classes include lessons on surviving the new cultural framework in Australia. The women are taught to access goods and services and basically how to go about their daily lives in a society that is foreign to them.

The organisation provides crucial workshops for Somalian women on female genital mutilation, which is a big problem in the Somalian community in the Lakemba electorate. The community is addressing the problem by educating the women about the health concerns related to that practice. The association is working towards dispelling the myths surrounding the origin and practice of female genital mutilation. Hopefully, it is moving towards eliminating the practice amongst Somalian women in

my local area. However, the practice is still widespread and needs special attention.

Recently I asked the Premier to support the special needs of the Somalian community in my electorate. I am pleased to inform the House that he responded adequately. His ethnic affairs policy adviser visited my electorate and met Somalian community leaders. As a result, a network has been established to address the concerns of the Somalian community, with a common understanding that the Somalians will be able to readily access the health, community and specialised services that they so desperately need. That will ensure that Somalians will no longer be forced by an uncaring Federal Government to simply settle in the area without proper assistance. [*Time expired.*]

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL CANCER CARE LODGE

Ms FICARRA (Georges River) [6.01 p.m.]: Tonight I congratulate my St George community and in particular the members of the Cancer Care Lodge Appeal Committee. Cancer care lodge is an initiative of the community of St George to support patients seeking oncology treatment, cancer therapy treatment, at St George Hospital. In particular, I congratulate John Green, our tireless chairman, who has been on the committee for four years. Together, the committee and the community have raised \$1.6 million.

On Saturday, 20 June, the community attended the opening of Bezzina House. The other committee members are Warren O'Rourke, deputy chairman; Peter Hunt, deputy chairman; Phill Bates; Joy Chisholme; Chris Crawford, chief executive officer of St George Hospital; Councillor Ferdie Dominelli; David Ensor; Sandra Harris; Professor John Kearsley, head of the St George Hospital oncology department; John Osborn, head of the McDonald's chain in the St George area; Sid Payne; Dr Kiran Phadke, a dedicated member of the oncology department; Robert Robson; and Helen Zerefos, a famous St George entertainer and tireless community worker.

Cancer care lodge, known as Bezzina House, was the vision of Professor John Kearsley, whose caring nature is renowned not only throughout southern Sydney but throughout Australia and even on the international scene. I congratulate Michael Bezzina, a local builder, on co-ordinating much of the volunteer construction work during the building of cancer care lodge. Without Michael, we would not have the great standard of finish and the 15 wonderful, comfortable and friendly residential units

on site in Kogarah, adjacent to and part of St George Hospital. I congratulate also the honourable member for Sutherland, Lorna Stone. When Professor John Kearsley had his vision the honourable member, as chairperson of the Southern Sydney Area Health Service, supported the establishment of a committee with the help of John Green. It was great to see the honourable member for Sutherland at the opening of Bezzina House on Saturday.

I congratulate the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* on supporting our appeals. It is not easy to raise \$1.6 million. The State Government contributed \$50,000, and the remainder was raised through community appeals. I acknowledge the support and sponsorship of the St George Bank. The motto of the cancer department at St George Hospital is one of a holistic approach to patient care and wellbeing for the body and soul, encompassing physical, emotional, social and spiritual care. That approach has been led by Professor John Kearsley.

The lodge is situated adjacent to the Cancer Care Centre and provides accommodation for local cancer patients receiving radiation treatment or chemotherapy and their families, and patients from throughout New South Wales. We hope to assist people accessing oncology services, particularly those from the south coast, where there is a great need for such services. All the specialised in-patient units and outpatient services will be housed in one centre for greater patient comfort and convenience.

St George Hospital has become a world leader in cancer care. Its quality of care and unique approach to treatment have been recognised internationally. It is guiding the development of a fully operational cancer care unit at Gleneagles Hospital in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The cancer services division at St George Hospital maintains close associations with the cancer units at St George Private Hospital, Sutherland Hospital, Kareena Private Hospital and Wollongong Hospital. These close ties ensure that there is a smooth continuity of care for patients who are referred by specialists or general practitioners beyond the immediate vicinity of the hospital. I am proud of the achievements of the St George community in terms of both the Lions hydrotherapy pool and now our wonderful new cancer care lodge known as Bezzina House.

STAR STRUCK '98

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle) [6.06 p.m.]: On Thursday, 11 June, I sat enthralled in Newcastle Entertainment Centre with thousands of mothers, fathers, grandmothers, teachers, members of the

community and, I am sure, the Minister for Education and Training, who was the special guest that evening, to watch the Star Struck '98 Rocks performance. The performance involved 2,500 school students from 72 primary schools and 25 high schools across the Hunter region, stretching as far north as Taree and Wingham and as far south as the northern parts of the central coast. The fantastic performance showed the absolute talent of school students in the Hunter region. We watched talented musicians, dancers, circus performers, a 500-student choir and backing orchestras comprising both talented students and talented teachers, choreographed by both students and teachers.

My view is probably biased, but Star Struck '98 was a premier performance of school students. One could not sit there without feeling that it was an enormous tribute to public schoolteachers and parents who supported their children through the lead-up to Star Struck '98, which is about nine months. The performance involves an enormous commitment by parents, teachers and students, who must practice their skills in private with their fellow students and then in major dress rehearsals. I cannot express it any better than John Deacon, the producer/director, who said:

Star Struck '98 Rocks is the result of a process which involves thousands of people from our schools and the wider community—students, teachers, parents and friends. It is the culmination of nine months of planning and practice. What you see tonight began shortly after Star Struck '97. Rough ideas and concepts grew into plans and directions. The production team and cast grew. Auditions brought together past performers and unearthed many newcomers in dance, drama and music.

... Rehearsals varied in size and venue. They brought together individuals, school groups, item and segment performers and, on just a few occasions, the entire cast.

The outstanding feature was the professional co-ordination and production of the event. I pay tribute to Sue Leask. Star Struck '98 Rocks was Sue's final contact with Star Struck. She has been involved since Star Struck started and this year was executive producer. She is a person of boundless energy and much enthusiasm, and she has a zany approach to life and creative irreverence. I am sure that all who have seen her at work have witnessed the way she brings out enthusiasm in the student performers. She has an ability to bring out the fun in all of us. When the concept was first raised at the opening of the Entertainment Centre by former Minister Chadwick, Sue had tremendous belief in the ability of students and teachers of the Hunter to perform and produce Star Struck. Along with John Deacon and other production team members, Sue saw that concept come to reality and has made Star Struck an

outstanding performance every year since. I pay tribute to Sue, to the production team and to all of the students, teachers, parents and community members involved.

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [6.11 p.m.]: I endorse wholeheartedly the comments of the honourable member for Newcastle about the outstanding Star Struck '98 Rocks performance. In past years I have listened to the honourable member for Newcastle and other honourable members from the Hunter wax lyrical about the professionalism and talent of Star Struck performances. On those occasions, although I had never experienced a performance, I praised the talent of students and teachers and the work they do. This year I was determined to enjoy a performance and made a note in my diary of performance dates. I was able to attend the same performance as the honourable member for Newcastle and I endorse emphatically his remarks about that night.

Approximately 98 schools across the Hunter and from the far north coast were represented by 2,500 students demonstrating their talents. The show, a professional presentation, revealed very talented young people and very talented teachers, who were widely acclaimed and praised by all. As I moved through the hall where students were preparing for the evening's presentation, it was a delight to talk to them and their parents and to hear each of them heaping praise on the teachers for their support and for bringing their talents to such a professional standard. I endorse also the honourable member's comments about Sue Leask, who has worked on Star Struck since its inception. Sue is a professional and I was pleased on the night to be able to comment about her professionalism, dedication and vision. The performance was thoroughly professional and a great night was had by all.

DRUG EDUCATION

Mr OAKESHOTT (Port Macquarie) [6.13 p.m.]: Without doubt the most difficult social challenge facing young people today is the issue of drugs, drug abuse and the subculture of drugs within youth culture. It is easy for those in public positions and for those with the benefit of age and hindsight to reflect on the drugs issue as black or white. However, it is not. That is why I am particularly proud to be part of a mid-north coast community that is willing to work for a better future for young adults and not fight for a blind ideological view of either harm minimisation or zero tolerance. Various community-minded people in the Port Macquarie electorate have been instrumental in developing a

broad-based multistrategic approach to assist young people in choosing not to abuse drugs. This project will assist in providing information and education on the impact of drugs as well as positive alternatives to doing drugs.

I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone involved in the various aspects of this multistrategic campaign. I will not mention individuals, but everyone who played a role knows who they are and should be proud of their contribution to the most difficult of youth culture issues. As a community team and through nothing more than community interests and goodwill, many strategies have been and are being developed, for example, fundraising for and organising of a Youth Insearch camp in the Hastings Valley. The community's goal is to achieve the first Youth Insearch camp in the Hastings by August. Youth Insearch has proven to be a successful discussion camp and forum for dealing with the causes of a lot of youth anxiety.

Earlier this year I participated in a fundraising bike ride from Byron Bay to Taree to raise funds for Youth Insearch. This program cuts to the causes of problems. Whilst no program is 100 per cent successful, Youth Insearch shows strong positive results and is an important part of our community's overall multistrategic approach to addressing youth problems. I congratulate Ron and Judy Barr and young leaders such as Anthony Humphries on their great work and I shall welcome them to Bonny Hills in August. I thank also the local steering committee for the work it has done so far, and particularly committee member Greg Willcox. Although fundraising has reached almost the halfway mark, I am confident all funds will be raised and the camp will provide something new for troubled youth in the Hastings and Manning valleys.

The Commonwealth Government will provide input to the strategy through a drug information booklet available to parents. I congratulate the Commonwealth Government on this important initiative. If necessary, the community will print more copies to ensure this important information gets into the right hands. Another strategy is making available to schools easy to read and relevant information. The local community will donate several books, such as *The Great Brain Robbery*, *The World Drug Report* and *Marijuana—An Australian Crisis* to local high schools at Wingham, Kendall and Port Macquarie. I sincerely hope that students of these schools will recognise this gesture not by thanks but by sitting down during a quiet period in their timetables to read and learn about the impact of drugs on people's lives.

Part of the strategy includes circulating as far as possible phone numbers for drug and alcohol information lines. At any opportunity I urge local residents to use these information and toll-free numbers for answers to their queries about drugs and the impact of drugs. Another aspect of the strategy is inviting guest speakers with whom young people identify to visit the region to discuss drugs and life with and without drugs. On Thursday, 3 September and Friday, 4 September the second annual Keep Our Kids Alive anti-drugs forum will be held in Port Macquarie. If it is anything like last year's forum, it will be an enormous success. Last year 900 people attended a discussion at the local RSL club at which notable speakers explained their knowledge of and experiences with the drug culture.

One speaker of note, Angela Wood, spent the entire week in the region visiting schools and talking about her family's tragic experience with the drug ecstasy. I understand this year similar speakers will visit the forum. I wish Margaret McKay, the main organiser, the very best in pulling together a successful educational program. All of this will come to nothing if people do not listen or learn. It is not easy to admit that we should know more; importantly, we all should do more. Only by tackling this real community problem with real community action from young and old alike will we minimise the problem. I am proud to be part of a community that is honest enough to embrace the problem. I encourage everyone locally and statewide to admit that we are failing our younger generations by not dealing with the drug culture in a positive and aggressive way, and to support community programs that leapfrog the zero tolerance versus harm minimisation debate by dealing with local people with local problems in a positive and co-operative manner. [*Time expired.*]

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [6.18 p.m.]: I compliment the honourable member for Port Macquarie for his support of various initiatives by his constituents concerning drug taking by young people. Unfortunately, much of the hard work of many people is lost on young people because young people see the drug problem through different eyes. Often the very people who tell the young to desist from or not participate in drug abuse themselves indulge in various activities about which young people are critical. The young regard such behaviour as hypocritical and thus much of the message against drugs is lost.

Initiatives by organisations such as Youth Insearch have value. I am keenly aware of the work

of Youth Insearch and the various camps it runs. The honourable member for Port Macquarie may note that the headquarters is at Riverstone. Ron Barr has been associated with Youth Insearch from the very beginning. In my former capacity as Minister for Youth and Community Services back in 1987 I made the initial grant to Ron Barr and his organisation to enable Youth Insearch to get off the ground, and it has gone from strength to strength ever since. I was pleased to nominate him for an Order of Australia medal in recognition of his truly outstanding work with young people. He captures the imagination of young people because he is fair dinkum and honest. He does not preach at them; he leads by example. He also uses young people who lead by example. Great work is being done all over. I conclude by commending the work that is being done in our schools: \$5 million is being spent on drug education and the reform of the various syllabuses and curriculums, particularly in personal development, health and physical education courses. I particularly commend Wyndham, Kendall and Port Macquarie high schools for the work they do.

TORONTO POLYCLINIC

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [6.20 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a ceremony yesterday of great importance to people in my electorate, the official handing over of the Toronto Polyclinic building by the Department of Public Works and Services to the Hunter Area Health Service. The chairperson of the health service, Ms Carol Abela, and I were given the keys to the polyclinic by Mr Mark Queenan of the department. The building work on the \$5 million polyclinic was undertaken by Lahey Constructions, overseen by the public works department. The health service will now start the fit out of the building in preparation for the commissioning of services. The polyclinic building consists of a two- and a one-storey airconditioned concrete building with Colorbond steel roofing. A lift and stairs have been provided for access to the upstairs dental clinic and interview rooms. The building is located between Thorne and James streets in Toronto near the ambulance station. When the polyclinic is opened it will deliver an expanded and comprehensive range of health care services. Most importantly, the polyclinic will provide health services not previously available locally.

Services will include a dental clinic, aged care rehabilitation and specialty clinics. In addition, the polyclinic will provide enhanced facilities for Westlakes community health workers. A primary care casualty-type medical service with pathology and x-ray facilities will also be provided at the

polyclinic. In about four weeks community health workers will transfer from their current poor accommodation in the main street of Toronto to the polyclinic. The new services will be brought on line over the following six weeks and in September the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Health, Dr Andrew Refshauge, will officially open the polyclinic.

Construction of the polyclinic has provided a multimillion dollar boost for the local building industry, creating many jobs. More jobs will be created after the official opening. The polyclinic will employ around 40 health workers, an increase of 15 on the current 25 in the cramped and inadequate facilities in Toronto. Construction of the polyclinic fulfils a commitment by Bob Carr and Andrew Refshauge prior to the 1995 election. The Minister for Health allocated funds for the polyclinic in previous budgets and in this year's budget he has allocated \$881,000 to assist with its fitting out.

I point out the good work of local community health workers, particularly Mary Downey, the commissioning officer, and her assistant, Halina Paczynski. They have put together an excellent leaflet outlining the community health services currently available and the services that will come on line in the next month or two, and for which they are busily preparing the building. The catchment area for the Westlakes Health Service Toronto Polyclinic is vast, stretching from Wyee to Cardiff on the western side of Lake Macquarie. The services the polyclinic will provide will be of great benefit to the community. It will enhance health care in the growing Westlakes area, including communities of south Lake Macquarie such as Dora Creek, Morisset, the Morisset Peninsula, Cooranbong, Mandalong, Martinsville, Wyee and Wyee Point. People in the south lakes area will be 15 to 20 minutes closer to health services, which previously would have been available only from John Hunter, Belmont and Royal Newcastle hospitals. Importantly, the polyclinic will provide an after hours medical service, Monday to Friday from about 5.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday. I congratulate the Minister for Health and the community health workers at the Westlakes Community Health Service. [*Time expired.*]

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [6.25 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Lake Macquarie on his outstanding achievement in persuading the Government to construct the Westlakes Health Service Toronto Polyclinic. As he indicated, it will be of substantial benefit to his electorate, the northern central coast and the lower

Hunter area. I know how hard the honourable member works. He is always knocking at my ministerial door trying to obtain improved capital works. I have to say that he has done very well in improving conditions for schools in his area. In the area of health, particularly community health, he is just as persistent. No doubt this is why the Minister for Health responded in like manner.

I note that the chairperson of the Hunter Area Health Service, Ms Carol Abela, was involved in the key handover ceremony. I pass my compliments to Carol Abela, whom I knew prior to her taking up her position as chairperson of Hunter health. She was instrumental in the establishment of a retirement village in Walters Road, Blacktown run by the Dominican Sisters. Had it not been for her able and professional legal advice on that occasion, the retirement village would not have come about at that time. I congratulate her and the honourable member for Lake Macquarie on what has been achieved. The polyclinic will provide the best of dental, aged care, rehabilitation and other health services. [*Time expired.*]

POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUBS

Mr SCHIPP (Wagga Wagga) [6.27 p.m.]: I raise the issue of the future of police and community youth clubs, PCYCs, a subject that should be ringing alarm bells throughout the Parliament. The honourable member for Kiama, the Minister for Gaming and Racing and Opposition members such as the honourable member for Maitland, the honourable member for The Hills and the honourable member for Southern Highlands will continue to work hard for PCYCs following the release of the report of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service, which contained adverse comments on PCYCs. On 27 May 1998 the shadow minister for police, the honourable member for Eastwood, Andrew Tink, gave notice of a motion seeking to debate this issue to elicit the views of the Minister for Police on the Callaghan report. We have not heard from him in regard to that very important subject.

The alarm bells started to ring when I began to sift through the 30 pages of the budget papers dealing with the Police Service. The only mention of the subject under discussion, in broad terms, related to community support: there was no mention of Police and Community Youth Clubs Limited in particular. I made some inquiries and found out that staff in PCYCs have been reduced from 141 to 75. In fact, 39 clubs now operate with only one officer. Anyone who knows anything about PCYCs will know the extent of the demands on a single officer, particularly as he or she is now required to do outreach work with schools et cetera. That means

that those officers are not in the clubs to look after the membership. The clubs are where the liaison or bridge between young people and police is built.

Over a period of years the budget allocation for PCYCs has been reduced from 1.2 per cent of the police budget to 0.5 per cent. The clubs cater for the needs of 39 to 46 per cent of youth, because the age group for eligibility for PCYC membership has risen from 18 to 25 years with no corresponding budget increase. In fact, there has been a transfer of funds away from the PCYC budget. No longer is the role of the youth liaison officer or the safety officer conducted by the PCYC. Youth conferencing is not now conducted by PCYC. Wagga Wagga PCYC, which now only has one officer, pioneered police conferencing. I calculate that approximately \$6.6 million in funding for YLOs and PSOs has been cut from the police budget over a three-year period, together with \$5.3 million formerly allocated for youth conferencing.

I mentioned that the age of eligibility has been increased, but there has been no corresponding increase in the budget allocation. Research figures show that \$1,000 spent on early work with young people gives a net saving of approximately \$20,000, in overall terms, further down the youth crime cycle. To use the vernacular, what is happening now is that police community youth clubs are being shafted by the Government. It is a determined effort to turn away from the traditional role of the police in the PCYCs. I believe that parents are now asking themselves why they send their children to these clubs when they will have no contact, or very little contact, with police. Such clubs have always been regarded as a bridge between young people and the police. They were designed to engender respect for the established police system. They are now being pulled apart before our eyes.

I hope that those honourable members I mentioned, particularly the Minister for Gaming and Racing—who represents the electorate of Charlestown—and the honourable member for Kiama, will speak out in this regard. They worked hard when we took the campaign statewide to try to deflect the attack on the clubs resulting from the Callaghan report. Some comments favourable to the clubs were made at that time, but those clubs are now being stripped of their traditional role. If we do not watch out we will lose them entirely, which would be a very sad day for the community.

PREMIER'S AWARD RECIPIENT Mrs RITA MOORE

Mr CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [6.32 p.m.]: It is my very pleasant duty tonight to bring to the attention of the House the presentation of the

Premier's award to a constituent of mine, Rita Moore of Toukley. Mrs Moore has had a long history of community service, both in Toukley on the central coast and in other areas where she has lived with her husband Jack. I should point out that Mr and Mrs Moore have been married for more than 50 years. Mrs Moore's community service in effect commenced with war service when she joined the Army Medical Corps in 1943. She was discharged in November 1945 and since that time has contributed greatly to the communities in which she has lived.

Mrs Moore was the very first pink lady at the Norah Head nursing home in 1980, and has certainly been a tower of strength in that organisation for the past 12½ years. It is important to recognise that many of my constituents who live in nursing homes do not have family that live nearby. The pink ladies provide human contact and family atmosphere, and Mrs Moore has been instrumental in not only providing that service, but also encouraging others, male and female, to join in that worthwhile endeavour. She also worked with the Inland Mission from 1969 to 1974. Mrs Moore has contributed greatly to the Red Cross and has cared for sick people both in Canberra where she lived previously, and also in Toukley.

In that respect she has obviously saved the Government a great deal of money because she has encouraged and assisted people to stay in their own homes, by providing a helping hand and assistance when required. For that the taxpayers should be extremely grateful. Mrs Moore is very active in the Presbyterian Church and has been an elder of the Toukley Presbyterian Church for some considerable time. She is president of the Presbyterian Women's Association Committee of Management and fulfilled a similar role in Moss Vale and Albury when her husband Jack, who worked for the Dairy Corporation, was stationed at those respective localities.

It was pleasing to see so many people from so many diverse backgrounds come together at an afternoon tea for the presentation of the award. It was a tribute to both Mrs Moore and her husband that so many people were present. The event was organised by Baden and Joyce Nord in recognition of the contribution Mrs Moore has made to our community. The Reverend Peter Dunston of the Presbyterian Church also attended, as did several pink ladies from Norah Head nursing home, together with Mrs Moore's friends from the Uniting Church, Hugh and Jess Joyce, and parishioners from the Presbyterian Church.

Also at the presentation were the Mayor of Wyong Shire Council, Fay Brennan, and guests from a whole range of groups, including Vic and Pat

Miller, and Helen and Bill Merton from the Probuc clubs of Toukley and Halekulani, to which both Rita and Jack Moore made a substantial contribution; and Jack and Dolly Johns and Alan Dayment and his good wife from the Masonic Lodge. More importantly, because it is very rare for extended family to get together in the Wyong area except for occasions such as Christmas or a golden wedding anniversary, it was gratifying that Rita and Jack's daughter and granddaughter were able to make the trip from Queensland for the presentation, and that their daughter and her partner and son travelled to Toukley from Sydney. It was pleasing to see the family members integrated into the Toukley community, sharing the recognition so rightly deserved by Rita Moore on this very special occasion.

MIRANDA CRIME STATISTICS

Mr PHILLIPS (Miranda—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [6.37 p.m.]: I raise a matter of concern to my constituents, that is, the rising crime rate within my electorate, particularly around the Miranda shopping centre. During the 14 years that I have represented the constituents of Miranda the types and rates of criminal offences have varied considerably. Honourable members will be aware of the changes in the types of criminal offences being committed. It is important that police officers and the community respond to those problems in an effort to solve them. The current problem confronting the major Westfield shopping centre in Miranda is the increase in young adult crime rates and youth crime, particularly in relation to small gangs and young people hanging around shopping centres and harassing passers-by.

In recent months the incidence of complaints coming into my office has increased. For example, I have been made increasingly aware of car break-ins, bag snatchings, intimidation, assaults and skateboard riders harassing patrons in the Westfield shopping centre car park. Around Penprase Lane and Central Road, Miranda, young skateboarders are present day and night, intimidating pedestrians, workers, customers and residents. I have received complaints that kids from as young as eight through to their mid-twenties congregate in the area around Kiora Road and Urunga Parade at the Westfield shopping centre near Arizona's corner from as early as midday—and this is not just during school holidays. Their behaviour is sometimes aggressive and abusive to general passers-by.

These young people engage in coarse language and general intimidation tactics, fighting and arguing. They play chicken with traffic as they cross the road and they jump the pedestrian fence constructed along the middle of the road. There is an electricity substation in the lane leading off

Urunga Parade at the back of Liquorland. Young people congregate in that area and write graffiti and drink. Young people congregate near the seats at the corner of Gibbs Street and Kiora Road and harass people. The lack of adequate security causes problems for patrons of the shopping centre following late-night screenings at the Greater Union cinemas. Unfortunately, recently the school captain of a major local high school was badly assaulted and hospitalised, as was a woman in Miranda.

I have met with the local area commander, Superintendent Henry Karpic, for whom I have a great deal of regard. I have a good relationship with the local police, but at present there is a problem with youth gangs and young adults committing an enormous number of crimes against persons in the Miranda area. It is essential for police, the community and local government to get together to resolve the problem. It has been noticeable under the policing administration during the past three years that the relationship between the community and the police has diminished, not through lack of respect for each other, but through lack of communication. That concerns me, and I appeal to the police, the community and local government to re-establish their previously close relationship and specifically target crime in my electorate.

Private members' statements noted.

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.

Mr SCHULTZ (Burrinjuck) [6.44 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk to the 1998-99 State budget, which has placed New South Wales at the

forefront as the highest-taxed State in Australia by imposing an additional \$755 million tax penalty on New South Wales taxpayers. Repeated promises of no new taxes and no tax increases have proven to be another cruel hoax on the people of this State. Since 1995 the New South Wales Labor Government has callously increased taxes in New South Wales by 33 per cent. Next year taxpayers will face an additional penalty that will make their tax charges 11 per cent higher than those in the next highest-taxed State in Australia. Each person in New South Wales is paying \$1,063 more than his or her fellow Australians in Queensland, and \$417 more than his or her Victorian neighbours.

Interstate comparisons of per capita taxes, fees and fines are: New South Wales, \$2,224; Queensland, \$1,161; Victoria, \$1,807; and Western Australia, \$1,667. As if this were not enough, the Carr Labor Government has again demonstrated its obvious inability to soundly manage the State and has penalised every section of the community. The citizens of New South Wales pay more land tax per capita than people in any other State in Australia—\$57.75 more per person than Victorians, \$89 more than Queenslanders and \$57.27 more than people in Western Australia. Yet Queensland and Victoria are committed to abolishing land tax on family homes. Payroll tax has increased by \$100 million per annum, placing further undue pressures on small businesses throughout the State.

I will tell the House how these and other tax increases affect householders, small businesses, and land and property owners. Bed tax charges have increased by 10 per cent, or roughly \$10 on the average cost of \$100 for a room. The Carr Labor Government backed down following industry outrage and agreed to stagger the introduction of this new tax over 12 months. Room occupancy rates have plummeted 7 per cent since the introduction of the initial 5 per cent tax slug. The payroll tax base was extended to cover superannuation contributions, and this cost \$1,155 for companies with payrolls over \$600,000, and \$4,800 for companies with 50 employees. Land tax has increased by 23 per cent—up from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent. The extra cost to the household per year is \$1,005 on a property valued at \$200,000.

This tax increase has resulted in a \$20 per week increase in rent for an average priced unit. Higher rents will hit all income groups, especially low-income families. It will also place additional burdens on public housing. Land tax for owner-occupiers is a new tax on a sliding scale. It equates to \$10,000 on a \$1.5 million property. For the first time in New South Wales the family home will be

taxed. The coalition is committed to repealing this new tax, and argues that the Carr Government will lower the threshold to hit lower income groups in the not too distant future. General insurance duty for motor vehicles, excluding other class 2 vehicle insurance, has been increased by 100 per cent, which equates to \$26.70 per family. This contributes to making it more expensive to own and maintain a vehicle in New South Wales than in any other State.

There has been a 12.5 per cent increase in user charges for hospitals and ambulances: for meals and accommodation, lease and rental accommodation, Meals on Wheels, commissions, kiosks and coffee shops, and fees for medical records. The Minister for Health pleaded that he was unaware of the fee increases for these services and ordered a review, which blamed the director-general for the whole debacle. The Government then backed down from the 12.5 per cent fee increase.

A similar thing happened with national parks fees. As a member who represents part of the Kosciuszko National Park I was concerned about the 50 per cent increase in the national park entrance fee. In addition to the fee increases in the four main parks, entry fees were increased for 23 other parks. As a result of public outrage the Minister for the Environment backed down and agreed to review the increases—that is a review, not a removal. Stamp duty on motor vehicle registration has been increased by 67 per cent. That costs the average family \$36.60. This tax has been dressed up as a luxury car tax but it hits ordinary small businesses and farmers. Under this regime the cost of a landcruiser four-wheel drive utility exceeds the luxury car threshold.

The cost of school bus passes has been increased by 26 per cent, up from \$23 to \$29 a term—an extra \$24 per annum. There will be a 20 per cent increase in motor vehicle stamp duty, up from 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent of the price of the car. This will cost \$125 for a \$25,000 car. As I said before, New South Wales has become the most expensive State in Australia in which to own and maintain a motor vehicle. A 20 per cent increase in stamp duty hits all motorists, including low income families. There has been a 52 per cent increase in greenslip premiums, up from \$254 in June 1995 to \$386 in June 1997. That is an extra \$132 for the average car in Sydney, and obviously it will affect my rural constituents as well. This Government has no answers to the problem of escalating fee increases.

According to freedom of information figures, on 30 November 1997 the police strength was

13,415. According to the budget papers the figure will be 13,378 at 30 June 1998—37 below the number at 30 November 1997—and 13,407 by 1999. Police numbers are obviously declining. This is not surprising, given the number of resignations that have occurred and will continue to occur. Many of the police officers who are resigning have a considerable number of years of service. We are seeing the haemorrhaging of experienced, streetwise police officers at a rapid rate. Where are the strategies to stop the destruction of the most important section of our Police Service infrastructure, who pass on their considerable skills to incoming police recruits?

The capital works budget for health has been cut by \$12.75 million, or 2.7 per cent. This is in an environment where a \$300 million increase is required to ensure the recurrent health budget covers debt, inflation and unfunded pay rises to nurses, visiting medical officers and other hospital staff. Every day, members on this side of the House become aware of small businesses not being paid for the goods and services they deliver to hospitals or having to wait an unreasonable time to be paid. The situation has arisen whereby no extra in-patients, no extra emergency patients and no extra outpatients will be treated, and 26,000 fewer people will receive non in-patient treatment.

It is apparent from the budget papers that overall there is no increased funding for land and vegetation management, water management or country town water and sewerage supplies. There have been major staff reductions in the Department of Land and Water Conservation since the last budget. In 1997-98 departmental staff totalled 2,757 and in 1998-99 will decrease to 2,709, a reduction of 48. Staff losses have occurred in the following areas: land and vegetation, from 655 to 628, a net decrease of 27; catchment, coastal and flood plain management, 583 down to 551, a net reduction of 32; State land assets, that is, Crown land management, from 579 down to 541, a net reduction of 38. At the same time there was a net increase in rivers and ground water staff of 55, from 934 to 989.

Country town water supply and sewerage scheme funding has been reduced from \$75 million when Labor came to office to \$50 million in 1998-99, a 33 per cent reduction. The number of completed projects has fallen from 30 in 1995-96 to 15 in 1998-99, and the number of projects under construction has fallen from 80 in 1995-96 to an estimated 70 in 1998-99. This is despite pollution in regional New South Wales waterways caused by inadequate sewerage systems.

In addition, the Government has a policy of not funding new sewerage systems needed as a result of population growth. That adversely impacts on coastal waterways in particular. The budget allocations for blue-green algae and river care management have been halved from \$7.8 million in 1997-98 to \$3.4 million in 1998-99. Budgeted staff reductions in the land and vegetation management area of 37 in 1998-99 are not consistent with the promise by the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation to put more resources into making the Native Vegetation Conservation Act more workable through increased human resource allocation. Soil conservation grants are down from \$20.9 million in 1997-98 to \$17.5 million in 1998-99. The Government is shifting the funding burden onto local government by reducing capital grants from \$29 million in 1997-98 to \$25 million in 1998-99.

Capital grants in Crown land management have been reduced from \$11.5 million to \$2.8 million. This reflects a weak commitment by the Carr Labor Government to the Crown estate in New South Wales. With State forests it is intended to introduce annual payments to land-holders to establish hardwood timber plantations. This is actually an Opposition proposal based on the successful softwood plantation trials. No funding is specified in the budget papers for this project, so I assume it will come out of the \$15 million allocation for the eucalypt program.

Considerable noise was made about the enormous amount of money that will go into roads. In the Burrinjuck electorate most of the money to be spent on roads will come from the Federal Government. As an example, I refer to the Bookham bypass on the Hume Highway, which involved the construction of a dual carriageway from 19 kilometres to 39 kilometres south of Yass. This bypass received an allocation of \$15 million in this year's budget. The south Gundagai interchange and the duplication of Sheahan Bridge at Gundagai, undertaken with Federal funding, are estimated to cost \$28 million. Expenditure on the project to date is \$4.487 million, and the allocation for 1998-99 is \$7 million.

The preliminary stages of the Illalong Creek deviation near Binalong, 26 to 34 kilometres west of Yass—which the former Government embarked on in 1989—will cost in the vicinity of \$15.6 million. Expenditure on preliminary work on the project to date is \$4.783 million, and \$7.9 million has been allocated in the 1998-99 budget. As a frequent user of this road I am pleased that the Roads and Traffic Authority has made the funding available. The road

carries an enormous amount of heavy transport and has some of the tightest rail crossovers of any road in the State. Serious accidents have occurred on the road over the years, and I have no doubt that the bypass of the township of Binalong will enhance road safety and contribute to a reduction in the number of road fatalities. It is a very good project.

The budget does not bring any joy to me as one of the members representing a rural constituency. I remind the House that about 30 per cent, or slightly more, of the State population resides in regional and rural New South Wales, but over the past seven years budgets under the current Government and the former Government have delivered only about 20 per cent of the total budget cake to those regions.

Rural New South Wales comprises around 90 per cent of the State's land mass, but it has been allocated only 20 per cent of the total budget. There is a disparity between the funds allocated to the Sydney Basin—that is, Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong—and those allocated to the rest of the State. But historically that is how budgets have allocated funds throughout the State; and that is an indication of the Government's contempt for regional and rural New South Wales. At this year's Country Summit at Wagga Wagga a graph was produced that showed how the budget has affected rural New South Wales from 1991 until 1998. It is disgraceful that in 1991-92 about 17 per cent of the budget went to rural and regional New South Wales but in 1997-98—the latest figures I have been able to obtain—only about 8 per cent of the budget was allocated to that area. As usual, rural New South Wales is behind the eight ball in terms of the funding it should receive. The people of rural New South Wales have been neglected, and it is no wonder that the One Nation Party is getting such a reaction from regional Australia.

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [7.04 p.m.]: The 1998-99 budget has little direct relevance to the important urban and social issues facing the inner-eastern city suburbs. This is a budget that is full of inner-city improvements for the Olympics but ignores key inner-city areas like Oxford Street, Darlinghurst and Kings Cross. It is a budget that confines most of its capital works allocations to projects that destroy the environment and amenity of city residents. It is a budget that grandstands on health spending, some of which is funded by the elderly in my electorate through land tax, yet does not return any benefits to those people in the form of funding for hospitals and medical services in their area. It is a budget that improves rail services all around Sydney but overlooks the desperate need for a light rail service to Moore Park.

More than \$2,000 million will be spent on roads in this State, yet none of it will be used to improve the roads that carry increasingly heavy traffic burdens in Paddington and Darlinghurst. It is a budget that delivers only 100 extra police to the whole State, when the crime problems in Bligh warrant allocating those extra 100 police to Surry Hills and Kings Cross local area commands alone. While the Sydney 2000 Olympics continue to dazzle us with huge expenditures year by year, we are reminded of the 90,000 people in New South Wales who are short of suitable affordable housing. We remember the many homeless and mentally ill people on our streets in increasing numbers, and the plan to clear them out of sight from tourists during the two weeks of the Olympics, instead of responding to their needs. I call upon the Government to stop toying with the serious social and environmental problems it has intensified in the inner city and to face its responsibilities head on. I challenge the Treasurer to amend this budget and to put his pennies where they are needed in the inner city for the benefit of those living in Australia's most densely populated, problem-intensive areas.

I welcome an increase in the number of police officers and other measures in the budget to release police officers for operational duties. Fear of crime is high in many areas of my electorate. Over the past six to nine months residents and business owners in Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Paddington have been increasingly victimised by predominantly drug-related property crime and street violence, harassment and intimidation. As I have repeatedly told the Government, police resources in Kings Cross and Surry Hills are stretched to the limit. The job that our local police do is tough, and I commend their commitment and courage in the face of overwhelming odds to try to curb the drug trade that centres itself in Kings Cross as a focal point for the whole city, and spreads its effects through Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Paddington in car break-ins, hold-ups with syringes and knives, break and enters, bag snatches and brutal bashings of elderly people in their homes, and of gay and lesbian people in the streets. Inner-city dwellers pay the price for this Government's failure to comprehensively address the drug-related issues that contribute directly to so much of this crime.

Until we have a government that is committed to a humane drug policy to break the cycle of drug dependency and which will legislate for a health approach rather than a law enforcement-based approach, the demand for drugs will remain, the excitement and lure of the drug scene to vulnerable young people will continue, the tragedies of lives

lost through unsafe drug use will repeat themselves, we will continue to be victimised by property-offences and violence by addicts supporting a habit, and the time of police will be absorbed in enforcing the law and apprehending any number of troublemakers who have addiction problems at the root of their offending.

Uniformed police on the streets are necessary to ensure besieged inner-city residents feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods. Only when there was television publicity about car break-ins in Woolloomooloo did the Government mobilise resources to manage the kids there. Now, a month later, those kids are again hanging around the area. Sustained, increased resources are needed to handle these problems in the long term. The people of Woolloomooloo gave a strong message to this Government that they need a 24-hour police presence at their local station. If that presence requires 24 additional police to be allocated to Kings Cross alone, 100 additional police for the whole State is woefully inadequate.

Oxford Street—one of our most important entertainment and retail precincts for people from all over Sydney and overseas—seems to have been forgotten in all the talk about improving the city for the Olympics. Violent, unprovoked assaults, hold-ups at knife point, gang brawls ending in a fatal shooting—as occurred just two weeks ago only 30 metres from my office—are just some of the appalling problems that residents and business owners of the area have to put up with while they wait for the 25 police officers on holding cell duties at Surry Hills to be made available where they are needed.

I welcome the \$8.6 million being spent on upgrading the 000 emergency calling system. I hope it will include improved training for operations patrols, to ensure timely and effective response times to calls for assistance, because the system has fallen down for some assault victims in recent months. The \$4.8 million pledged for community safety, a vital part of police activities, amounts to \$60,000 per local area command. I hope that community safety officers will be empowered to access the funds they need to do important networking and for education in the community about reducing victimisation and situational crime prevention. Likewise, I hope to see youth liaison funding used effectively to enable communities to work productively with young people and reduce their vulnerability to and propensity for crime.

I question whether the \$0.7 million allocated will effectively integrate and streamline the

computer operated police system, COPS, given the serious problems police have with the time spent recording arrests on the system at present, which keeps them off the beat. Basic computer resources are taken for granted by most businesses and offices, but in this regard police resourcing is way behind the modern world. I doubt whether the \$2 million computer replacement outlay and the \$4.1 million computer upgrade will provide every police officer with access to a Windows-based computer. Will front-line police continue to be hindered in their operational duties by a lack of computers to record details and by antiquated DOS-based systems? Provision of e-mail to police is also long overdue.

The allocation of \$2.2 million to build a new police station at Kings Cross is good news, if old news. It is vitally important to bring uniformed officers and detectives under the one roof. I hope that construction of the new police station will take place quickly and smoothly, with minimal disruption to staff, who have an important job to do. The allocation of \$3 million to the Case Management Fund of the Attorney General's Department, while again not specifically directed at Bligh, is a welcome move. Valuable police resources are frequently tied up in court delays, so any funding that will minimise that backlog and reduce the amount of time our beat police are having to sit outside courtrooms is welcome.

This year the Government added insult to injury by selecting a small section of the population, many of whom are my constituents, for ongoing discrimination in the name of funding expenditure in other areas. Land tax on the family home is wrong in principle and should be repealed. It is incredible that this Government thinks that an increase of the threshold on investment properties from \$160,000 to \$170,000 will make any appreciable difference, with land values escalating as they are. The threshold should have been doubled eight years ago, as I proposed to the coalition Government. Such paltry tinkering with an antiquated tax that needs major overhaul mocks many hardworking citizens of New South Wales who have saved for their retirement only to watch their investment being eroded.

If this Government ever gets back to democratic principles of fairness and follows parliamentary procedure by having a private members' motion—just for a change—I intend to introduce my Land Tax Amendment (Exemptions and Rates) Bill 1998. The bill, if enacted, will remove land tax on the family home, increase the threshold on investment properties to \$320,000 and reduce the rate of land tax payable to pre-1997 budget levels. Housing was not sufficiently

important to rate a mention in the Treasurer's Budget Speech, but it is a very important issue in Bligh. A major part of my electorate workload involves trying to get public housing assistance for many constituents who either are unsuitably housed or have no home at all.

A further 70 new housing crisis accommodation places sounds good until one considers how easily the most densely populated electorate in the State alone could use up every one of those places. It is really a case of steps in the right directions, but not nearly enough. Let me add up the housing that is promised in the budget: for crisis accommodation there will be 70 places; for capital works there will be 1,341 new dwellings plus 450 dwellings leased from the private sector; for the community housing program there are to be 378 new dwellings plus 220 dwellings leased; for Aboriginal housing there will be 153 new dwellings; and there is a commitment of 58 new dwellings for people with special needs, the elderly, people with disabilities and people living with HIV-AIDS. That makes a total of 2,622 new places available across the State, in the face of a Department of Housing waiting list of 90,000.

One of the most fundamental needs of people in New South Wales, that of a place to live, still gets less overall funding this year than construction works for the Olympics. Where are the Government's priorities? Affordable accommodation in the inner-city areas is becoming increasingly scarce. In my 10 years representing Bligh I have seen a succession of boarding house redevelopments resulting in the eviction of tenants. I have seen economically disadvantaged, long-term, elderly tenants sold down the drain by the local council, the Department of Housing and Land and Environment Court judges. A \$10 million affordable housing initiative alone will not curb this trend. Councils need much stronger urban planning controls to protect and promote affordable accommodation in the inner city.

I welcome in particular the allocation of funding for the delivery of mental health programs. Bligh has a very high proportion of people with a mental illness and a desperate need for improved services. I am disappointed that there is no mention of additional funding for rehabilitation programs or other health-related strategies for drug and alcohol problems. The combined impact of mental illness and drug and alcohol problems is clearly evident on the streets of my electorate. People affected should not be dealt with in the criminal justice system; they should be dealt with in the health system. The Sacred Heart Hospice is currently undertaking a

palliative care community services review. A central impetus for this review is cost savings, with the Sacred Heart Hospice being integrated into St Vincent's Hospital.

Bligh has a high proportion of people with HIV, and it is vital that cost savings be achieved in palliative care and that a high standard of palliative care be maintained. In-patient numbers must be maintained. I welcome the upcoming redevelopment of St Vincent's Hospital. It has been a significant win for the city community that this nationally recognised health facility has been maintained and will be further developed in coming years. The Government has failed to target Olympic funding to address the needs of Bligh, despite the fact that the area will host four Olympic events at Rushcutters Bay, Centennial Park and Moore Park. The Government allocated \$2.5 million to upgrade Central station for the Olympics—a long-overdue public works project that I welcome—but failed to address the need for transport links between Central station and the Olympic venues.

The Government has allocated funding to provide an integrated road, rail and ferry transport system to Homebush Bay and Darling Harbour. The inner east requires a similar commitment to promoting public transport as the only acceptable and practical way of travelling to Olympic venues. A policy decision has to be made for the Olympic sites in Moore Park to restrict car parking and to provide permanent public transport access, particularly in the light of the development of the Fox entertainment complex. The Government's road strategy for the Olympics will also have a negative impact on Bligh.

The Government has nominated Victoria Road as the official route from the city to Homebush Bay, with designated Olympic lanes. However, a recent National Roads and Motorists Association report has identified that the likely route from the airport to Victoria Road is along the Eastern Distributor city to airport tollway and then through the inner city and suburbs such as Redfern, Surry Hills and Darlinghurst. This route will result in extreme congestion in inner-city streets with traffic "rat running" through residential areas. The Government needs to make an urgent commitment to the development of an east-west cross-city tunnel. Olympic visitors will not appreciate being stuck in traffic gridlocks on inadequate roads, as they were in Atlanta, and local residents would be appalled.

Funding is identified in the budget for the restoration and development of Centennial Park and Moore Park. As the Government acknowledges,

those recreation lands are highly used. In fact, each year they are used by five million people from 22 municipalities—certainly not only people from my electorate. An estimated \$11.1 million is to be provided to maintain services and facilities, to continue the tree-planting and weed-management programs and to consolidate marketing and business-development programs.

Funds of \$19.5 million are also provided for the restoration of Old Grand Drive—a project wheeled out for about the third time—completion of restoration of the Hordern Pavilion and Royal Hall of Industries, landscaping the forecourt of the new Moore Park event bus station and the continued restoration of the Centennial Park ponds. How much of that allocation is new funding, and what component is payment to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust to restore the damage done to Moore Park by the Eastern Distributor? Eastern Distributor construction has resulted in the devastation of significant areas of Moore Park and the permanent alienation of five acres, or 2.2 hectares. Tollway-induced noise and pollution will reduce the quality of the environment of the remaining areas.

Despite the devastating effects of car parking on Moore Park parklands, it continues to expand to include previously unaffected areas, such as Kippax Lake. The Government must ensure that Moore Park is not used for a car park once the Eastern Distributor and the parkland restoration are completed. I seriously question the marketing and business development programs of the trust, and condemn the construction of the reception centre, which is strongly opposed by park users and was never put out to public exhibition and consultation. The Moore Park parklands have been profoundly reduced and devastated by State government policy. This funding is the least the people of Sydney should expect from the Government to partly repair the damage and loss it has caused in the past three years. The Government subsidised projects of private consortia with a callous disregard for the devastation caused in the city.

The Auditor-General's report on the Sydney Showground confirmed that the Government provided a massive subsidy of \$109 million to a private company for private profit. It should also have made a commitment to deal with the desperate need for improved public transport to manage visits to the Fox Studios, theme park, Hoyts cinemas and additional retail outlets that have been imposed on this densely populated inner-city area that is already experiencing traffic gridlock. The flawed and now superseded master plan for the Fox Studios site is

evidence that traffic conditions in the area will be difficult. It was based on visitation forecasts of 1.4 million per year, supplied by the proponent. These figures were significant underestimates and are now wildly inaccurate due to continued development applications and changed plans for the site.

I have recently received a ninth development application for variations at the Fox Studios site. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the consent authority, continues to approve additions and expansions, but he is incapable of addressing with his colleague the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads the significant impact these developments are having on the area. Compounding the traffic problems is the increasing population density of the inner city, a direct result of the Government's urban consolidation policies. If urban consolidation is to work, there has to be proper planning for recreation, transport and support services. This budget fails to provide for those basic necessities. The city to airport tollway, currently under construction, is not the Eastern Distributor we worked for during the 1980s. It will bring another 125,000 vehicles per day into the inner-city area.

There must be substantial commitments from the Government to community input, traffic management and urban landscaping following the construction of the Eastern Distributor if it is to repair the damage caused by the project. The Government needs to make an urgent commitment to an integrated traffic and transport solution for chronic inner-city traffic problems. A long-term and environmentally responsible strategy must be developed and implemented. The Government's approach is ad hoc and driven by private companies with private agendas seeking private profits. Thus, there is a useless city monorail, a toy light rail system to the Casino, the much-touted heavy rail link to the airport and the allocation of \$1 million to the Bondi rail extension with no overall plan. Major traffic generators are approved directly by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, without taking into account the needs of the people of the city.

An overall vision for a comprehensive and effective network is needed to meet Sydney's needs into the future. This budget has not demonstrated that. Certainly government policy in the past three years has not demonstrated that either. The Government of New South Wales has failed to make our inner-city areas green, safe and amenable. I very seriously question the whole concept of a green Olympics whilst our city is being devastated environmentally. If current policies continue, Sydney faces a grave future of a New York or Los Angeles

style concrete jungle dominated by tollways and overdevelopment. That is an indictment of the best city in Australia.

Mr MacCARTHY (Strathfield) [7.23 p.m.]: The fourth and final budget of the Carr Government brings little joy to the people of New South Wales, and particularly the people of the electorate of Strathfield. It is a budget that highlights the broken promises of the Premier and the lack of vision evident in the Government's ranks. The Carr Government has opted for a big-spending, election-driven budget at the expense of prudent financial management of the New South Wales economy. There is clear evidence that Labor has no economic credibility. Its 1995-96 budget deficit blew out from a predicted \$238 million to \$611 million. The next year a supposed surplus of \$5 million became a deficit of \$457 million. More recently, a \$268 million surplus has been acknowledged by the Government as having blown out to more than \$300 million, and all the indications are that it will be far worse than that.

Labor came to government boasting about jobs, investment and its economic qualifications. One could say it was flatulent with fiscal rectitude. Labor was going to cut spending so it could give the people tax relief. It was going to balance the budget and freeze taxes. It promised a \$1 billion payroll cut to stimulate employment. It was going to give economic leadership to Australia. Three years later this budget proves that, by its own yardstick, the Carr Government has failed. Key features of the fourth and final Carr budget include a true underlying deficit of more than \$860 million; massive spending; an increase in revenue of 25 per cent since March 1995; and more taxes, with payroll tax receipts set to rise by 6.8 per cent, or \$229 million, representing an overall increase since 1994-95 of nearly 35 per cent. This budget envisages an increase in taxes alone of \$755 million, or some 6 per cent.

This is scarcely consistent with the principle of fiscal management requiring tax restraint let alone the fulfilment of the election promise of "no new taxes and no tax increases". The total revenue from taxes, fees and fines outlined in the budget papers is \$13.2 billion. In his Budget Speech the Treasurer—and several Government speakers subsequently—spoke about adjustments to land tax as if they were some wonderful concession made to land tax payers. The minuscule adjustments to the land tax regime are an insult to taxpayers. They will be eaten up by inflation. The Government's statement that a few thousand properties will be freed from paying land tax is based on the

assumption that if land values remain static, a few thousand properties would be in the range of \$160,000 to \$170,000. But, as we all know, property values are not stable; they increase.

It is obvious that the Government is budgeting for a 12.6 per cent rise in land tax receipts this year, to almost \$950 million. In the last year of the coalition Government—1994-95—land tax receipts were \$510 million. In the year 1998-99, they will be \$945 million. That is an increase of 85 per cent in land tax in just one term. For example, a house or block of land valued at \$200,000 for this year's land tax purposes would attract a tax of \$840, assuming a 10 per cent increase in valuation, which is not unreasonable but conservative. Next year, assuming the land value increases to \$220,000 and 10 per cent inflation, land tax would be \$1,025, an increase of 22 per cent. A \$180,000 block of land subject to the same assumptions will attract \$618 instead of \$470, an increase of 31 per cent. These values are typical of modest houses in my electorate of Strathfield.

Land tax on three properties valued at \$200,000 each, totalling \$600,000, would increase from \$8,240 per year to \$9,165 per year, an increase of 11 per cent. All this at a time when the Government estimates inflation at only 2.25 per cent. The electricity levy on electricity prices charged to non-franchised customers will be passed on to the wider community. Further, users who escaped last year are to be caught, giving the lie to the Government's claim of no tax increases in this budget. Again it is apparent from the budget papers that receipts are expected to rise by 7.3 per cent to \$100 million. Not content with seizing the assets of electricity distributors previously owned by local communities through local government, the Government has extracted dividends and loaded up the distributors with debt. Now it is taxing the customers.

By the year 2000 all customers will be non-franchise customers. If by some disaster the Labor Government were to be re-elected, one could expect that eventually all consumers would pay the consumption tax. Who needs the Commonwealth goods and services tax when Carr and Egan are on the rampage taxing hotel beds, private houses and even a basic commodity such as electricity? From now on GST will stand for galloping State taxes. I will not identify all the tax increases in the budget, but many have been placed on the record by numerous speakers from the Opposition. Taxes, fees and fines per capita in New South Wales are approximately \$2,224 in comparison with \$1,161 in Queensland, \$1,807 in Victoria and \$1,667 in Western Australia. Each person in New South Wales

pays \$1,063 more a year in taxes than Queenslanders and \$417 more than Victorians.

On the capital expenditure side, there is little in the budget to cheer the people of my electorate. That is clear from the list of asset acquisition projects for the Strathfield electorate which finally reached me this afternoon. It is dated 2 June but obviously it must have come by slow mail coach. One has to search diligently through the budget papers to find a few projects of relevance to Strathfield. I will mention some of those included in the list. A few thousand dollars has been allocated to complete some accommodation projects in Burwood, and that is welcomed. Also, \$31 million is included for the Flemington junction grade separation. Although that is listed as being relevant to my electorate, it will benefit the wider community and will have very little relevance to the people of the Strathfield electorate. Nevertheless, the rail will be improved. A few other similar projects have expenditure notionally allocated to the Strathfield electorate.

I wish to comment favourably on a couple of items included in the budget. I am pleased that the Centenary Drive, Hume Highway, Roberts Road intersection will be completed during the coming financial year. I pay tribute to the Government for getting that project under way. The planning had been completed, but the present Government actually made it happen, for which the people of the inner-west will indeed be grateful. The total cost will be many millions of dollars and when completed it will improve traffic flow in my electorate. A few other small amounts of money are included in the roads budget. I am pleased that \$119,000 has been set aside for the Barker Street local area traffic management scheme, something for which local residents have been fighting for some time. I pay tribute to Judy Young, a constituent who has been a stalwart in the fight to get that done. I am happy that local bike plans will be carried out, all of which will be welcomed.

The Government has announced that things will happen on the Western Suburbs Hospital site. However, the budget does not appear to contain any specific allocation for that project, so we will have to wait and see exactly how it will work. Ashfield police station, which is not currently in my electorate but it will be after the redistribution, is the subject of funding in the budget. I note in passing that even though money was allocated in the 1996 budget for work on Ashfield police station, not a penny was spent on that project. I am yet to see whether the Government is fair dinkum this time. As that site will be included in my electorate I will

certainly make it my business to ensure that something happens with that project.

Another project just outside my electorate is construction of the Auburn police station, which again was included in the 1996 budget but nothing was done. I have raised this matter with the Minister in private correspondence and still have not had an answer, but I am concerned about the impact that the construction at Auburn police station may have upon Flemington police station. The people of my electorate are concerned that it may lead to the closure of Flemington police station and the removal of the last police presence in the Strathfield municipality. I am keen to get an assurance from the Minister that the Flemington station will not be closed.

I am pleased that progress will be made on provision of easy access to Ashfield railway station—again not in my electorate at present, but it will be following redistribution. The people of Ashfield will welcome the improvements. But what about Burwood, Summer Hill and other stations in the area that also need improvement? Burwood is the prime retail centre between Sydney and Parramatta. It has been documented well and truly that access to the station is an absolute disgrace. Burwood is the focal point that links numerous bus routes from areas such as Drummoyne, Five Dock, central Concord, Mortlake and Cabarita, as well as suburbs within my electorate, North Croydon, Enfield and Croydon Park.

Burwood meets all the criteria for inclusion in the easy access program but the Government will not fund it. The Minister confirmed, in answer to questions I asked, that Burwood is not even in the program. I have established that escalators could be provided for as little as \$2 million, and lifts might cost even less. I call on the Government to acknowledge the importance of Burwood station by including it in the easy access program. Summer Hill residents have been waiting for decades for decent access through the subway and onto the platforms. The most recent works provided a superficial facelift but no real benefit.

One might also ask what has happened in regard to Homebush station. In the lead-up to the 1996 by-election the Government promised that Homebush station would be restored following the 1994 fire damage. That by-election was two years ago but nothing has been done. Commuter car parking is singularly lacking in the Strathfield electorate. Commuter car parking is vital if motorists are ever to be weaned off private vehicles and onto public transport, and if air quality is to be improved.

Apart from the inner city, the city circle and the eastern suburbs lines, there are only three locations in Sydney where four or more consecutive railway stations have no commuter parking. The most important of these is the sequence of five stations in my electorate of Strathfield, and the other two are in immediately adjacent electorates. In the last budget the central business district parking levy, introduced by the former Government to assist in providing commuter car parking spaces at suburban railway stations, was increased by 100 per cent. This year \$16.5 million will be raised by means of the levy, most of which will go straight into Treasury and will not provide parking as was supposed to be the case.

Strathfield, as a major transport node for the Olympics, is a logical place for commuter parking. Railway land is available nearby, between Homebush and Strathfield stations and close to the exit of the M4, which would be an ideal place to locate a major commuter car park for day-to-day commuting and for the Olympics. I call upon the Government to give that option consideration. After three years in government Labor has lost the plot. The question that should be asked is: did it ever have one? Labor did not expect to win the election in 1995, so it had no program other than to administer the Olympics which, of course, the coalition won for Sydney, and to try to justify the promises it never expected to have to keep.

Any casual observer of proceedings in this House will have seen that there is no cohesion in what the Government does. Indeed, much of its legislation is routine or in reaction to Opposition or Independent initiatives. The Government has no vision beyond the Olympics. Should the Government, by some misfortune, be elected in 1999, New South Wales will enter the new millennium in 2001 with no direction, no sense of purpose and no enthusiasm for the future. The people of New South Wales will not be taken in and will not forget the hundreds of broken promises, soaring crime, the erosion of our education system, a crumbling hospital system and chronically unreliable trains. One has only to see and read what has been said in the media about the budget to know what the media and the people have understood. Ross Gittins in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, referring to the Treasurer, said:

His planned Budget surplus of \$45 million is the rabbit.

He also said:

Does it sound a bit too good to be true? It is.

The Leader of the Opposition said that instead of soaring with the eagles this budget is:

A turkey that had an underlying deficit of \$800 million.

Max Walsh said:

Michael Egan can't help himself. He's a smart alec.

Mandy O'Bree, a Waitara Public School teacher said:

One area of disappointment would be that of training and development.

David Humphries—someone we see often in the press gallery—said of Michael Egan in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

His self-congratulation, however, may prove to be a tad premature.

The *Australian's* Alan Wood said:

Bob Carr and his Treasurer Michael Egan have turned NSW into the highest taxed State in Australia.

The people of New South Wales know that they are the highest taxed people in Australia. They are waiting for March 1999, when they will rise in anger and throw out this Government. This budget typifies Labor's failings that are obvious to all—it is high on taxes, high on spending and low on vision.

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [7.41 p.m.]: I contribute to debate on this legislation, albeit briefly, to raise the concerns of constituents in the Coffs Harbour electorate who are extremely disappointed. The only initiatives in this budget are initiatives introduced in 1994 by the coalition Government—the Raleigh deviation, the Englands Road to Lyons Road deviation, the Bonville bypass and the Arthur Street to Bray Street road widening. The bridge on that road was put in place between the hours of 12.00 and 5.00 this morning. I compliment the Roads and Traffic Authority on its great \$11 million job. But those projects were all initiatives of the previous coalition Government. I have it on good information that the \$7 million budget allocation for Coffs Harbour hospital is nothing more than accrual accounting. This year there is a budget allocation of \$7 million and last year there was a \$6 million allocation. So far, \$13 million has been allocated towards that project, but less than \$1 million has been spent.

The Minister for Health, the Hon. Andrew Refshauge, insisted that site works commence so that the Government could be seen to be doing

something. I received an anonymous telephone call—I would like the Minister for Health to deny this—that work at this site is purely window dressing, that only \$13 million was available for the hospital project because of poor budgetary considerations. The old hospital will be kept open and the new hospital will be partially open after the tender process, which will commence in September. Tenders will close after Christmas and a decision will not be made until March 1999. In April 1996 the Minister for Health wrote to the *Coffs Harbour Advocate* and promised that Coffs Harbour hospital would be completed in the Government's first term in office. That project has not yet started.

The development application lodged by the Government with Coffs Harbour City Council refers only to a hospital platform—a piece of concrete on a block of land, to give the appearance that something is being done. We know that the tenders that will be submitted in September will not even meet the standards required for that slab. It is a farce. Over 3,000 people in Coffs Harbour are on the hospital waiting list. The Government said that it no longer regards tonsillectomies as urgent surgery. Tonsillectomies were regarded by the previous coalition Government as urgent surgery. In the last 12 months a pensioner in my electorate took out a \$700 loan to pay for her three-year-old son's tonsils to be removed at a private hospital as he could not breathe or swallow food and was gagging. The Minister for Health does not care. When I wrote to him and asked him to refund that money he refused. Last week an 80-year-old pensioner paid for a knee operation at a private hospital. His other knee requires surgery but he cannot afford that operation. His attitude is that one leg is better than none. The Minister for Health ignores the problems of people in my electorate.

The only budget allocation for sewerage works is \$120 million for a scheme forced on us by the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Public Works. Over the next few years ratepayers in Coffs Harbour will have to pay \$120 million for those sewerage works. The Government is spending \$400 million on a storage tunnel from Lane Cove to primary treat raw sewage at North Head and pump it out to sea. I notice that the honourable member for Lane Cove is in the Chamber tonight. At the same time the Government is telling us that we must reuse effluent on sporting fields and run the risk of infecting our children with diseases and viruses. I will not accept that effluent is safe to use. In fact the polio virus lives for 90 days in the soil. A population of 60,000 in a country area is being told that it will have to pay for this \$120 million sewerage project. Sydney Water is receiving a

budget allocation of \$400 million to primary treat raw effluent at North Head and pump it out to the ocean.

Mr Blackmore: It is typical of this Government.

Mr FRASER: As the honourable member for Maitland said, it is typical of this uncaring Government. It does not know what areas come within New South Wales—apart from N for Newcastle, S for Sydney and W for Wollongong. People in country New South Wales will remember this Government. The Premier would not be game to show his face in Coffs Harbour.

Mr Blackmore: He might be flushed out.

Mr FRASER: The honourable member for Maitland said that he might be flushed out. He should be flushed out as his policies are no good, and what has been delivered in my electorate is no good. This budget is a farce. As I said earlier, it does not contain one new initiative. The Government claims that it has allocated \$52 million for works in the Coffs Harbour electorate but that money is to be spent over the next three years; it will not be spent over the next 12 months. It will be spent in the Coffs Harbour electorate on coalition-initiated road projects, the Southern Cross University and Coffs Harbour education centres—all things initiated by the former, caring, coalition Government. Opposition members care about people in regional New South Wales and will continue to care about them.

The Minister for Tourism, who is in the Chamber, is looking in the *Macquarie Dictionary* for the definition of the words "hospital" and "hospital services". He knows very little about tourism other than window-dressing. He should go to the Premier and other Cabinet Ministers and tell them that in 1999 regional New South Wales will make sure they are not returned to office. People in regional New South Wales have had enough. They will elect a government that cares, a government that funds projects in regional New South Wales and a government that provides opportunities so that regional New South Wales can progress. The Minister for Regional Development wants to allocate only \$6 million a year over three years for regional development. As I said earlier, there is not one new initiative in this budget, but the Government is prepared to allocate \$12 million this year to shift the North Sydney Bears to the central coast. It is farcical. It is prepared to allocate \$12 million dollars for that project, but it has allocated only \$6 for regional development in country New South Wales.

Mr Blackmore: That is \$1 million a player.

Mr FRASER: I appreciate the assistance of the honourable member for Maitland. As he said, that represents almost \$1 million for each player. But country New South Wales received only \$6 million in this budget for regional development. That is an absolute disgrace! It is farcical. Last year the Government allocated \$18 for the Fox film studios.

[Interruption]

The Minister for Energy does not understand what people in regional New South Wales are saying. He is thick; he has no idea. On two occasions earlier today we listened to the Minister's pathetic efforts in the House. The Minister should establish what tourism is all about. His colleague the Minister for Regional Development has no idea what people in regional New South Wales want. He is aware that 400 jobs have been lost at NorthPower and over 120 jobs have been lost in the timber industry. He is doing nothing about it. The \$6 million budget allocation for farcical schemes over three years will not fill the void that the Minister, the Premier and the Government left in regional New South Wales.

The Minister is a disgrace. The message he will receive from Bathurst, Clarence, Broken Hill and other regional areas on 27 March 1999 is that this is the last budget Treasurer Egan will deliver and that he as a Minister will support. Earlier today the Minister ranted and raved about a highway. I suggest that the only road he will see on 27 March 1999 is the road out of here. On behalf of the electorate of Coffs Harbour I condemn this budget.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove) [7.50 p.m.]: On four occasions the Treasurer has come into this Chamber and grandstanded. Four times he has come into this Chamber and announced that he will deliver for the people of New South Wales. As on the first three occasions, the people of New South Wales and members of this Chamber were sorely disappointed on the fourth occasion the Treasurer chose to address us, because this budget does not deliver to the people of New South Wales or to the people of the Lane Cove electorate and certainly does not deliver any favourable environmental outcomes for this State.

This year's budget for the environment is damned more by what is omitted than what is included. The budget has done little to address the huge environmental problems facing New South Wales, which, as is obvious from reading papers and

talking to people, are growing daily. Bob Carr promised to address these problems when he became Premier, but he has failed to deliver. As one of the prime objectives of the Australian Labor Party coming into office, he promised to wage a war against smog. Yet last year Sydney suffered from record levels of air pollution. What is the Premier's response in this year's budget? It seems that he will wage the war by funding air monitoring equipment to find out what we already know—that Sydney's air ranks with some of the dirtiest in the world.

Last December was the most polluted December on record. By contrast, under the coalition Government 60 per cent fewer smog days were recorded in 1994 than were recorded in 1997. It seems that the ALP's preoccupation with counting the number of national parks New South Wales has or will have is threatening the rest of our environmental assets. Once again, this budget shows a lack of commitment to an integrated transport strategy, which was formulated by the coalition and was ready for implementation until being dumped by the Premier when he came into office in 1995. This Government has given no encouragement to people to get out of their cars and into public transport. Honourable members might recall the Government's well-publicised public relations exercise to announce a new strategy on public transport. That exercise turned into a complete farce when three Ministers, who had arrived in cars, were asked by the media why they had not travelled by public transport. The Government talks about its commitments, but there has been no real on-the-ground improvement.

The much touted emission control program, which was the centrepiece of the Government's public relations exercise, has been downgraded to the future provision of only two Roads and Traffic Authority stations to test car emissions for the whole of the Sydney metropolitan area. Where is the Government's commitment to the environment? The Premier is so desperate to find a quick and easy way to out-green himself that our natural resources are being put at risk. He concentrates on acquiring more national parks but does not address the issues that concern the citizens of this State, and Sydney in particular. He should be addressing the cleaning up of our waterways, which are being choked with pollutants. I note the presence of the honourable member for Maitland in the Chamber. Recent reports state that it is no longer safe to swim in Lake Macquarie after it rains.

Mr Fraser: The honourable member for Wallsend told me there is so much garbage in Lake Macquarie that he cannot swim in it.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: A sentiment with which I would agree. The honourable member for Wallsend, who is in the chair, would be well aware of the needs of Lake Macquarie. Yet in this year's budget there is no commitment to clean up the lake. There is no commitment to clean up Georges River, where an estimated \$200 million is required to begin to sort out the problems. Where is the commitment from this Government to clean up those waterways? To turn to another issue of great environmental concern, waste management, the Carr Government has spent more than \$33 million in a failed attempt to reduce the amount of waste being dumped in New South Wales. The Government has spent millions of dollars establishing eight waste management boards, but none of its waste plans have been implemented.

The Carr Government made an election pledge to reduce by 60 per cent the amount of waste going into landfill. Yet during its time in office the Government has managed to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill by only 13 per cent on 1990 levels. In 1996 the Government announced the establishment of eight regional waste boards to spearhead the development of regional waste management plans. Nearly three years later the Minister for the Environment has admitted that she has not even bothered to approve those plans. Why did the Minister establish waste management boards if she was not prepared to implement any of their strategies to cope with the growing waste problems in New South Wales? The Carr Government seems to have spent millions of dollars producing paperwork and has talked about how it will attempt to tackle waste management, but has not implemented any practical measures to reduce the problem.

Another example of the inability of this Government to deliver in this area is the allocation by the Carr Government for emergency support for kerbside recycling. The fact that emergency support for kerbside recycling is required indicates that this State has no long-term strategy for waste management. The whole of this State's waste system is facing crisis. The Government is wasting time and money on propping up the local government recycling co-operative and continues to throw good money after bad to patch up a haemorrhaging system.

Mr Fraser: That is its idea of waste management.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: That is the Government's idea of waste management. In fact, it

has no idea how to manage waste because it continually dumps plan after plan that it has announced to reduce waste in this State. Recently the Minister for the Environment announced that she has put on hold a plan to reduce the amount of green waste going into landfill. The dumping of that plan, a key promise of the Government to be implemented from 1 July, is a typical action of this Government. It raises expectations in the community about what it will do in the area of waste management and then fails to deliver. Members have seen Ministers make the sign of a big tick about their policies. When it comes to the environment, the sign is a big cross.

A ban on green waste would have stopped garden, fruit and vegetable waste from going into household bins from the beginning of July. That will not occur for at least another 12 months because no commercially viable framework is in place to support such a scheme. If a plan relies for its operation on a commercially viable framework, one would have thought that a business plan would have been in place before the Government made an announcement. The plan was announced but failed to eventuate because of improper planning. Again another initiative has gone out the window. It is clear that the Minister for the Environment is not prepared to show any leadership on matters of waste management. Members of this House and the people of New South Wales condemn her for that.

Waste management is an issue about which people are concerned, and they want to know that it is properly under control. It is clear from what is happening that the Minister for the Environment has no overall strategy. The problems will continue to worsen, not improve, whilst the carriage of the environment portfolio is in the hands of the present Minister. The other problem is that, as all members know, all the Premier is interested in is sitting in his office and adding up how many national parks there are in New South Wales. It is easy to add up numbers; it is much harder to tackle the difficult issues confronting our environment, such as addressing the serious pollution problems of the Olympic Games site and the Homebush precinct. The latest report from the Green Games Watch 2000 clearly shows that not enough is being done to identify and clean up the area around Homebush Bay, despite the fact that the Premier promised the green Games.

Perhaps the most disturbing picture was painted in the "State of the Environment Report", which the Government delayed releasing for six months until last December. The report contained a damning assessment of the lack of commitment by

the Carr Government to seriously address the major problems within the environment. That lack of commitment has been shown up in this budget, which contains no substantial funding to address the major issues that were identified in that report. The report stated that there had been no change to the devastation of waterways, no improvement to air quality, and a failure to achieve waste reduction objectives set by the Government. The Government's performance is so abysmal that a coalition of green groups in its mid-term review of 1997 stated:

To date there has been a complete failure by the Government on sustainable transport and air quality.

It seems that the Government's environment strategy is predicated on the creation of new national parks. Newspaper reports have stated that the Government is about to create another 52 national parks, but it is not even doing that correctly. It is creating national parks on the cheap without adequate funding to ensure that they are properly resourced and properly provided with the necessary manpower to manage them. For example, I note that there will be a reduction of 55 people in one area of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. How can the Government claim to be doing the right thing by the environment when, in the only area it claims to have some credentials, it is not providing the resources to deliver the outcomes which the community believes relate to national parks. If national parks are to be created, they need to be preserved and resourced in an appropriate way. The Government is not doing that. It refuses to acknowledge that it has spent money creating national parks without providing adequate resources to manage them.

I am concerned that the Carr Government has yet again forgotten about people living north of the harbour bridge, especially those in my electorate. It came as no surprise that no funding was provided for the much-needed missing link between the M2 and the Gore Hill freeway; it would have been a good environmental initiative to fix up that road. In fact, no funding has been allocated for schools in my area or for any major project on the north shore. The budget provides for no extra police. The coalition has discovered that in 1999 there will be fewer police than there were in November 1997, despite the Premier's claims that he is increasing police numbers.

Honourable members may recall that the Premier came to office saying that he would be tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime, and he would provide the necessary resources. How can the Premier say that he is tough on crime? Residents of my electorate are concerned about the loss of

police from the local police station. Lane Cove used to have a 24-hour fully manned police station. The police have now been moved to Chatswood. Whilst I have no doubt that Chatswood needs those resources, Lane Cove, Greenwich, Longueville and the surrounding areas are a long way from Chatswood. It is difficult to get from Chatswood to Lane Cove in peak hours because of heavy traffic. People of Lane Cove now have the dubious honour of having only one police officer on duty at the station during daylight hours and have been told that officers from Chatswood will be despatched in cases of emergency.

Mr Blackmore: When?

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The reports I get from local residents say that if one wants a police officer in Lane Cove make sure it is late at night because that is when they might be out on patrol and might be in the nearby area. But at any other time during the day one is unlikely to get a police officer to attend within a reasonable time. People say, "Why bother ringing the police?" So much for the Government's commitment to increasing safety in the community; people know that police do not turn up within a reasonable time.

I note that the Government has provided money for improvements to the emergency department of the Royal North Shore Hospital. I place on record that had the coalition been in office those improvements would have been completed in 1995. More importantly, the Treasurer admitted that no extra in-patients, emergency patients or outpatients will be treated. Also 26,000 people will miss out on non in-patient treatment; that is hardly good news for the people in my electorate. Perhaps the most cruel cut, the most cruel blow, in this budget, relates to land tax. The so-called silvertails in my electorate, who are fighting for the right to live in their own homes, feel totally abandoned by the Labor Party. There has been a feeble attempt to rule out any plan to lower the land tax threshold by promising to cap the number of people who have been forced to pay this iniquitous tax. But everyone in my electorate can see through that ploy; they do not believe anything the Treasurer says in relation to tax.

Honourable members might recall that the Treasurer said that a land tax would not be introduced on the family home. So how can anyone believe anything he says? After all, the Government pledged no new taxes. Read my lips, no new taxes! Then what did we get? We got the bed tax, the poker machine tax and, of course, this iniquitous land tax. For many of my local residents land tax is

the evil they fear most from this Government. They fear losing their homes as punishment for working hard all their lives and not relying on the Government for handouts. They have done the right thing and looked after themselves; they have not asked the Government to look after them. Now they will be punished for struggling to secure a roof over their heads. In many cases that roof was supposed to protect them in their retirement and old age. But they have been told that they can afford to hand over thousands of dollars to the Treasurer to bail out the Government, which has completely failed to manage the State.

In reality, the residents I deal with, especially the elderly, simply cannot afford to pay this iniquitous tax. They will be forced to sell the homes in which many of them have lived all their lives; homes which in many instances have been in their families for a number of generations. I inform the Minister and members on the other side who are interjecting about all the poor people living in Lane Cove that many people in Lane Cove have lived there for many years. They are pensioners, superannuants, people who have not asked the Government to look after them. They have not asked for handouts. They have done the right thing and yet the Government is forcing them out.

The Government is imposing undeserved stress on people. It is putting people's health at risk, and that will not be forgotten. People resent the Government forcing them out of their homes. They also resent the fact that that tax will be paid out of their estate if not paid now. This is, in truth, a death duty. I remind the House that at the last State election when the Liberal Party announced that the Labor Party would introduce a tax on homes valued at more than \$1 million, the Liberal Party was accused of being liars. We got it right! The Government lies. Everything it will say during the next election campaign will be an absolute lie. The Liberal Party, not the Labor Party, will have credibility in the electorates.

I conclude by saying that the budget has disappointed me as both the shadow minister for the environment and as a member whose electorate has been ignored by the Premier. It disappoints me that this State is not moving forward. It disappoints me that the Government is not taking advantage of the resources that New South Wales has to offer. It disappoints me that there is no vision in this State. I suspect that the greatest fault of the budget is that it relies on a rosy picture of the economic future of New South Wales. Every economic commentator believes that the Carr Government has got it wrong and that it is trying to throw it to the electorates as a

sop for its abysmal performance and incompetent mismanagement of this State. Finally, when we go to the election next year the people of this State will know Government members for the frauds they are. People will not forget that the Labor Government attacked those who cannot defend themselves. Members opposite will not be here on 28 March 1999, and coalition members look forward to being on that side of the House.

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [8.10 p.m.]: I support the fourth budget of the Carr Labor Government because it boosts many projects in the Lake Macquarie electorate. I am sure the people living in Lake Macquarie are pleased about the announcements in this year's budget. The areas that have received funding include an allocation of \$3.2 million for construction of the Toronto courthouse; an allocation of \$881,000 to assist in fitting out and completing the Toronto polyclinic; an allocation of some \$3.8 million for a number of road projects which I shall detail later; an allocation of some \$490,00 through the Department of Sport and Recreation for accommodation units to be built at the Myuna Bay Centre; an allocation of \$510,000 towards construction of Department of Housing dwellings; and an allocation of some \$1 million through the Hunter Water Corporation towards the Wyee Point sewerage scheme.

Overall, the budget is good for the Lake Macquarie electorate, with many of Labor's pre-election commitments being fulfilled. I am pleased that funding has been allocated for a new ambulance station at Morisset and to assist in upgrading the access road to Morisset Hospital. In Budget Paper No. 4, under capital works to be undertaken by the Attorney General's Department, some \$3.2 million has been allocated for construction of the Toronto courthouse, which is due for completion in 2000; \$950,000 had previously been allocated, and the facility is estimated to cost a total of some \$6 million. Page 13 of the Social Justice Budget Statement states:

PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND A SAFE COMMUNITY

The Government continues to demonstrate its commitment to improving the administration of justice and improving community access to the justice system.

The Government's priorities in the justice system are to:

- reduce delays across the court system by creating a Case Management Fund to provide a more flexible system of resourcing special needs;
- to improve the personal safety of all participants in the judicial process, and in particular, victims of crime and other vulnerable community members;
- to promote access to justice by providing better standards of court accommodation which cater for the full range of

support services provided to the clients of the courts, particularly in rural communities.

The Social Justice Budget Statement further states:

In 1998-99 the Government will provide funding to improve the standard of court accommodation in a number of locations:

- **\$2 million** for the construction of a new purpose-built **Children's Court in Campbelltown** . . .
- **\$3.2 million** to construct a new Court House for the **Local Court at Toronto**;
- **\$2.8 million** for refurbishing and extending the **Orange Court House**;
- **\$1.2 million** for the refurbishment and extension of **Bega Court House**.

The local community has been asking for many years for a courthouse to be constructed at Toronto. I believe that a new courthouse at Toronto was first proposed back in the 1950s; the proposal has certainly gathered momentum during the past 10 years or so. My father, the previous member for Lake Macquarie, worked with the community and lobbied for construction of the new courthouse. In 1987-88 plans were drawn up for a \$2 million court facility to be built on a site earmarked by former Attorney General Frank Walker. Unfortunately, when the Greiner Government was elected in 1988 it saw fit to downgrade that project from number one or number two to number seven on the State capital works list for courts.

In 1995 Labor gave a commitment that a Labor Government would construct a new courthouse at Toronto. The budget papers show that a facility estimated to cost \$6 million in total will now be constructed. The Attorney General visited the site last November to unveil a model and plans for the court. I believe that tenders have now been called for this project. Construction should start in the next few months, and the courthouse should be completed by the end of 1999 or in early 2000. The new courthouse will be the most modern courthouse in the State. It is a fantastic design and it will be a state-of-the-art facility providing a number of services. Importantly, the facility will provide disabled access and accommodation for a disabled magistrate. I hope that some of the concerns of the local community about having a courthouse in Toronto, especially its location, will ease when the new court facility opens. The new courthouse will provide great benefits to the local community and, indeed, will boost the local economy.

I agree with many people in the local community that it would have been preferable for the new courthouse to be located adjacent to Toronto police station, but the Attorney General has decided that it should be located on the site that was dedicated for it in 1980. Unfortunately, the Attorney

General could not acquire enough land on which to construct the courthouse next to Toronto police station. One elderly gentleman who has lived in his family home for more than 30 years was not prepared to sell his property, and the Attorney General advised me that he was not prepared to resume the property and throw the gentleman out of his family home. The courthouse could not be designed to go around that property, so the Attorney General decided to proceed with construction of the courthouse on the existing site, which has been dedicated for a courthouse for some 20 years.

I mentioned that \$881,000 had been allocated to assist in fitting out and completing the Toronto polyclinic. Earlier today I made a private member's statement about a ceremony I attended yesterday at which the public works department officially handed over the keys for the Toronto polyclinic. I was pleased to attend that ceremony with the chairperson of the area health service, Carol Abela. We received the keys and opened the door. The standard of work undertaken at the polyclinic was impressive. The Carr Government has increased the health budget for the fourth consecutive year. That demonstrates that the Government is insulating patients in New South Wales against John Howard's health cuts. Total recurrent expenditure in 1998-99 will increase by some \$303 million to \$6.7 billion—an increase of 4.8 per cent, compared to the 1997-98 period.

That increase will provide greater security and protection for families and patients in an environment of ever-declining Federal funding. The Carr Government increased health spending by some \$1 billion in its first three years, and it has been forced to add another \$303 million simply to protect patients against John Howard's sustained attack on Federal health funding. A total of \$457.9 million will be spent on health capital works in the coming year. The health capital works budget includes \$11.6 million for the construction of community health centres at Erina and Tuggerah as well as a new day surgery unit at Wyong Hospital; \$4.3 million for a new 15-bed in-patient facility at Wallsend District Hospital; and \$13.6 million towards stage one of the Hunter strategy.

The Hunter strategy includes construction of a new emergency department at John Hunter Hospital. That will help to streamline the treatment of patients through the emergency department and create a modern, up-to-date working environment to match the skills and expertise of the hospital's health professionals. A more efficient working environment will enhance patient care. The new department will also improve access for ambulances. A new and expanded intensive care unit will be built above the

emergency department. The people of the Hunter have pushed for some time to have the emergency department upgraded and I am glad work has commenced on that project.

The Wallsend District Hospital will receive \$4.3 million for the in-patient unit for families, fulfilling an election commitment of Premier Bob Carr. This new unit will benefit families. It will have 15 in-patient beds on the hospital campus and in-patient services will be offered to parents of the Hunter and surrounding areas who are having problems, such as feeding difficulties and infant and toddler behavioural difficulties. The unit will offer services to families referred by the Department of Community Services and to mothers suffering from a mental illness. The unit will combine with the family care cottage, which is currently at Waratah, and with other services that provide support to parents in the Hunter region.

Funds allocated for the new Belmont District Hospital emergency department will allow construction planning to commence. My colleague the honourable member for Swansea has been pushing for improvements to that department since she came to this place in 1995. Work will commence on the Hunter pathology facility and on the car park at the John Hunter Hospital campus. It is interesting that the Carr Government will put \$4.3 million into providing an in-patient unit for families at Wallsend hospital as the Greiner Government caused much community angst by closing that hospital. Thousands of people marched in the streets of Newcastle and attended rallies in an attempt to save the hospital. Closing Wallsend hospital showed how much the Greiner Government cared for the people of the Hunter and its health service. The budget has allocated \$881,000 to the Toronto polyclinic that will benefit the people of the Westlakes area. I should like to read from an article on page 3 in today's *Newcastle Herald* under the headline "Health boost for Westlakes". The article stated:

Residents in the Westlakes area will have increased access to medical services following the hand-over of the new Westlakes Health Service Toronto Polyclinic to Hunter Health yesterday.

Department of Public Works and Services representative Mr Mark Queenan handed over the keys to State Member for Lake Macquarie Mr Jeff Hunter and Hunter Health chairperson Ms Carol Abela.

Mr Hunter said the clinic would provide a range of new services not previously available including a dental clinic, aged care rehabilitation and specialty clinics.

The Toronto Polyclinic, when opened, will deliver an expanded and comprehensive range of health care services in

addition to providing enhanced facilities for the Westlakes community health workers.

The clinic is located between Thorne Street and James Street, Toronto, and will be officially opened in September. The previous Labor Government gave a commitment to build this polyclinic. Unfortunately, when the Greiner Government was elected in 1988 it did not fulfil that commitment. I have correspondence addressed to the former member for Lake Macquarie from the present Leader of the Opposition, Mr Collins, who was then Minister for Health, pointing out that the then coalition Government had no intention of providing such a facility for the people of the Westlakes. I am proud that this Government has provided in excess of \$5 million for that project. The building is complete and services will come on line during the next few months. The Minister for Health, Andrew Refshauge, has now fulfilled that commitment to the local electorate.

The budget also allocated \$246,000 towards the upgrade of the main access road to the Morisset Hospital at an estimated cost of \$497,000. Again the Labor Party made the commitment during the 1995 election campaign that Morisset Hospital would remain open. This Government intends to upgrade the hospital's facilities and this allocation is the first instalment of funds to be provided to ensure that mental health services are looked after. The Morisset township will gain a new ambulance station as part of a \$18.3 million enhancement package for the New South Wales Ambulance Service. The allocation includes the provision of new ambulances. In Labor's first three years of government it increased by approximately 40 the number of ambulance officers in the Hunter. Each ambulance is now manned by two officers. The estimated cost for the new Morisset ambulance station is approximately \$600,000 and work is expected to commence before the end of the year. Hopefully, by the middle of 1999 the Morisset ambulance station will be completed and I will be happy to attend its official opening.

Approximately \$3.8 million has been allocated to my electorate for roadworks. I shall outline some of the projects. Approximately \$150,000 has been allocated for the construction of cycleways at Rathmines and along the foreshore reserve at Wangi. The local communities have pushed hard to have these projects commenced and Lake Macquarie City Council will match the funds. At Morisset roughly \$320,000 has been allocated to upgrade the Main Road 217 and Fishery Point Road intersection. People living on Morisset peninsula have pushed for

that upgrade for some time. I look forward to seeing that project commence during the next 12 months.

At the moment similar funds allocated from last year's budget are being spent on a major intersection improvement at the corner of Dorrington Road and Main Road 217, Rathmines. As people from Morisset travel through that area they will see the level of work that will be undertaken to improve the intersection leading to the Morisset peninsula. The budget allocates \$300,000 towards planning of and public consultation on the road duplication between Booragul and Speers Point roundabouts, which will upgrade Main Road 217 between Booragul and Speers Point. The total project cost of duplicating the bridges and improving the road carriageway is approximately \$14.4 million, of which \$200,000 was allocated last year and \$300,000 has been allocated this year to enable the environmental impact statement to be undertaken and consultation with the local community on the best route for the bridge duplication, and to ensure that the neighbouring five islands wetlands are protected.

An amount of \$490,000 has been allocated towards the construction of cabins at Myuna Bay. Total capital expenditure for 1998-99 on New South Wales sports facilities amounts to approximately \$3.2 million. This amount includes funding for the decontamination of the shotgun range at the Sydney Academy of Sport, a new multipurpose indoor recreation hall at Lake Keepit sport and recreation centre, and the new lodge accommodation at Myuna Bay sport and recreation centre. These funds will provide extra cabins to accommodate groups of up to 36 people and will provide improved facilities for many sporting organisations, family groups, senior groups and general community groups that already use the centre. Again I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation for the funding she has provided to the excellent sport and recreation centre at Myuna Bay.

Mr Fraser: You have done well.

Mr HUNTER: And the people of Lake Macquarie have done well. The Department of Housing has allocated \$510,000 towards the construction of eight new dwellings at Toronto at a total cost of approximately \$769,000. It is good to see money to provide public housing in the electorate. The State Government has allocated \$1 million to the Hunter Water Corporation for the Wyee Point sewerage scheme. Wyee Point is one of the last pockets of residential development on the Lake Macquarie shores that needs sewerage

connection. This will improve the environment of Lake Macquarie and its water quality. I thank the Minister for the allocation of funds towards that project. Also, \$250,000 will be allocated to upgrade the waste water pumping station at Boolaroo.

Certainly the budget contains many projects that will benefit the Lake Macquarie electorate and it has answered many requests to increase services in that area. Many projects are promises and commitments that were made by the Labor Party during the 1995 election campaign. I shall outline some of those promises that have been kept since 1995. We promised to establish a Lake Macquarie State Recreation Area. That promise has been kept with 650 hectares of foreshore bushland now protected as a State recreation area and under the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. We allocated approximately \$3 million towards lead remediation in the north Lake Macquarie area. The honourable member for Wallsend is conscious of that money being spent in his electorate. We said we would upgrade Toronto High School and \$4 million has been provided for that project. In July the Minister for Education and Training will travel to Lake Macquarie to officially open that expanded high school. The \$5 million polyclinic has been built and \$5 million to \$6 million has been provided for the courthouse. The people of the Lake Macquarie electorate are appreciative of the \$17 million to \$18 million of capital works provided by the Government. Overall, it is a very good budget for my electorate. Many pre-election commitments have been fulfilled. I commend the budget to all members. [*Time expired.*]

Mr PRICE (Waratah) [8.30 p.m.]: I support the appropriation bills and congratulate the Carr Government on its fourth budget. Given the very difficult times caused by international events and the Federal Government reducing funding by \$724 million in the last three budget periods, it is a delight to see the program for this financial year. The electorate of Waratah will soon disappear from the political map when it is abolished and the boundaries of other electorates are changed and people should realise the efforts that have been made to maintain a program of progress and public works within the electorate.

I turn first to roads. The completion of the F3 freeway connectors from Minmi to Weakleys Drive at Beresfield involves almost total Federal funding under a program that was started by the former Federal Government. The efforts by the Roads and Traffic Authority and its contractors have been spectacular in developing a number of initiatives that are world firsts. One was solving the problem of

subsidence in the Hexham wetlands. Previously it would have taken 300 years for settlement to take place but through modern technology and computerised programs a system was devised to dewater the site and reduce the settlement period to about four years. The officers concerned should be praised for this achievement. The \$7.7 million required to finish the project by the end of this year will ensure reasonable transport corridors from the F3 to the New England Highway at Thornton and to the Pacific Highway at Hexham. The connectors form the vital final link in the national highway.

The design of the work and erection of sound barriers will relieve the Wyabba Estate of a tremendous amount of noise. The people of Black Hill, which is adjacent to Wyabba Estate, have much safer access with a new bridge and a redesigned road. Residents of Black Hill and Wyabba Estate particularly appreciate the increased safety the work provides for their children travelling by school bus. On the opening of the new connectors, Lenaghans Drive, which has been the temporary national highway, will revert to being a local road. Because it has been constructed to international road standards, it will be one of the best local roads in the State. When the road is used only by local traffic road safety will improve as traffic will be reduced by 95 per cent and people living nearby will no longer feel that their homes and families are endangered by accidents.

The final phase of the program will involve the link road between Thornton Road, Thornton, and Anderson Drive, Beresfield. The \$500,000 for this is shown on page 78 of Budget Paper No. 4. Weakleys Drive, the New England Highway and the link road will meet at an interchange, completing—I hope by 2000—a program involving more than \$60 million. Because of the present deficiencies in road design within 800 metres three sets of temporary traffic lights are required on the New England Highway. Completion of the project will provide one of the safest crossings on the highway and allow Thornton, in the Maitland electorate, and Beresfield, in the Waratah electorate, to have safe local road access without the need for traffic lights.

Ambulances, police vehicles and other emergency vehicles will be able to travel from one suburb to the other without being delayed by three sets of traffic lights on a major highway. Advancement of the West Charlestown bypass involves \$14 million, as shown at page 79 of Budget Paper No. 4. The project is due for completion in 2001. The next stage will be the Shortland to Sandgate section of Highway 23. Designs were called for about six months ago and construction

should begin in 2002. This is a big improvement on the coalition Government program: it did not even contemplate starting that section of the road until 2011. The community will appreciate the project being completed earlier.

The Hunter Area Health Service has made significant improvements to health services in my electorate. I refer specifically to the Waratah parent craft unit. The Wallsend District Hospital was closed by the coalition Government. There was a huge public protest, with 13,000 people turning out on the street to demonstrate against the closure of the hospital. But the demonstration was ignored. The Labor Government promised to restore hospital services at the site and a 15-bed, 24-hour-a-day, fully staffed parent craft unit has been funded as the first step in restoring hospital services to the site, which would have been sold by the former Government if it were not for the public protest. I give credit to the people who stood on the picket line for 18 months to ensure that the hospital remained intact for people to use in the future. A nursing home is now located in part of the old wards and a dementia unit has been established, returning the hospital site to normal patient use. Mothers who have had postnatal difficulties and psychological problems in raising their children will have full 24-hour care, satisfying a promise of the Government.

The honourable member for Maitland is in the Chamber. I am delighted that \$951,000 has been allocated for the final part of the redevelopment of Maitland Hospital, which services the suburbs of Beresfield, Tarro and Woodberry in my electorate. In recent months a new dental clinic, an initiative of the administration of Maitland Hospital, has been provided. At a time when the Federal Government has withdrawn \$34 million in funding from dental services, the hospital has increased the number of chairs in the dental clinic by 50 per cent. The dental clinic now has 60 chairs and all it needs is funding from the Federal Government to enable it to operate efficiently. The hospital deserves full praise for its great effort.

The opening only a few weeks ago of the psychiatric ward at the Maitland Hospital has considerably advanced health services in the region. In fact, it is the first such unit in the Hunter Area Health Service district and has been well received by the local community. It will alleviate some of the criticism resulting from the closure of the Shortland clinic in Newcastle. The Royal Newcastle Hospital hydrotherapy pool is another Government initiative in the electorate of Waratah. It appears as a line item on page 59 of Budget Paper No. 4. An amount

of \$441,000 was allocated for that project, which has been under construction for two years. It should be on line by the end of this year and will be of particular benefit to those with health problems associated with their limbs. The community has been asking for a hydrotherapy pool for a considerable period and has assisted by raising some of the funds for the pool. It is a great initiative and I am pleased to note that it is now nearing fruition.

A telethon raised approximately \$3 million for a cancer research institute at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The Government has advised the telethon trustees that the proposal has been accepted, and planning will now proceed. A number of delays have resulted in the Government not committing funds to the project at this time, but that will not prevent it from proceeding. The Mater hospital has changed its management group since the project was first proposed, and it is proper that the Department of Health should review the project and its cost with the new board. Once those matters have been clarified I have no doubt that the Government will commit funds to complete the cancer research institute. It will be one of the finest cancer research facilities in the country and will be linked to a number of world organisations studying the same problem.

I will deal now with rail services generally and State Rail Authority allocations. A line item on page 117 of Budget Paper No. 4 relates to an allocation of \$4 million for the Kooragang Junction upgrade. That project has to be considered in conjunction with a number of other initiatives that were announced by the Government prior to the budget. The total program is designed to resolve the congestion problem on the coal rail lines and to alleviate noise and vibration problems that have affected residents for many years. Several months ago the Premier announced that the Government was working to ensure that rather than park in residential areas coal trains park adjacent to the Hexham wetlands. I am sure the honourable member for Maitland would support that objective. The Government's announcement of support in the amount of \$10 million included funding for bi-directional signalling and up-down line crossover links to enable trains to line up behind one another and pass one another out of sequence. That cannot be undertaken at the moment.

The upgrading will certainly overcome the problem of trains being held at points such as Tarro, Beresfield, Thornton, Metford and Telarah. In addition, \$4.7 million will be spent on implementing the recommendations contained in the report into the Beresfield coal train smash. Those recommendations

have either been implemented or are being put in place and I anticipate that further advice will be received on the success of the implementation phase. A noise reduction committee has been set up by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. The report of that committee was accepted and \$8.3 million has been allocated for implementation of the recommendations contained in that report. The project is designed specifically to reduce noise and vibration problems experienced in the suburbs adjacent to the rail lines.

That project will take some time to complete but those who have been suffering for so many years appreciate the effort and the initiative of the Government. They are not merely words: funds of approximately \$27 million have been allocated and the program will cover the coal rail line from Rutherford through to Mayfield. In association with that project it was announced that rolling stock belonging to the State Rail Authority and its associated corporations would be upgraded. That upgrading will be undertaken by A. Goninan and Company at its Broadmeadow workshops. It is great news for the Newcastle and Hunter region and means the retention of a significant number of jobs in the engineering industry.

The State Transit Authority's initiative in respect of new buses means that by 1999 \$2.7 million will have been spent on new buses for the Newcastle and lower Hunter region to bring it into line with the Sydney metropolitan service. That is something that many years ago did not happen. The lower Hunter got all the hand-outs and repaired vehicles. It now gets a percentage of the new vehicles. That is appreciated by the community and its local representatives. I now move to the Hunter Water Corporation. On page 126 of Budget Paper No. 4 reference is made to the construction and completion of the Marylands-Minmi sewerage redirection to the Shortland depot. That \$3.5 million project is significant in a number of ways. The community has been waiting for completion of the project for a number of years. It will clear the way for the new suburbs on the Marylands-Minmi line to be expanded at a far more rapid rate and will give the whole system greater capacity. The announcement of the Butti reservoir project at a cost of \$1.4 million is significant and will be greatly appreciated by local residents. The project will amplify the water supply in that area.

The Government has allocated funds to recruit 100 additional police officers during the current financial year. The Police Service has been subject to considerable criticism during and after the royal

commission and by some community groups. However, I cannot speak too highly of the police and their endeavours in the electorate of Waratah. They are working at a considerable disadvantage. Two former patrol headquarters have been condensed into one. Neither is complete but I am advised by the Minister that within a few months a significant announcement will be made as to the progress and construction of new patrol headquarters at Waratah which will relieve the pressure on the former patrol headquarters at Wallsend and enable a more functional and accessible police operation to be conducted in that part of my electorate. That will lead to a reduction in police numbers at Wallsend, Mayfield, part of Hamilton, Lambton and Adamstown, but it will provide a much larger and more flexible force available in a centralised location at Waratah. The new headquarters will provide a far greater vehicle capacity for on-the-road after-hours services. The detectives have already been centralised. There are now 15 detectives operating out of temporary headquarters at Waratah and the improvement in crime detection and prosecution has been significant within the past 12 months.

Recently some nasty incidents have occurred on the Maitland-Newcastle rail service. However, the increasing number of transport police and the advent on 1 July of security guards should make it one of the safest services in the State and the fear and trepidation of passengers will be reduced. I hope public patronage of this excellent service that operates between the towns in the lower Hunter up to Dungog will be increased. This excellent budget is one of which the Government can be proud and one with which I am proud to be associated. The benefits of the budget can be clearly demonstrated in my electorate and I look forward to a continuation of the Labor Government.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Ku-ring-gai) [8.50 p.m.]: The Government's fourth budget has achieved little in education. As I speak in this debate tonight the Board of Studies has just completed a meeting where it tried yet again to grapple with the Government's higher school certificate agenda, an agenda which began more than three years ago and which is still not completed less than 12 months before the end of the Government's term. Last year the Government released a white paper on the HSC. That white paper has the distinction of being one of the few white papers in the history of this State, perhaps the only one, that did not make any decisions; it said that further work was required and the Government would work it all out some time next year.

With only a week to go before the term of the Board of Studies expires on 30 June, it has only one meeting left to decide two important issues about the higher school certificate. The first is the structure of HSC subjects. In the past month the board has had to absorb something like 1,500 pages of material relating to 37 subjects. That material resulted from hurried consultation amongst teachers over the past few weeks. The board must make a decision by the end of next week. The second issue, which related to assessment procedures, has not been dealt with adequately by the Government or the Board of Studies. With one week to go before the current Board of Studies turns into a pumpkin Cinderella has not even arrived at the ball.

The Opposition calls on the Government to extend the term of the current Board of Studies to allow it extra time to grapple with the highly complex and technical questions the Government has forced on it in the past month. No doubt the response from the Government will be that the board has had three years to talk about the HSC. I agree, but when has the detailed work been done? Following the release of the white paper last year, in which the Government made no key decisions on subject structures or assessment procedures, the board went behind closed doors for almost 12 months. Last week I was staggered when the Minister for Education and Training could give no commitment, in the estimates committee hearing last week, to maintaining his timetable. He shoved it all back onto the Board of Studies. The term of the current board needs to be extended to allow that work to be completed.

Nothing demonstrates the Government's approach to education better than the back-to-school allowance, which has nothing to do with education and everything to do with the Government being able to clock up a few so-called achievements. It is all about the re-election of the Carr Government. The Government hopes that next year people will forget the \$71 million per annum cut in capital works spending for schools and the \$55 million per annum cut to school budgets. The Government also hopes the public will forget that no decisions have been made about the higher school certificate. The Government hopes that parents will simply focus on the fact that it sent them a \$50 cheque for each of their children. People are neither cynical nor stupid, as the Carr Government believes them to be.

It is a mark of the Government's underestimation of the community at large that it is committed to paying the back-to-school allowance for the next two years in the belief that people are motivated something as simple as a \$50 cheque. The

program is administratively wasteful and contains no accountability mechanism for the expenditure of a large amount of public money: \$55 million plus administration costs of \$4 million, as well as school administration costs. The program is in the education budget, yet it has nothing to do with education. Last week in the estimates committee hearing the Opposition raised this with the Minister. When asked in a previous estimates committee hearing about the administration of the scheme the Minister said:

If it is going to cost a couple of per cent or perhaps a bit more of the total amount of money allocated to administer the scheme, that would be deemed to be fair and reasonable.

This year's budget papers reveal that the cost of administration of the scheme is \$4 million, that is, about 7.5 per cent and almost four times what the Minister said last year it would cost. In last year's estimates committee hearing the Minister also said this about costs:

I do not anticipate they will be borne by schools from their global budgets.

He was referring again to the administration of the scheme. This year the Opposition again probed the issue and the Minister said at great length that if schools spent time on administering the scheme, that was too bad for them because they should already have a list of the students enrolled. That does not take into account non-government schools, which had to send out forms to parents to get permission to send addresses to the Government. The Government has made no comment on the costs incurred by schools involved in administering this scheme, which is nothing more than blatant political pork-barrelling.

It also says nothing about the plaintive cries of principals across New South Wales, who have roundly criticised the Government for taking up the time of school assistants in administering this pork-barrelling exercise on behalf of the Carr Government. This took place at a time when school assistants were trying to do important work at the beginning and end of the school year. School reports had to be prepared and enrolments completed, but amidst all of that the Government told them to drop what they were doing, fill out the forms and put the data onto computer disks. That took many hours and cost schools dearly, yet the Government has failed to take account in this budget what is clearly a hidden administrative cost.

Another 50 per cent could be added to the \$4 million in administrative costs of the back-to-school allowance that the Government has admitted to,

because the costs have been borne by schools. The Government says that is just too bad and the Minister believes it is good accountability. The Opposition says the accountability processes have been shocking. Last week in the estimates committee the Minister was asked how many cheques had been duplicated and had to be reissued, how many stop cheque orders were issued, how many people received cheques for children they do not have, how many people did not receive cheques and had to ask the department for cheques to be issued, and how many schools had significant delays in processing cheques. The Minister did not know the answer to these questions, which involve \$55 million of taxpayers' money.

The Department of Education and Training is the largest public or private organisation in the entire country bar none. Yet last Friday morning in the estimates committee the Minister, with all the advisers he had at his disposal, could not provide an answer about accountability of the scheme he signed off for \$55 million. That \$50 million could have employed 1,000 teachers or airconditioned every demountable school building in this State—and there would have been enough money left over to run them for three years. His advisers eventually said that they might be able to obtain an answer over the phone. The phone call was made and an hour later the Minister finally gave a figure of 42. That figure rings a bell. For those who have read Douglas Adams' excellent series of books, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, that is the answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything else.

Mr Knowles: What were the five titles of the trilogy?

Mr O'DOHERTY: I shall give the Minister the five titles of the trilogy after the debate. I am pleased he has read them all. The Minister, being an aficionado of Douglas Adams, knows that the number 42 is a nonsense figure. The Minister for Education and Training should also know that 42 is not an adequate answer to the significant questions about accountability for the back-to-school allowance that the Opposition has raised in this Parliament.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough): Order! The honourable member for Ku-ring-gai will ignore the interjections of the Minister. The honourable member needs no assistance from the honourable member for Coffs Harbour or the honourable member for Tamworth.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The Opposition has raised significant questions and the answers do not equal 42. The Minister also said some cheques, an indeterminate number, had been reissued or had incorrect details provided by schools which had to be changed. Let me inform the House of some cases the Opposition has documented in relation to the back-to-school allowance. The first is that of a woman the Government said it would help: a single mother living in the western suburbs of Sydney who said she did not ask for the \$150 but would rather it had gone to her children's school.

Nonetheless, the Government had promised it and because of that promise she had budgeted for it. Did her cheque arrive on time? No, it did not. The school her children had previously attended gave the department an incorrect address, even though it had a clear indication from her that she had changed her address within the previous three years. She phoned the hotline. She was told she had to sign a statutory declaration saying that she had moved. She was also told she had to get a statutory declaration from the principal of her new school. She was told she would not receive the money for one or two months.

Finally, she got the new forms to enable her to receive the allowance. She had them signed by a justice of the peace and sent them back, paying for the mail herself. She then received more forms saying that the principals of both schools, old and new, had to sign the new forms. She phoned the Minister's office to complain and the staff provided her with no advice or assistance. These are the people the Government said it was helping. However, it is making them jump through hoops and treating them like criminals because they are asking for something the Government said they would get.

A mother of three from Forbes received a back-to-school allowance cheque for 12 children. Another mother of three in the same town received a back-to-school allowance cheque for seven children. She was told to send back the cheque and it would be reissued to another family. She had been given a cheque for other children whose names started with the same three letters as the names of her children. That is an extraordinary piece of administration that the Government still has not accounted for. She was also told that she might be able to give the money to the other parents if she knew them. She said she would do that. She gave the money to the other parents. Later, the other parents received another cheque from the Government. How much money has been wasted because the Government has duplicated payments in that fashion?

Glendale High School had not sent the details of its students to the department. As a result, parents had to wait until March for payment. The Government wants to blame the schools, but the problem is not with the schools. The problem lies with the department's system. Maitland Grossman High School had to send in the disks three times. The formats were still not compatible and they had to send the information in hard copy. A Mr Paul L. from Nelson, which is near Windsor, received two cheques for \$150 each. He has three children at school. The only difference between the two cheques was that the names were in a different order. How many parents received duplicate cheques but were not as honest as Mr L., who sent one of them back?

The Leader of the Opposition received two cheques, and he and his school got the blame for that when the Government tried to defend itself. Chris Van Der Kley of the Blue Mountains received two cheques for the same child. A constituent of the honourable member for South Coast has two children, one in a public school and one in a Catholic school. He received a cheque for only one. The hotline could not provide an answer. So the story goes on. This story has not yet been explained by the Government, and the Opposition will pursue it. The Opposition believes parents are demanding answers to this waste of education money.

The Government's claim to have provided an additional 90,000 computers to schools is highly dubious. The numbers in the past four budgets do not add up. In addition, schools are asking: where is the teacher training to implement computer programs in the classrooms? The Government made a clear promise to train every teacher, and it has trained only one-third of the teachers. The Government has squibbed it. It wants to create a cargo cult mentality: it will provide computers for the schools, but it is too bad about training, and it is too bad about connecting the computers. It cannot stick a plaque on those or issue a press release about them, it wants to provide only computers in boxes. The Government has told New South Wales schools that they can do the rest. Teachers claim the program is inadequate to meet their needs as classroom professionals.

For four consecutive years the Government has cut capital works spending on schools. This year \$71 million less is allocated to meet the needs of public education facilities in the State than was allocated in the last budget of the coalition Government. That is a cut of 35 per cent. That is a disgraceful running down of public education resources in New South Wales—and this is the Government that wants to complain about \$4 million which it claims has been

taken out of public education funding by the Federal Government in a budget which has actually increased overall funding for public education. The argument of the Minister for Education and Training is not consistent. He has cut \$71 million out of public school building funds, he has cut \$55 million out of classrooms of New South Wales in so-called productivity cuts, and he has taken \$55 million for the back-to-school allowance. Those cuts are of a greater magnitude than any cuts the Minister claims the Federal Government has made.

A great deal more needs to be said in the education debate but, as honourable members know, the Government has cut short the time allowed for members to speak in this debate. I have only a few minutes left to talk about some priorities in the electorate of Ku-ring-gai. Schools in my electorate have again been grossly underfunded by the Carr Government. Four years ago the Government took two schools off the capital works funding list. Those schools, Wahroonga and Mount Colah, were among the top 30 priorities in the State. This year, for the first time, the Government has allocated funding to one of those schools, Wahroonga. The funding will not flow through until next year. It is very late, but let us hope it does come through. The needs of the Wahroonga public school are still high on my agenda and I will continue to press for the needs of that school to be met, as I will in relation to the needs of other schools.

Brooklyn Public School needs a permanent solution to its overcrowding problem. The addition of demountables does not properly address the needs of Asquith Public School. Other schools have similar problems and I shall continue to pursue them with both this Government and the next. The Hornsby district was the last in the State to have a maintenance contract signed by the present Government. That shows the low priority it gives to people in the northern suburbs of Sydney. Secure commuter car parks are urgently needed. I am yet to receive an answer from the Minister for Transport as to when he will provide security and upgrading of the car park at the Berowra railway station. The provision of easy access to that station is also a high priority—at least it ought to be, but the Government says not to wait for the money. The situation is the same at Turramurra, another key station in the northern suburbs network.

The needs of Hawkesbury River station should be addressed. This Government must address the problems created by the steep steps at that station. They cause access problems for the elderly as well as for school children and those who experience other access difficulties, such as parents with

strollers. It is about time the Government gave serious thought to the suggestion made by my constituents and me that a tunnel be constructed under the railway line to provide easy access to the platforms at Hawkesbury River. Another project in Brooklyn is the best project I have ever come across to meet the diverse needs of that community. I spoke about it in this House last week, and I again pledge my support for the Lower Hawkesbury Visitor Information and Cultural Heritage Centre.

Another project in Brooklyn which deserves the support of the Government is the restoration of the old community hall. The hall was a centre for community debate. It has now been condemned, so many community activities in Brooklyn cannot take place. The backlog in the sewerage program needs attention. To give due credit to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing, that matter is being looked at, and I am currently consulting with the service set up by the Minister to talk about the needs of my electorate. However, that must not be paid for by increased levies on my constituents. The Berowra Valley bushland must be protected. One of my highest priorities is the preservation of as much of that bushland as possible from the impact of housing developments by the Department of Housing and Landcom.

There has been no upgrading of the Pacific Highway. That work must take precedence. The problems at Pearce's Corner must be addressed. Berowra needs a second road to take traffic out of the region and the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Hornsby Council must commence discussions and make a serious attempt to build it. That was a high priority among constituents I consulted at a recent community access meeting in Berowra, at which I spoke to constituents about the future of the area. Another high-priority issue for those in the northern part of my electorate is youth programs for Berowra. There are no significant youth facilities in the north of my electorate, and they should be provided by this Government and by the local council.

A significant cultural facility must be provided for the Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai area for the vast array of cultural performing arts programs held in the northern suburbs of Sydney. At present there is no such facility. That has been a priority of mine for as long as I have lived in the Hornsby shire, which is 34 years of my 38. Issues such as land tax must be tackled. I remind the House that the coalition will not allow constituents of my electorate to be taxed for living in their own homes. It will also review the tax on investment properties, which threatens to

increase rents in my electorate. The coalition will not allow anyone to threaten the existence of Hornsby hospital, as the current Government did.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough): On behalf of the honourable member for Vaucluse I welcome to the gallery the Bellevue Hill branch of the Liberal Party.

Mr SULLIVAN (Wollongong) [9.10 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak to the budget brought down by the Carr Labor Government.

Mr Debnam: Its last budget.

Mr SULLIVAN: As my colleague opposite intended to say, this will be one of many Labor budgets yet to come. I wish to refer to a number of the budget's key indicators. Growth is expected to increase by 3 per cent—one of the highest figures in Australia; inflation is expected to be 2.25 per cent; wages are expected to increase by 4 per cent; employment is expected to increase by 1.5 per cent; and investment is expected to increase by 8.25 per cent. Given that those forecasts are being made and that they are generally accepted within the financial community as being accurate if not conservative, that says much about previous budgets brought down by this Government.

The main aspects of the budget are that recurrent expenditure will increase by 2.6 per cent to just over \$21.9 billion; the budget surplus is estimated at \$45 million; capital spending will decrease by 11 per cent to \$3.1 billion; and net debt is expected to decrease to 5.2 per cent of gross State product—which makes New South Wales one of the least debt-ridden States in Australia, a significant factor in its AAA rating. No tax increases are forecast—although I do not disagree with any of the tax increases or emergency tax measures introduced in the previous budget. In the coming 12 months there will be increases in expenditure on community services—an area much neglected by the Greiner-Fahey Government—health, education, and police. The State Government must accept responsibility for those areas as they are crucial to the wellbeing of the community and the way in which it functions. It has long been said in Labor Party circles that if the Government looks after the young, the old, the dispossessed and the disabled, it is a sign of a good Labor government that is doing a good job.

It must be remembered that the unemployment rate in the Illawarra is approximately double the State average. In the next financial year additional works and projects valued at \$143 million will be carried out in the Illawarra district. That is an

increase of more than \$20 million on last year's spending. That measure will generate about 2,800 jobs. In the previous year the Government was able to generate just over 2,600 jobs. Again, that is an improvement on the projects achieved last year. The major projects for the coming year include the replacement of Hickman House and the Isedale Wing, at an estimated total cost of \$62.5 million. The building—which was designed in the late 1930s and completed between 1948 and 1952—reflects the medical thinking, design, layout, and so on, of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

An amount of \$2.6 million has been allocated for the completion of the Illawarra Entertainment Centre, which will be a major benefit to the Illawarra region. In the year 2000 that entertainment centre, which will have a seating capacity of 6,000, will be the venue for the national conference of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The centre will also be the venue in the year 2000 for an international conference of Lions Club members. These are just some of the benefits to flow to the Illawarra area from this facility—a facility initially promised before the 1991 election but only now being delivered in the first term of the Labor Government.

An amount of \$258,000 has been set aside for predesign electrification works on the Dapto-to-Kiama railway line, and \$400,000 has been allocated to the initial design work for the Lake Illawarra entrance, which has been a continuing problem for many years. That project involves a dollar-for-dollar subsidy or matching of funds from the State Government and the cities of Wollongong and Shellharbour. In effect, State Government funding of \$400,000 will mean \$800,000 spending on design, initial tender letting, and so on. Next year it is expected \$2 million will be spent on the project, and in the third financial year just over \$1.4 million will be spent, bringing the total cost of the project to \$4.2 million. They are major projects for which people in the Illawarra have been waiting many years. It is to the credit of the Labor Government that finally, at long last, facilities and services that should have been provided in the Illawarra many years ago are now being provided, and that has been achieved in less than four years. That shows a conscientious Government looking after its heartland.

This financial year \$34.5 million will be spent on new projects in the Wollongong electorate. An amount of \$3.201 million of an estimated total expenditure of just under \$4 million has been allocated to education and training, to be spent on rebuilding Port Kembla Public School on a site well

away from its old site opposite Port Kembla Copper, the major smelter in the Illawarra. Why anyone would build a primary school on the other side of a narrow lane from a copper smelter that had been in production for eight years has always intrigued and baffled me. The rhyme and reason for that decision are beyond me. Nonetheless, that is precisely what was done. In 1916 that site, on the boundary fence of a smelter that has the highest industrial chimney in Australia, was thought suitable for the building of a primary school. The Government will now relocate that primary school well away from industrial areas, which will benefit the children who attend the school and bring peace of mind to their parents.

An allocation is made for the proposed \$62.5 million redevelopment of Wollongong Hospital. This work is sometimes referred to as stage two of the project and involves the demolition of two eight-storey buildings, Hickman House and the Isedale wing. Those buildings will be empty by the end of the year and, it is to be hoped, demolished very early next year. That will clear the site for the construction of a major new facility on the site. In the order of \$120 million will have been spent on Wollongong Hospital by the time the project is completed. While the hospital will not be entirely new, it will be state of the art and a great credit to the Health Department and the health system. It will at long last be able to provide the services that should be located in the Illawarra to meet the health needs of the people of the region.

A sum of \$70,000 has been allocated for the nuclear medicine department at Wollongong, being the culmination of almost \$1 million spent to date. As well, the clinical services building, a \$50.6 million project, will be completed this year. Approximately \$1.5 million has been allocated for finalisation of construction. The Marine Ministerial Holding Corporation will spend \$250,000 on remediation and land improvements to the western end of the inner harbour, which will increase the usability of that area for other harbour purposes. The Port Kembla boat harbour, a small harbour located along the eastern breakwater, is being allocated a total of approximately \$2 million for the project and this financial year a sum of \$735,000. That expenditure brings to a total of just under \$1 million the allocation made within the responsibility of the Marine Ministerial Holding Corporation.

A number of projects are being undertaken at various TAFE facilities in Wollongong itself. Building course facilities are being allocated \$1.259 million, spray-painting booths will receive almost \$400,000 and vehicle trades resource rooms at Wollongong will be allocated just less than

\$100,000, making a total expenditure of \$1.735 million. Twenty-five new house units will be commenced this financial year at a cost of \$1.839 million. As well, a further 27 new housing units that have already been commenced will be completed at a cost of just over \$2.5 million. I pay a genuine compliment to the Minister for Housing, who is in the Chamber, on behalf of tenants of Department of Housing properties in the Wollongong electorate. The Government has undertaken a consistent, determined program of upgrading Department of Housing facilities in Wollongong.

The weekend before last I had the opportunity to inspect a number of the areas in which Department of Housing complexes are being upgraded, at Berkeley, at Crown Street, Wollongong, and at Bundaleer estate at Warrawong. The exterior improvements—practically none of the improvements are to the interior of residential units—have significantly changed the way in which people view their environment. One of the great criticisms I have of the previous Government is that it allowed this State's housing stock to run down and become a landlord to be despised rather than respected. The total value of the projects to which I have referred is just under \$4.5 million.

In the coming year the Department of Public Works and Services will spend \$94,000 on computer projects in my electorate. The Port Kembla Port Corporation has been allocated \$550,000 for the construction of a cargo shed on the multipurpose berth. The multipurpose berth was greatly used during the recent maritime lockout and is now starting to be used as we all hoped it would be. It is hoped that it will become an even busier centre of activity following the construction of the new spur line. A sum of \$2 million is being allocated this year for the rail spur and associated works, making a total of \$5.5 million for the project. The new cargo shed at the multipurpose berth and the spur line linking the multipurpose berth with the rail system will greatly enhance the ability to expand throughput of cargo at Port Kembla. A total allocation of just under \$3 million is being made to the Port Kembla Port Corporation.

The State Emergency Service will install new communications equipment at a cost of \$59,000. For Sydney Water there are a number of projects. Water distributions will be improved; sewer surcharges will be minimised; water and wastewater systems will be upgraded to reduce operational costs; Illawarra sewage treatment plants will be upgraded to protect beaches; the reliability of sewage treatment plants will be upgraded for ocean outfalls; and outflow from sewage pumping stations will be minimised. A

total of just under \$4.5 million will be spent in the electorate on those projects.

The Wollongong Sports Ground Trust has been allocated \$2.636 million to complete the entertainment centre. As I have said previously, the entertainment centre will provide a significant boost to economic activity in the Illawarra, centred on Wollongong. Much of the increased economic activity will come from tourism from the Southern Highlands and from right along the coast. It is expected that people will come even from western and south-western suburbs of Sydney. A total of \$11.388 million is being spent on roadworks.

The allocation can be divided into four sections. The first relates to major development works, an expenditure of \$6.5 million, centred primarily on the widening of the F6 expressway from the lights where Mount Ousley Road joins the Northern Distributor and the F6 through to Ghost Creek Bridge. A comparable amount is being spent on that work in the Keira electorate, making a total allocation of \$13 million. The second section of spending is for minor works, network development programs, which will receive an allocation of \$143,000. The third section of the expenditure relates to infrastructure maintenance programs. Rehabilitation of the Flinders Street pavement has been allocated \$100,000 and rehabilitation of the southern freeway pavement has been allocated \$942,500. A sum of \$1,643,530 is being spent on other infrastructure maintenance. The total expenditure for infrastructure maintenance comes to just under \$3 million.

The fourth section of the roadworks allocation is for road safety and traffic management. Traffic lighting is to benefit by \$400,000; existing cycleways will receive just over \$12,000; \$33,000 will be spent on upgrading certain cycleways; audio tactile facilities in Wollongong will be allocated \$7,000; a right-turn bay at Cowper and King Streets, Warrawong, will be allocated \$60,000; a roundabout at New Dapto Road and Mercury Street, Wollongong, will be allocated \$120,000; and \$10,000 is allocated for a new curb blister at Burelli Street, Wollongong. Together with other improvements, those projects amount to a total allocation of just over \$2 million. The work is a great tribute to this Government. Certainly it is very much appreciated by the residents and voters of the Illawarra.

I cannot but think back to the paucity of commitment and support for the Illawarra evident in my first term in the Parliament, from 1991 to 1995, when the Liberal and National parties were in

government. This is a pleasant change, to say the least. This Government has taken on the task of restoring, for example, the Department of Housing stock in our area and has made improvements such as replacing timber-framed windows with aluminium-framed windows, replacing cupboards, replacing exterior lighting, repairing concrete footpaths that have become broken, and erecting fences around properties to provide protection for residents and to act as a barrier to dissuade others from crossing the common property of Department of Housing settlements.

However, the steady progress that the Government has achieved in addressing school maintenance problems in Wollongong electorate has given me the greatest pleasure. Warrawong Primary School, built in the early 1950s, sticks most clearly in my mind. When I was elected no money had been spent on it for maintenance in approximately 15 years. By the time maintenance had to be done, the cost was just over \$1 million, which had to be split over two financial years. The school is now a delight for the students and teachers who occupy the buildings, and the parents are very proud of it. The results of neglect are obvious when one can walk into a kindergarten room, put one's finger in a hole in the carpet and start to rip it. Windows effectively painted closed show how little attention was paid to proper maintenance. All those problems have been addressed. The staff, the community and the students are very appreciative of the work done by this Government. I take great pleasure in complimenting the Minister for Education and Training on that aspect of the budget.

Mrs STONE (Sutherland) [9.30 p.m.]: I speak on the Appropriation Bill, and cognate bills. At a preliminary glance it would seem that the people of my electorate have made some gains, but a closer look reveals otherwise. An announcement was made that \$12 million has been allocated for the Woronora Bridge. Together with a decision to persist with the building of a two-lane bridge, these decisions are obviously inadequate if considered in light of current needs. The people of the Sutherland electorate continue to face the daily grind of delays, traffic snarls, frustration, pressures and inadequacies of Menai and River Roads as they cross the Woronora bridge. What has this Labor Government offered? The Minister for Roads stood on the banks of the Woronora last December with the pylons in the background and promised the people of Sutherland a new bridge.

This was the same week a by-election was announced and devastating fires raced through the Menai area. It is now six months since that promise

was given in the heat of the by-election, and very little visible progress is evident. Virtually nothing has been progressed in the past six months. To add insult to injury the Labor Government will provide only a fraction of the funds promised last December, to provide an inadequate bridge without the essential surrounding roadworks. The coalition commitment is estimated to cost a total of \$30 million, plus the necessary surrounding roadworks and a further \$38 million for the Bangor bypass. One must wonder exactly what this budgeted amount of \$12 million will provide. Certainly it will not provide much in the immediate future, because it is all that has been allocated in this financial year. The question is asked: has the contract been let?

Perhaps my very presence in this Parliament is a result of the electorate not believing that the bridge will be built by this Government. Perhaps the electorate sees clearly that the coalition will fulfil its promise to build the bridge—a bridge that would have been built already had this Government not taken it off the capital works program. One of the priorities set under strategic directions of the New South Wales Government is "to make New South Wales roads the safest in the world". A trip south to the Sutherland electorate during morning or evening peak hour would reveal some of the most unsafe road conditions anywhere in the State. What is the State budget contributing to alleviate the problems? Very little.

The bushfire last December highlighted the problems. Even the fact that the traffic gridlocked during the crisis and the fire chief gave advice supporting the necessity for the bridge does not seem to have spurred the Government into any action. The Government's own budget documents reveal a very slow start to honouring the by-election commitment. To date only \$1 million has been spent, with \$12 million allocated for the next year, with the completion date being after the year 2001. It is just not good enough, and it shows the Government's continued neglect of the people of the Sutherland electorate. A report on the Woronora Bridge reveals a promised two-lane bridge to replace an old two-lane bridge, but that certainly will not solve the traffic problems.

It also reveals no assessment of old plans; no letting of tender, to date; no Bangor bypass commitment; no traffic study, which was promised many times but still there is nothing; and no liaison with the community. I now turn to the families first initiative, which appears to be a program aimed to meet the desperate needs of families. The stated aims of the three-tier program is to focus on early childhood health visitors, volunteer home visiting

and parenting programs targeted at early intervention for children at risk. The alarm bells are ringing when I read further into the budget documents and find this statement:

The first year of this initiative will be devoted to consultation, planning, education, training and development of the program. New and expanded services will commence in 1999-2000 with available funding growing to \$2.4 million.

Assurances are needed that it is not just a budding bureaucracy. The budget documents also state that the Government will make available to non-government organisations nearly \$1 million for the provision of services. The theory is right and reads well, but effectively nothing but theory will happen in the first year. Many groups in the community are delivering vital services to families, and these organisations should be supported without delay. The Sutherland Family Network project commenced in 1994, and was initiated as part of the Hope for the Children project. The need was identified for many families who, today, are isolated in their community and live far from relatives and friends. Many are unsupported and find it hard to cope when problems arise, especially when they have a new baby. Through their experience and training, volunteers can help parents to cope better and gain greater joy from the early years of the new baby's life, enriching the family experience for all its members.

The Sutherland Family Network service is delivered by trained volunteers who have enjoyed bringing up their own children and wish to help other parents find the same joy from this experience. Volunteers are drawn from the local community and will visit the homes of families referred to the service through maternity hospitals, general practitioners or other services. The network has been part of a research project to prove the effectiveness of such programs in keeping families healthy, and preventing damaging consequences to individuals and society. This research was undertaken through the University of Technology under the auspices of the professor of nursing. Support has come from well-known retired Children's Magistrate, Barbara Holborow, who is the patron of the organisation. The founding Chairman of the Hope for the Children Foundation, Dr Clarrie Gluskie, said:

The Hope for the Children project began as an effort to combat the problem of family breakdown and inadequate child care within our community.

Families today are increasingly stressed with greater demands and less support, especially as so many women are now working. Many mothers are overwhelmed, as shown by the 30 per cent who experience postnatal depression, 27 per cent of whom are still depressed when their babies are four years old.

That is 7 to 8 per cent of our babies growing up with depressed mothers. It is not surprising that many of these children will not benefit from a nurturing environment as the strains and pressures evolve into family dysfunction. In the longer term, these children will show increasing rates of crime, violence, youth homelessness, suicide, drug addiction and alcoholism.

Surely the Government does not wish to reinvent the wheel. This organisation is already functioning in the community, along with many others, and for several years has been doing precisely what the families first program is planning to do, but not in its first year, as evidenced in the budget papers. While this Government is planning the practical assistance that so many families in our community need now, Sutherland Family Network is actively involved in the community. This non-government organisation is greatly underresourced and desperate for funds. Surely this is one project that would qualify as a worthy recipient of a government grant under this initiative to share in the reported \$1 million available for non-government organisations.

Budget funds were first allocated in 1997 to upgrade Sutherland hospital, and \$6.882 million has been allocated for works in progress. That includes the redevelopment of the emergency department that was planned by the coalition and would have been completed by now had it not been stalled by this Government. It was made possible by the area board financial planning with community funding and it is now reaching completion. The sum of \$79 million has been allocated for new works in the Sutherland hospital redevelopment. Again that work has been delayed three years by the Labor Government. Given the March 1999 election, one can be excused, I am sure, for being just a little cynical about the timing of the announcement of both the completion of the emergency department and the redevelopment. But the positive side is that the community will get an upgraded hospital at last.

An announcement has been made of a \$600,000 bathroom refurbishment at Sutherland hospital. The events leading up to that announcement reveal that it is simply a face-saving exercise from a government that was shamed into providing something in the budget, but I am sure the community is thankful to have that small but long overdue amount. The Sutherland community will be pleased that the bathrooms are to be upgraded. I applaud the staff, who strive, and indeed succeed, to provide a 1990s service in a 1950s facility. The inadequacy of the bathrooms was recognised years ago. The coalition planned a new hospital after a wide consultative process with the community in 1993, but under the current Minister for Health the Government shelved all plans when it came to office in March 1995.

The community-based redevelopment appeal committee, of which I was chairman, continued to work to improve facilities in spite of the withdrawal of support from the Government. A member of that committee was the general manager of Abbotts Australasia, whose guidance and encouragement resulted in his staff undertaking the bathroom refurbishment as a company-staff community project. Once again with internal and external fundraising—and I emphasise that no government funds were involved—the grossly inadequate 1950s style bathrooms were upgraded. It is important to note that had the coalition's plan of the early 1990s been progressed, that would not have been necessary. Recently some of the bathrooms were completed but the remaining old bathrooms have proved to be an enormous embarrassment to the present Government. Accordingly, it has been shamed into providing the necessary funds to improve these vital facilities to an acceptable standard.

The coalition's master development control plan, to be implemented in separate stages, passed the feasibility stage in 1994. The first stage, the emergency department, was approved and was to be funded with \$3.2 million from the coalition area funds, supplemented by community fundraising. The Government has been vocal in stating that the coalition did not place the hospital's redevelopment on its capital works program. How hypocritical that is, when for three consecutive years the Government has had the opportunity to progress the hospital's redevelopment, but has not included it in the capital works program. It had that opportunity in 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98, but nothing has been done.

That has not been lost on the Sutherland electorate and I am confident that the electorate will recognise the political implications of the Government's sudden rediscovery of the need to place the hospital on the capital works program in this election year. The community has continued to support Sutherland hospital in spite of negative and sometimes destructive campaigns against the redevelopment by some Sutherland Shire Labor councillors. The emergency department redevelopment is nearing completion, and it is worth placing on the record that it has been achieved without any government funds.

Budget Paper No. 2 refers to the growth in home and community care program funding that will enable services to be maintained as well as expanded in such areas as food services. I draw the attention of the House to the difficult circumstances under which Sutherland Food Services, formerly Meals on Wheels, operates. Sutherland Food

Services provides an average of more than 200 meals each day to the frail aged and people with disabilities in the shire. After its incorporation, Sutherland Food Services operated for some months from a mobile cool room because no funds were made available from the Ageing and Disability Department.

The service currently pays a commercial rate of rent to the Sutherland hospital, with no security of tenure. That vital service, which assists people to continue to be independent, and minimises premature residential care, is not being treated equitably compared with services in other local government areas. With the increase of almost \$15 million provided in the budget, I sincerely hope that the inequity will be corrected and that some of the funds will find their way south to this service in the Sutherland electorate to provide a satisfactory facility to meet the proper standards required by the Government.

The transfer of Meals on Wheels from Sutherland hospital to an incorporated management committee resulted in savings of around \$500,000 to the hospital. The question needs to be asked: did the savings benefit the people of the Sutherland electorate and Sutherland hospital or did the funds drift across to other parts of the area health service, perhaps east? In summary, the lack of an adequate Woronora Bridge and the dumping of the redevelopment of Sutherland hospital are not the only areas of neglect in the Sutherland electorate. Roads are not being upgraded, and funds from the sale of public land in the electorate are being redirected outside the area.

The Menai part of the electorate is connected to the eastern part of the electorate by the Woronora Bridge, and there is a desperate need for the promised Menai-Engadine traffic study that was promised before Christmas 1997, but which has made little apparent progress. Railway stations in the Sutherland electorate are sad and neglected places, and would engender little pride in the community. Graffiti and peeling paint do not give railway staff much reason to have pride in their stations. Some months ago the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads grandstanded about surveillance cameras being a purported safety measure. Closer scrutiny on one station in my electorate revealed that the cameras did not operate on a continuous basis, if at all.

The schools in my electorate are of great concern to me. With the abandonment of the cyclic maintenance program, many schools increasingly find ordinary maintenance a problem, with the only

solution being to use precious funds raised by parents for basic repairs, and that is absolutely unacceptable. One school in my electorate faces an obvious disadvantage because a longstanding commitment, along with funds for improvements, disappeared when this Government came to office. Where is the genuine care for families under stress? What about the drug problems with our young people? What about the ever-increasing waiting lists in our hospitals? What about the community's fear about the lack of law and order? What about the mounting fear of people to walk the streets at night and, more importantly, to feel safe in their own homes? What about the poor quality of roads, the broken promises for a vital facility such as the Woronora Bridge and a district hospital and well maintained schools? Where is the equity in the funding allocation process?

It would seem that the people of my electorate are being punished for providing a Labor-free zone. This year the Government has been shamed into giving just a little. The major funding announcements for my electorate will come into force not this year but after the March 1999 election. In essence there are few immediate promises, because I am confident that by the time these promises are implemented there will be a new government—the coalition government—that keeps and meets its commitments.

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [9.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Sutherland on her well-read speech, even though she was in breach of the standing orders. I will not bother to read my speech. When I became a member of Parliament in 1988 there were three hospitals in the Auburn electorate—St Joseph's Hospital, where my mother died, Lidcombe Hospital and Auburn District Hospital. After four years of Liberal government in this State—first under Premier Greiner and then under Premier Fahey, when the present Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Health—only one hospital remained in the Auburn electorate. Every day Auburn District Hospital tries to deal with 100,000 patients in my electorate.

I weep for people in the Sutherland electorate who are confronted with so many problems, but the honourable member for Sutherland should remember that the coalition had seven years to fix those problems and it failed to do so. This Government, which has been in office for just over three years, is trying to clean up the mess left after seven years of Liberal-National Party government. Where do we go from here? What effect will the Olympic Games have on my electorate? The Fahey Government won the right to stage the Olympic Games in Sydney, and I vividly remember where I was when Premier

Fahey made that great leap. I was working in a room at the Sheriton Hotel in Dacca, Bangladesh.

Mr Hartcher: Ha, ha!

Mr NAGLE: I will tell the honourable member for Gosford, who is laughing, why I was in the Sheriton Hotel at Dacca, Bangladesh. I had the great honour of being asked to go there to run a series of lectures on parliamentary practice and procedure to help the Bangladesh Government form a better democracy. It is all right for the honourable member for Gosford to go to New York, London and all those great places, but I was in Bangladesh doing the right thing by my constituents, the people of New South Wales and the people of Australia. When I got the news about the Olympic Games and when I saw the Premier of this State, the Hon. John Fahey, jumping in the air I said, "That is great because more money will be spent in my electorate over the next few years than has every been spent there."

What a great job the member for Campbelltown, the Minister for the Olympics, has done. The Minister was previously not one of my friends, but he is now. I admire him for the fantastic work he has done in co-ordinating the Olympic Games in New South Wales. If members of the Opposition had the task of co-ordinating the Olympic Games they would still be trying to work out where to locate the athletic track. The Minister for the Olympics, the honourable member for Campbelltown, has done a good job of co-ordinating the Games, and that is reflected in the amount of money being expended on developing the Olympic Games. In this financial year \$2,185 million will be spent to promote the Olympics.

Perhaps the honourable member for Sutherland would have a bit of money for Meals on Wheels if New South Wales was not staging the Olympic Games, but we have to progress and promote the Olympic Games because they will be of enormous economic benefit not only for my electorate but for New South Wales. I have done a tremendous amount of work in my electorate to promote the Olympic Games. The honourable member for Gosford and the honourable member for Murwillumbah have not bothered to raise money, but I did. I brought two women from Atlanta, Georgia, who worked in community projects, to tell the people of Auburn how the Olympic Games would affect their electorate. The people in my electorate are appreciative of the work I am doing to promote the Olympic Games in their area.

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for Murwillumbah, who I admit is a good member of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, should use his imagination—which is something most Opposition members do not have—to promote the Olympic Games in New South Wales. I referred earlier to three hospitals—Lidcombe Hospital, St Joseph's Hospital and Auburn District Hospital. Lidcombe Hospital was closed by the former Government. St Joseph's Hospital, which has had organisational changes, is doing a great job in palliative care and rehabilitation. I am indebted to the nuns and staff at St Joseph's Hospital for the good work they do. Last year 20,000 people were treated in the casualty and emergency services department of Auburn District Hospital. What a great turnover. That hospital does a magnificent job, and I do not want to see it closed.

This Government has spent more money on health in the three years that it has been in office than the former Government did in its seven years in office. I have in my electorate people from 48 different nationalities, and that excludes the Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Welsh and Scottish people. It is difficult to co-ordinate activities for those 48 different nationalities, but this Government has spent \$43 million on the English-as-a-second-language program. The only way to deal with seasonally adjusted unemployment rates of 18 per cent and non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rates of 22 per cent is to make English a second language for the hard-working people in the Auburn electorate. That \$43 million will go a long way towards helping a lot of people in my electorate; it will give them a fighting chance to get a job. The Government has allocated \$1.3 million for multicultural education in schools. On Saturdays various ethnic organisations conduct classes to teach high school and primary schoolchildren English, history and other subjects.

The Government has allocated \$600,000 for antiracist education, \$1 million for 18 additional community language teachers, \$100,000 for overseas trained teachers, \$2 million for TAFE courses and \$47 million for small business development projects. There is a budget allocation of \$4 million to build a new police station in Auburn. In 1932, when Jack Lang was to be dismissed by Sir Philip Game, 22,303 rifles were stored at Auburn police station just in case the people of Auburn rioted because of the dismissal of the Lang Government. A good friend of mine, Ted Challenger—a former councillor who is now deceased, God bless his soul—and his father saw the rifles stored at the police station for those purposes. Auburn police station was formerly an old house. Now, thanks to this Government, \$4 million will be spent on a new police station that will house

up to 300 police officers. After Bankstown, Auburn has one of the highest crime rates in the area. The other day I said on radio 2KY—

Mr Hartcher: Ha, ha!

Mr NAGLE: The honourable member for Gosford laughs. But when I left school at 14 I got a job as a telegram boy at Lidcombe post office. It was a job that gave me a start to my working life and enabled me to meet new people and advance my working career. There are no jobs for young people in the Auburn electorate. Of the 18 to 22 per cent unemployed, more than 50 per cent are between the ages of 14 and 24. Where will the young people, of whom the honourable member for Sutherland spoke, find jobs if they are not available? Jobs are not being provided by the Federal Government. Yet Prime Minister Howard said his Government would move mountains and change the course of the world to reduce the rate of unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. After nearly three years of a Howard Government we still have high youth unemployment and have not seen the implementation of a major youth employment project. Under Prime Minister Keating's Labor Government, things were being done. An amount of \$5.5 million has been allocated for work on the Bicentennial Park Trust, and the Department of Corrective Services has been allocated \$1.8 million.

One disappointment in the budget is that my electorate did not receive a hoped-for \$2.2 million allocation for work at Auburn West Public School, which has 22 demountable classrooms. It is shameful that my Government and the previous Liberal governments under Askin, Fahey and Greiner have not replaced those 22 demountable classrooms. Today I made representations to the Minister for Education and Training and he gave me an absolute assurance that upon Labor's return in March next year—and we will be returned—plans will be drawn up, for which \$60,000 has been allocated, and within two years the demountable classrooms will be replaced by a new school building.

Of the students who attend Auburn West Public School, 98 per cent are from an ethnic background. The teachers do a magnificent job, teaching in demountable classrooms that are hot in summer and cold in winter because there is no airconditioning. The coalition decided against airconditioning being installed in those classrooms. Auburn west will get a good school out of the next budget allocation. The Minister told me today that in this speech I could tell the House and the students and parents of Auburn west that they will get a good

result from the next budget. The school did not receive an allocation this year because \$3.7 million had to be allocated for a primary school to be constructed on the Olympic village site, which will house 15,000 people within the next decade.

The good news is that the long-suffering Birrong Girls High School will get a new library. Birrong Boys High School has a great library but the library at the girls high school is pathetic. During its seven years in office, the coalition promised a new library year in and year out for Birrong Girls High School—one of Sydney's top working-class girls high schools—but never delivered. We are now delivering \$2.2 million for that new library. Another big allocation—one for which I thank Linda and Nola of my staff, who always fight the hard fight—is for housing commission accommodation. We will spend nearly \$4 million on housing development in the electorate of Auburn to provide more housing. Remember the coalition's fiasco when it lost \$500 million on HomeFund?

Mr Hartcher: What is \$500 million?

Mr NAGLE: That \$500 million would house very many families in my electorate. The Minister for the Environment might tell me if I am right in thinking that the Government spent \$20 million on Wilson Park. Yet when the honourable member for Gosford was Minister for the Environment my electorate received only \$200,000 in seven years to undertake a study on one of the most polluted sites in Sydney. Industrial mates of his side of politics, and great contributors to the Liberal Party, dumped toxic waste on Wilson Park and pulled off the greatest land exchange con.

Public works has received an allocation of \$506,000, Fire Brigades \$400,000 and, as I have said, the Police Service will get a new police station at Auburn, which will service the electorate of Auburn all the way through to the Hume Highway. I want to mention my local police command, who do a great job under Bob Treharne and before him Ken Hughes. For my birthday my wife was kind enough to take me out to dinner. Again the honourable member for Gosford laughs. I will tell the House what I did that night, which he would not. On the way home we heard a woman screaming in a Cumberland Road convenience store. She was being held up at gunpoint by two men. We chased those gunmen up Wellington Road and noted the number and type of their car. The police have informed me that the people who held up the convenience store have been arrested.

My wife and I returned to the shop and observed four police officers gather evidence and deal with distressed people in a fantastic manner. It was great police work. I have recommended one of those police officers for an award for the services he rendered and the way he dealt with the matter. That is the type of police officer who works in my electorate under great difficulty. I was amazed to hear that he has been a police officer at the Auburn patrol for 10 years. Because of difficulties in the area, not many police officers stay in the Auburn patrol for 10 years; they usually transfer to areas such as Gosford or Vacluse. He will receive an award, and the reward for the people of Auburn will be a new police station. The State Rail Authority has been allocated \$9 million to upgrade Lidcombe railway station, another great advancement.

Ms Allan: All the people of western Sydney will appreciate that.

Mr NAGLE: And so will I. For a change, train services to the western suburbs are being improved. The people of my electorate are very grateful for all the advances that have occurred. Road works have been allocated \$12 million. Money for the reconstruction of the Hume Highway-Roberts Road intersection had been earmarked for the Eastwood electorate, but the Minister for Roads decided to allocate that funding to the electorate of Auburn. When that overhead pass is opened in September it will free up the Hume Highway and it will be a great boost to western Sydney as well as the local area. An amount of \$1 million has been allocated for the widening of Silverwater Road and landscaping on the M4, Holker Street, Victoria Road and Silverwater Road. All of these advances in my electorate would never have been achieved under a coalition government.

I assure the honourable member for Sutherland that if, unfortunately, her party wins the election in March, Auburn District Hospital will be closed; it will not merely have a change of status. I tell the people of Auburn and the hospital staff that within 12 months of the coalition coming to office—and God hope it does not—Auburn District Hospital will be closed. The sooner the people of Auburn realise that, the more likely that that excellent hospital, with its hard-working doctors and nurses, will be preserved. This Government will preserve Auburn District Hospital and will fight for its survival, as I fought for St Joseph's Hospital and Lidcombe Hospital. We will not allow the coalition to close Auburn District Hospital.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Kerr.

WORKPLACE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE BILL**Second Reading****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [10.10 p.m.]: The coalition parties oppose the Workplace Video Surveillance Bill, which seeks to set up a program to regulate video surveillance in the workplace. The bill results from a report by a committee established for that purpose. The coalition parties have no objection to the regulation of video surveillance in the workplace; it is appropriate and involves a balance between the rights of employers and employees and the important right of privacy. At present the law regulates the use of listening devices both inside and outside the workplace, and the Privacy Committee Act provides statutory rights to privacy.

Accordingly, the coalition has no objection in principle to the regulation of video surveillance in the workplace or elsewhere. However, the structure of the bill is unbalanced and not in the best interests of employers or employees. Therefore, the Opposition opposes the bill. In May 1998 an article in the *Daily Telegraph* showed how surveillance cameras at the Penrith Panthers club had been effective in preventing not only criminal conduct, which is their purpose, but also false and fraudulent claims for public liability. The newspaper headline stated, "But cameras foil \$20,000 fraud attempt". The article showed a man pretending to fall down stairs and injure his back when in fact he caused himself to fall. Referring to the film, the article stated:

It clearly shows the man, aged in his mid-30s, hovering about the stairway for two minutes, then throwing himself down the stairs.

He complained to the club that he hurt his back and suffered ankle damage after slipping on the stairway and would be seeking damages.

Security staff were told and the camera and film were checked before the man was shown the incriminating footage.

"You can imagine how the man felt when we replayed it to him. He did not want to take the matter further," Panthers security manager . . . said.

Panthers has almost eliminated insurance claims and its annual insurance premium has been cut by \$115,000 since a . . . security system was installed just over a year ago.

The use of surveillance cameras is widespread in shopping centres, large clubs and areas of high crime, such as George Street, Sydney, and Cabramatta, as well as various places of

employment. The purpose of surveillance cameras is simple: it is to detect criminal conduct. The legislation acknowledges that purpose in principle but sets up such an elaborate web of bureaucracy as to make it nugatory in practice. The legislation provides that a magistrate cannot issue a consent for covert surveillance unless he is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to justify its issue. Of course, the only time a person will seek surveillance is when he has a suspicion. If he has clear evidence he does not need surveillance. An employer will not need surveillance if he has evidence, and will be able to act on the evidence that he has.

Suspicion may result in the installation of surveillance cameras. Because the cameras are very expensive to install and run no employer would wish to install them unless there are grounds for doing so. The legislation states that the magistrate must have reasonable grounds to justify the issue of an authority. The concept of reasonability at law has been tried and tested. It requires more than a suspicion: it requires evidence to justify that suspicion. The coalition believes that that threshold test is too high and that it will cause many employers to balk at seeking the court's consent. Further, that test will cause other employers who have justifiable grounds for installing surveillance cameras not to proceed with an application.

The legislation provides that where a camera is installed for security purposes and catches an employee acting wrongly, that footage cannot be used unless its usage can be shown to have a benefit which outweighs the infringement of the employee's right to privacy. That is an extraordinary proposition. It means that the criminal conduct—which is what is involved—cannot be prosecuted unless a threshold test is passed as to whether the video evidence will outweigh some alleged infringement of privacy. There is no right of privacy, and nor should there be an alleged right of privacy, for the commission of criminal conduct. Criminal conduct is against the interests of society, contrary to good employment and contrary to the tenets of an ordered society.

When a person has been caught engaging in criminal conduct, that should be the end of the matter. But no, the legislation purports to lay down a further test before such evidence can be used in court proceedings. That provision is objectionable and is rejected. The legislation further provides that video surveillance will not be authorised in any toilet facility, shower or other bathing facility in the workplace, or to monitor work performance. That means that employees will know in advance which workplace areas cannot be videotaped. Therefore,

they will know that there are refuge areas in which they can engage in selling drugs—which is a problem in the workplace—or engage in consuming alcohol or in any other illicit or illegal activity, or any activity contrary to their contract of employment.

That exemption, while it may sound appropriate, is clearly inappropriate because it designates no-go areas. Even if people make false insurance claims—itself a criminal offence—video surveillance of them in the workplace cannot be authorised. Where people pretend that machines cause them back injury, a video cannot be used to survey that workplace, because that would involve the monitoring of their work performance. Once again, the legislation is too wide and is unacceptable. It allows for the authority to be in force for only 30 days or such other period as may be prescribed by the regulations. That means that there will be an ongoing bureaucratic system in which the employer has to go back to court each 30 days, or such other period as is allowed, which must be prescribed by regulation, and go through the whole process again. The installation of a camera, which is expensive, will involve a number of court applications.

Finally, detailed records will have to be kept, as provided in clause 21. The use of a surveillance camera is to be monitored by logs and registers. Those requirements impose a series of bureaucratic hurdles which make it uneconomic and inefficient and will mean that only in extreme, exceptional cases will an employer feel justified in going through all those preliminary steps. The bill provides that the legislation will be reviewed after five years. The Opposition consulted widely on the bill before adopting a position on it, and that position was laid down in the Legislative Council. As was said in the other place, the grounds for opposing the bill are simple. A letter from the Barrington Group stated:

The Workplace Video Surveillance Bill fails to reflect the reality of commercial life in Australia.

That summarises the matter in a nutshell. This legislation has been drafted by bureaucrats who are not involved in the workplace and have no experience of running a workplace. They simply theorise; they think that this bill looks good and will achieve a balance when in fact it will achieve nothing of the sort. The Opposition does not believe that this bill is capable of being saved by amendment; it believes that the bill should be redrafted. The Opposition will support sensible legislation to control video surveillance equipment, just as it supports sensible legislation to control

listening devices, but it will not support legislation that is unbalanced and over the top.

The Opposition believes that this legislation will not achieve any objective other than to impose a series of onerous and costly tests on employers. It will lead to ineffective use of modern equipment designed to prevent fraud, especially insurance fraud, and criminal conduct in the workplace. The two main purposes of using surveillance equipment are to prevent fraud, especially workers compensation fraud, and criminal conduct. Surely society would applaud those social objectives. Yet this legislation would prevent reasonable and proper video surveillance being undertaken in all but the most extraordinary circumstances.

Mr KINROSS (Gordon) [10.22 p.m.]: Before I comment on the detail of the bill, as chairman of the Opposition WorkCover group I am disappointed that it has been introduced prematurely. After all, in September last year the Government commissioned an inquiry into the workers compensation system in New South Wales, known as the Grellman inquiry. Prior to that an inquiry into the WorkCover system in New South Wales was undertaken in November 1996. The Opposition is concerned that the Government has introduced this bill, this little carrot, when it expected legislation relating to the WorkCover scheme to be introduced, guillotined, and rammed through the House next week. The nature of this bill seems to contrast with clause 43A of the Workers Compensation (General) Regulation. As the honourable member for Gosford said, the Opposition does not have a blanket prohibition on surveillance. Indeed, surveillance can help to monitor the extent to which workers or foremen in the workplace are complying with occupational health and safety obligations and various other matters.

Not only has this bill been introduced prematurely, the Government did not consult enough relevant interest groups about what it seeks to do. The Opposition is concerned that the bill will enable surveillance to be used in the workplace for ulterior purposes, despite some of the good that may result from it. The community is concerned about the use of video cameras in public places and the Government is currently examining that matter in detail. Indeed, in the past the honourable member for Cabramatta has said that video cameras have assisted in detecting crime in public places. Analysis of the statistics shows that the use of video cameras has simply resulted in crime moving to other areas. Privacy is a relevant factor when considering video surveillance in the workplace. The Opposition is contemplating whether it should move to disallow

the regulation to which I referred earlier. The introduction of that regulation is symptomatic of the Government's inclination to introduce workers compensation legislation prematurely. Next week at the latest we expect to receive a detailed report on this issue. That begs the question of why this bill has been introduced now.

[Debate interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Extension of Sitting

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That the sitting be extended beyond 10.30 p.m.

WORKPLACE VIDEO SURVEILLANCE BILL

Second Reading

[Debate resumed.]

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [10.26 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

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

Noes, 41

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

Pairs

Mr Carr	Mr Collins
Ms Harrison	Mr Tink

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

DUTIES AMENDMENT (MANAGED INVESTMENTS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 June.

Mr PHILLIPS (Miranda—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.36 p.m.]: This bill responds to the Federal Government's Managed Investments Bill and specifically relates to recommendations received from the Wallis inquiry into the financial industry. The amendments in the Federal bill provide for increased efficiency and reduced litigation by merging a number of managed trusts. The object of the State Government's Duties Amendment (Managed Investments) Bill is to amend the Duties Act 1997 to provide that ad valorem duty is not chargeable in respect of the transfer of dutiable property to a responsible entity if the transfer is made for the purpose of complying with the new Commonwealth regulatory regime for certain investment schemes and for certain instruments that amend or vary an instrument that establishes a

scheme subject to that new regulatory regime, namely, a managed investment scheme. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

Mr KNIGHT (Campbelltown—Minister for the Olympics) [10.37 p.m.], in reply: From time to time I have been critical of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for not being able to grasp Treasury issues. Clearly he has an impeccable understanding of this bill and I thank him for his support.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

PARLIAMENTARY REMUNERATION AMENDMENT BILL

Suspension of standing orders agreed to.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries), on behalf of Mr Carr [10.38 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The main purpose of the bill is to ensure that an independent tribunal makes final and binding determinations about the full range of parliamentary entitlements at arms-length from the beneficiaries. Honourable members will be aware that the current system is a mess. It is complex, confusing and obscure, and it leaves members at risk of making mistakes that may lead to serious consequences.

This bill will usher in a new regime in which a single independent body can make determinations covering both allowances and other entitlements and can set down clear rules for the application of its determinations. Members of Parliament hold a unique position. They are not self-employed or the employees of others. They hold a position of public trust to which they are elected. It is the voters who judge their performance and who may remove their representatives at periodic elections. The role and duties of a member of Parliament must be assessed with an eye to the long history of such a position, the privileges that attach to that position, and more recent changes in the parliamentary system, such as the role of political parties, the role of committees and greater community expectations of representation in an age of vastly improved communications and transportation.

The remuneration and entitlements of members of Parliament must reflect these factors, which do not arise in the case of ordinary employment. That is why it is appropriate that a specialist body, the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal, deal with parliamentary remuneration and entitlements rather than a general body. Long gone are the days when it was argued that members of Parliament should not receive a salary. It is now recognised that Parliament should not be the exclusive domain of those with an independent income but should be open to rich and poor alike. Members of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly were first given pay entitlements in 1889. This payment was described as an allowance but soon effectively became an annual salary. However, it was not until 1966 that the remuneration paid to members of Parliament was described in legislation as a salary.

The historical absence of a clear distinction between salary and allowances has its legacy today. Confusion persists in the minds of members of the public as to what amount is received by members of Parliament as their salary and what other amounts are paid to cover the business costs of members of Parliament. This bill makes it clear that the basic salary of a member of Parliament and the additional salary of a recognised office holder are paid as personal income for the performance of their parliamentary duties. The bill does not otherwise deal with the salaries of members of Parliament and recognised office holders, which will remain to be calculated by the existing method. Since the nineteenth century the role of members of Parliament has changed from that of part-time legislators to full-time representatives of the people.

Members are expected not only to perform their legislative duties in the Parliament, but also to represent their constituents and serve the State as a whole by listening to the concerns of the people, attending functions and meetings, making representations on behalf of people, investigating and resolving problems, and developing policies and, where possible, implementing them. To perform these functions efficiently, members must be able to communicate, travel, and have access to office facilities, staff and research facilities. These costs are similar to those involved in running a business. It is these costs that are covered by the additional allowances and entitlements which will be set by the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal.

The bill makes it clear in new sections 2A(d) and 10(1) that additional allowances and entitlements are to be provided for the purpose of facilitating the efficient performance of the parliamentary duties of members or recognised

office holders. As I noted at the beginning, this bill does more than merely clarify the existing distinction between salary and allowances or entitlements: it brings under the one umbrella of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal a range of existing allowances and entitlements that have been developed on an ad hoc basis by different bodies and authorities. It will provide for a single independent and final authority on parliamentary entitlements, and will allow the creation of a single clear set of rules for the application of these entitlements.

Honourable members will be well aware that the current system—if it can even be labelled such for the administration of members' entitlements—is a complex matrix of rules which range from the pedantic to the Delphic. The Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal, in its most recent report of May 1998, expressed concern at the "Byzantine complexity" of the current rules. It also noted that entitlements had been accumulated in such an ad hoc manner that "there is no readily discernible logical pattern that might give logical unity of underlying purpose to the accumulation". The tribunal considered that such a situation may give rise to misconceived claims, conceptual confusion, practical misunderstandings and suspicions in the public mind that there is insufficient transparency and accountability in the handling of parliamentary entitlements.

This bill is intended to clear away the confusion and misunderstandings by creating one authoritative source for the determination of parliamentary entitlements and one set of clear rules for their application. The Government intends that a new determination and a new set of rules be established as a priority. Members cannot be expected to continue to operate in an environment of ongoing uncertainty as to the appropriateness of their actions. This is particularly important now that the Legislative Assembly has adopted a code of conduct which gives the Independent Commission Against Corruption jurisdiction to consider such matters as whether a member has applied public resources according to any guidelines or rules about the use of those resources. Accordingly, the bill provides that the tribunal is to make an initial determination based upon its new jurisdiction by 1 December 1998, which is to take effect on and from 1 January 1999.

Another aspect of the current system which has been a source of confusion is the extent to which political party activity falls within the duties of a member of Parliament. The development of political parties in the twentieth century and their

vital role in policy making and the initiation of legislative proposals means that they now play a significant role in the parliamentary process. This is recognised in the code of conduct adopted by the Legislative Assembly. This has also been recognised at the Commonwealth level. The Australian Taxation Office, in its assessment of the duties of members of Parliament for the purpose of establishing deductibility of expenses, has ruled that attendance at parliamentary party meetings and annual party conventions forms part of the duties which attach to members of Parliament.

The Commonwealth's Remuneration Tribunal, in its "1997 "Decisions and Reports", accepted the view "that meetings of parliamentary political parties and the national conferences of political parties are an intrinsic part of the parliamentary process". The Remuneration Tribunal therefore decided to provide for travel allowances to apply to attendance at meetings of a parliamentary political party, its executive and its committees and the national conference of a political party, up to a maximum amount. The bill clarifies the meaning of "parliamentary duties" by providing that they are duties that attach to the office of the member or recognised office holder, and include participation in the activities of recognised political parties.

Under the current system, the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal can make determinations about allowances and recommendations about the provision of services, equipment or facilities. These recommendations could be accepted, rejected, implemented in part, or implemented with amendment. This situation has given rise to two problems. The first, as noted above, is the confusion arising from the different sources of entitlements and the rules for their application, which may be based on no more than a letter or discussion. The second is a perception that the Government is unduly interfering with parliamentary remuneration. This bill resolves these problems by allowing the tribunal to make determinations on all matters, including services, equipment and facilities. More importantly, it underlines the Government's commitment to ensuring that an independent body can make final determinations on matters concerning the entitlements of members.

This removes any perception of conflict of interest and is consistent with the Government's recent efforts to ensure that members cannot change their superannuation benefits without the approval of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal. This bill removes any control by members over their own entitlements and grants it to a judicial officer who has experience in the fixing of wages and

entitlements. The determinations of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal will have an impact upon the finances of the State, so it is important that they be fiscally responsible. Accordingly, it is essential that the tribunal be given accurate costings of the financial impact of any proposal before it makes its determination.

New section 13(5) provides that before making a determination the tribunal is required to seek the written advice of the Secretary to the Treasury as to the financial implications of the determination. For the sake of transparency and accountability, the provision also requires a copy of this advice to be annexed to the determination. In the course of the administration of parliamentary entitlements, issues often arise as to the interpretation of the rules and conditions placed upon the use of those entitlements. New section 17A provides an avenue for the Presiding Officers of the Parliament to request the tribunal to give a ruling on the interpretation or application of a determination. This will allow any controversy or dispute to be dealt with authoritatively. As with the determinations of the tribunal, such a ruling could not be challenged or reviewed in any legal proceedings.

While it is intended that the bill should allow the tribunal to make determinations on additional entitlements for members and recognised office holders, it is not intended that the Parliamentary Remuneration Act be an exclusive code. Ministers, for example, will still be able to use departmental services and facilities and have their travel paid for out of departmental budgets. Members will still be able to travel overseas with the support of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. There may also be matters relating to offices and facilities within Parliament House which remain within the jurisdiction of the Presiding Officers. This Act is not

intended to exclude such support for members and Ministers.

The final major change made by this bill is to the composition of the tribunal. Under current law, the Chief Justice appoints a judge or retired judge to hold office as the tribunal for a period not exceeding three years. The present incumbent is Justice Sully. The honourable member for Manly has previously suggested that the Industrial Relations Commission should determine the entitlements of members of Parliament as it does for other workers. While the Government considers that a specialist tribunal is more suited to the unique circumstances of members of Parliament, the Government accepts that the skills of the Industrial Relations Commission in assessing entitlements and conditions of employment could be appropriately employed in the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal.

Accordingly, when a vacancy arises in future, the President of the Industrial Relations Commission will appoint a judicial member of the commission as the tribunal. The bill includes a transitional provision which will allow Justice Sully to complete his term as commissioner. The Government recognises and appreciates Justice Sully's contribution to the reform of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act, and his commitment to completing a new and thorough review of parliamentary entitlements by the end of the year. This bill is further evidence of the commitment of the Government to reform the system of parliamentary entitlements by making it clear, transparent, accountable and, most importantly, independent of the Parliament and the Government. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Kerr.

House adjourned at 10.53 p.m.
