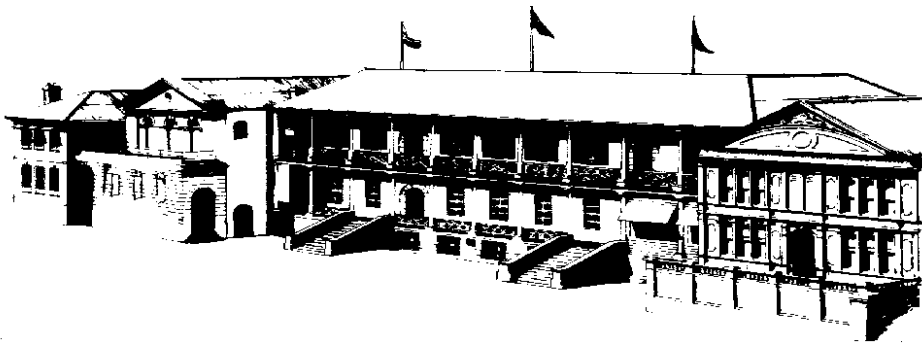




NEW SOUTH WALES



Legislative Assembly

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

**FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
THIRD SESSION**

OFFICIAL HANSARD

Wednesday, 24 June 1998

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 24 June 1998

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

CONDUCT OF JUSTICE VINCE BRUCE

Dr MACDONALD: I seek leave to suspend standing and sessional orders to allow General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 135 standing in my name to be debated forthwith.

Leave not granted.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Local Government Amendment (Meetings) Bill
Police Service Amendment (Alcohol and Drug Testing) Bill

SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr E. T. PAGE (Coogee—Minister for Local Government), on behalf of Mr Carr [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill 1998 introduces a number of miscellaneous amendments to the New South Wales public sector superannuation statutes that have been agreed with the Labor Council of New South Wales for the purposes of removing longstanding anomalies from some provisions and making some important improvements. Most of the proposed changes have been the subject of close examination by a consultative committee set up under the auspices of the Director-General of the Premier's Department and Treasury to consult with the Labor Council and the superannuation trustees on appropriate changes in these important employee benefit provisions. Their cost has been the subject of report by Treasury and confined to an acceptable, modest level, and the proposals have sought to address, appropriately, issues of inequity in entitlements.

I record the Government's thanks to Mr Peter Sams, who, as Secretary of the Labor Council, participated fully in the consultative process and greatly aided the negotiation of these measures. I will briefly outline the various elements of the legislation for the benefit of members, in their order of appearance in the bill. Amendments to the First State Superannuation Act 1992 were made by the Superannuation Legislation Further Amendment Act 1997 in relation to the provision of benefits on financial hardship and compassionate grounds when the scheme member had not become entitled to pay-out. This benefit pay-out was made available in the New South Wales public sector schemes only to those who had a preserved benefit in a scheme. In First State Super—the FSS scheme, as it will be called—this amendment inadvertently took away an existing right, for in that scheme continuing members already had access to pay-out on financial hardship and compassionate grounds.

The purpose of the current amendment is to correct the error and restore the rights of continuing members. To cover the intervening period since commencement of the 1997 amendment the Government had arranged for the making of a transitional and savings regulation. But it will now be necessary also to ensure that new members who joined since the amendment have rights to claim benefit pay-outs covering the intervening period. Major amendments are being made by this proposed legislation to aid the implementation of part-time work in the police force. The proposed amendments are being made to the Police Superannuation Scheme, the PSS, under the Police Regulation (Superannuation) Act 1906. Introduction of part-time provisions will create improved access by police to flexible work practices by enabling part-time employees to contribute at proportional rates and by amending the leave without pay provisions already in the Act. This would put police on an employment footing comparable with other sectors of public employment.

In the PSS, which has a strictly service-based benefit structure, the approach adopted for a benefit apportionment is based on equivalent full-time service. This is similar to the approach adopted for the State Authorities Superannuation Scheme, the SASS, which also provides coverage for police. Issues associated with scheme equity in relation to

the treatment of leave without pay, LWOP, have also been addressed in the context of the amendments for part-time work in the PSS, using the approach proposed for part-time work. In the SASS no distinction is made between part-time work and part-time LWOP. It is proposed, therefore, in PSS to concurrently amend LWOP provisions so that part-time LWOP is treated in the same manner as part-time employment, as is currently the case in the SASS.

The actual amendments to introduce provisions for part-time work in the PSS will pro-rate contributions by the use of a salary ratio, and will pro-rate benefits by converting length of service to equivalent full-time service using formulae inserted into provisions for benefits. As I have said, no distinction is to be made between part-time work and part-time LWOP. The various formulae enable adjustment of entitlements to correctly reflect the member's actual and potential service at the time of exit. These new provisions represent a very important improvement in superannuation scheme design for police which will enable better career planning and more flexible working arrangements, particularly for women police.

A simple amendment is made, at the request of the Labor Council, in the State Authorities Superannuation Scheme, SASS. This relates to improved provisions for continuity of service in the scheme on changing employers. The SASS provides contributors with rights to continue scheme membership as long as they resume employment with a scheme employer before the end of the next month after leaving. This will occur provided the contributor does not apply for a benefit from the scheme, and allows the contributor between four and eight weeks in which to be re-employed with membership continuity. For example, if the employee ceased employment on 31 January, he or she would be able to continue in the scheme only if re-employed before 28 February. This compares unfavourably with the State Superannuation Fund, SSF, provisions which allow a break of up to three months.

At the request of the Labor Council it is proposed that the contributor be allowed a break in service of up to three calendar months if a benefit has not been applied for. Thus, if the contributor ceased employment on 10 January, he or she would have until 9 April to be re-employed and elect to resume contributions. Employer contributions for the intervening contribution periods—using the example I quoted, from 31 January to 30 April—would be made by the employer with whom the contributor resumed employment. This would bring the

provisions for the SASS in line with those for the SSF. In this bill there are a number of amendments made at the request of the Labor Council to remove anomalies in the State Superannuation Fund, SSF, which was closed to new members in 1985. I will deal with each in turn.

In the SSF the benefit from the scheme on withdrawal, dismissal or discharge consists of a refund of contributions to which is added interest when service exceeds five years and a supplement plus interest when service exceeds 10 years. The interest rates applying before 1 July 1990 were set statutory rates which were usually exceeded by the actual fund earning rate. The rates are: before 1 July 1972, 3.5 per cent per annum, and from that date to 30 June 1990, 4.5 per cent per annum. The rate applied from 1 July 1990, in accordance with Commonwealth regulations, is set having regard to the actual fund earning rate.

At the request of the Labor Council it is proposed to improve benefits by replacing the statutory interest rates from 1 July 1972 with rates set having regard to fund earning rates. The Government Actuary has advised that the resulting benefit could be larger than the retirement benefit for some long-serving members. This is not intended and would encourage, in some cases, premature termination of employment. As a result, the Premier's Department has proposed that a cap be applied to the extent of the possible benefit increase. The improved withdrawal benefit will not be allowed to exceed the lump sum benefit applicable on early or normal retirement in each individual case.

If the improved withdrawal benefit were not capped in this way, the retirement benefit would be increased—in a scheme that was closed because of its high costs. It should be noted that the proposed capping does not eliminate this effect but serves to reduce the associated financial incentives for premature resignations. At the request of the Labor Council it is proposed that the discount rate used in the scheme's retrenchment formula to account for the early payment of the accrued benefit be reduced. From the Labor Council's perspective this benefit in the SSF for those offered voluntary redundancy compares unfavourably with the benefits being paid to SASS members, sometimes with less service. While SASS members have generally made higher contributions to achieve the higher benefits being paid, this is causing SSF employees to refuse redundancy offers and to exercise their right to redeployment. Employers with significant numbers of these excess employees can face industrial and financial difficulties as a result.

The triennial actuarial valuations of the scheme for 1987, 1991 and 1994 recommended a 1 per cent reduction in this discount factor from 8 per cent to 7 per cent per year. Case studies showed that an appropriate discount rate of 4 per cent, which was subsequently agreed by the consultative committee, should be adopted, and it is put in place by these proposed amendments. The Labor Council also recommended a change in the provisions in the SSF for commutation of pension for pensioners who had exited the scheme before 1 July 1985. Commutation is the technical term in superannuation for the conversion of a pension to a lump-sum payment which exhausts the pension rights. Since 1 July 1985 an anomaly was created by giving new SSF pensioners the right to exchange all or some of their pension rights for a lump sum at age 60. This right will shortly also be available at age 55 for women who elected to retire at that age, on the proclamation of the commencement of anti-discrimination amendments following their recent passage through Parliament.

However, for people whose pensions commenced before 1 July 1985, only part of the pension could be commuted. Single pensioners must retain a minimum of \$20 pension per fortnight and all subsequent consumer price index increases. Married pensioners must retain a minimum of \$34 pension per fortnight and all subsequent CPI increases. As well, any part of the pension relating to abandoned units cannot be commuted. It is proposed that SSF pensioners whose pensions commenced before 1 July 1985 be subject to the same provisions as those whose pensions commenced after 1 July 1985. This would flow on to any reversionary spouse benefits so that spouse benefits could be fully commuted to lump sum as well.

In terms of these proposals, all pre-1 July 1985 breakdown pensioners who subsequently reach age 60—or 55, if applicable—after the commencement of the amendment would be allowed six months to commute all of their pensions. All pre-1 July 1985 pensioners—breakdown and retirement—who have already commuted all but the amount not allowed under the Act as it currently stands will have a limited time of six months from the commencement date to commute the remaining pension. The factor to be used for commutation will be that applicable to their age at the time the new commutation takes effect. This proposal is expected to generate initial cash-flow requirements of approximately \$111 million in the first year but to generate substantial long-term savings. Particular reference is made to the potential financial impact on individual employers of this proposal in my later comments on the cost of these proposals.

The last amendment that I want to speak about is made to the Superannuation Administration Act 1996 at the request of my colleague the Treasurer, the Hon M. R. Egan, who has responsibility for that Act. The proposed amendment relates to the powers of the FSS Trustee Corporation to appoint external funds managers for the superannuation funds under its administration, and were sought by the Trustee Corporation. Under the Public Authorities (Financial Arrangements) Act 1987, the trustee, which is a scheduled body under that Act, must have the approval of the Treasurer for any proposed funds manager appointment.

The Treasury has recommended that this requirement be dispensed with in the case of the FSS Trustee Corporation. This recommendation was made having in mind the arms-length relationship between the Government and the trustee, its level of expertise in funds management, and the impediment to the decision-making powers and performance of the trustee represented by the need to seek approval for every change of funds manager. Other requirements of the Public Authorities (Financial Arrangements) Act will continue to apply to the trustee.

I shall now undertake a brief examination of the cost consequences of the proposed amendments. The Treasury was closely consulted on the cost consequences of the proposals and provided a cost analysis. In its view, the package provided either procedural changes to the structure of the State public sector superannuation schemes with no significant costs or changes to alter the timing of payment, form of payment, or rate of growth of some retirement benefits. These latter changes would result in some significant costs to be borne from the employer reserves within the schemes. Overall, this analysis recognised that there is a net advantage to be gained by bringing forward the payment of relatively few long-term benefits, thus reducing the long-term accrual of those benefits and creating very large savings in debt-raising costs that would otherwise be deferred. In relation to the specific proposals where significant additional costs or cash-flows will be incurred, Treasury commented as follows:

The proposal to improve interest earning provisions for the SSF withdrawal benefit, when taken with the "capping" of the benefit, is expected to result in an increase in the unfunded liabilities of no more than \$60 million in net present value terms.

The proposed improvement in the retrenchment benefit in the SSF by reducing the discount factor from 8 per cent to 4 per cent would cost \$45 million per 10,000 redundancies, in net present value terms. These costs are based on the assumption that the profile of retrenched members would approach that of existing contributors.

Commutation of residual pensions in the SSF emerging before 1 July 85 is estimated to result in savings of the order of \$200 million in net present value terms in relation to those pensioners turning 60 after commencement of the legislation. An additional saving could be expected for those who have already turned 60 and elect to commute their compulsory residual pensions.

However, the new provisions would also bring forward future cash flows. As of 31 December 1997, there were 5,929 retirement pensioners or their spouses over the age of 60 in receipt of residual pensions after their commutation. Making assumptions about the rate of commutation applied and the number of pensioners who would take up the fresh offer to commute, the immediate cash-flow impact of this proposal would be \$147.6 million. In addition, there is the staggered cash flow associated with the 75 pre-1 July 1985 pensioners who will turn 60, or 55 for certain female contributors, after commencement of the amendment.

The combined cash-flow effect in the first year could, therefore, be around \$150 million, less the pensions paid, which brings about an additional \$111 million to be drawn from scheme reserves. By way of general comment, Treasury has said that the total package of measures is expected to result in a net saving over the life of the State Superannuation Fund. This saving will be reflected as reduced unfunded superannuation liabilities reported at 30 June 1999. However, attention needs also to be focused on whether the cash flows that the proposals generate in the first one to three years can be supported by the existing reserves in the affected scheme without requiring additional funding by employers beyond their existing funding plans. The conclusion reached with regard to employers generally is that the increased cash flows generated by the package of proposals could be met from existing employer reserves. This package of amendments consists principally of a number of measures requested by, and agreed to with, the Labor Council to redress significant anomalies in the closed public sector employee superannuation schemes.

The Government is further investigating other measures that it had agreed to within the constraints of modest cost. In this regard the Government has welcomed the valuable opportunity of close consultation with the Labor Council and its representatives. The present measures will be beneficial to many scheme members and former members, by reducing and relieving inequities that no doubt have acted as a constant irritant to them over many years. The amendments to provide for part-time employment in the police superannuation scheme represent, as I have remarked already, a

significant improvement, allowing the scheme to adequately provide for modern employment conditions. I feel that serving police who are members of their scheme will welcome these improvements. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Hartcher.

ROAD IMPROVEMENT (SPECIAL FUNDING) AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 16 June.

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [10.21 a.m.]: I am pleased to lead for the Opposition on this bill and to indicate that the Opposition supports it. The object of the bill is to continue the operation of the 3 x 3 road funding program, which was introduced by the coalition Government in 1989. At that time country areas were consulted widely about the new tax, which was to be hypothecated to road expenditure. From my observation nearly 10 years ago it was a popular tax, if one will permit the expression.

The tax was seen as a charge on fuel that would be applied 100 per cent to road improvements and, as such, motorists could see a direct correlation between the taxes they paid to use the roads—determined by their purchases of fuel—and the direct improvement of those roads. Therefore the tax was welcomed by many organisations—the Shires Association, the Local Government Association, the Farmers Association, the Country Women's Association and several other road-user groups.

The Road Improvement (Special Funding) Act 1989 introduced the concept of 3 x 3, representing 3¢ per litre for three years. The formula has been indexed and increased a number of times and it would now be closer to 4¢ and four years. Each increase was supported by both sides of the Parliament, and I assume that reinforces that the tax was well accepted. The 1997 annual report of the Roads and Traffic Authority, at page 103, states that a committee was established to act as trustees for the fund. Having had discussions with the Minister, I understand that the Government does not intend to alter the composition of the committee or the way in which it operates.

I commend the members of that committee, who are: Mr Don Mackay, senior partner of Deacons, Graham and James, the past president of the NRMA and chairman of the New South Wales

Police Board; Councillor Allan Fifield, OAM, member of Culcairn Shire Council, grants commissioner and a past president of the New South Wales Shires Association; Mrs Audrey Hardman, OAM, past president of the New South Wales Country Women's Association, deputy chair of the New South Wales Women's Consultative Committee and co-chair of the Rural Women's Network; and Mr Robert Lyn, a partner of Coopers and Lybrand and chairman of the Australian Audits Standards Board. The Opposition would welcome the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads retaining the committee as it is presently comprised. On that basis the Opposition is pleased to support the bill.

During the past couple of years the Opposition has been concerned that the ratio of 60:40 between the rural and metropolitan areas, which is the same ratio imposed by the coalition, be continued. I am pleased to have had discussions with the Minister. Our one argument since the current Government came into office has been about the allocation of part of the 3 x 3 levy to public transport projects, predominantly in the city. The Minister and I agreed to disagree on that matter, but the Opposition supports the fundamental aspects of the 3 x 3 program. The Opposition supports the bill because it reinstates the operation of the 3 x 3 program following it being consumed by the High Court case which made it impossible for New South Wales to collect the levy—which was then collected by the Federal Government and reimbursed in its entirety to the States. The bill will allocate 44.5 per cent of the 3 x 3 road funding in accordance with the arrangements that applied under the 3 x 3 program prior to the High Court case. I am pleased to support the bill.

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [10.27 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Deputy Leader of the National Party and the Opposition for their support of the legislation. In the 1998-99 budget \$160 million from the 3 x 3 funding program, out of a total of \$266.6 million, will be spent in rural New South Wales, that is, slightly more than 60 per cent of the total 3 x 3 budget. That equates to 3.51¢ per litre of petrol, a little bit above 3¢ per litre with indexation. The Government does not intend to change the composition or role of the 3 x 3 committee. The committee has provided good service, and it will continue.

The Government and the Opposition will have to agree to disagree on urban public transport expenditure, but the good news for the bush is that any urban public transport moneys expended out of the program will come from the 40 per cent city

allocation for Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, so it will not impact on the 60 per cent. The Deputy Leader of the National Party rightly pointed out that the bill endeavours to continue what was in place prior to the High Court decision. In a sense the bill maintains the status quo up to 5 August. The money runs out on 30 June and that is why it is timely to pass the bill, and I thank the Opposition for its support.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

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 23 June.

Ms FICARRA (Georges River) [10.30 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to address this House on the Carr Government's fourth and final budget, a budget that will end up like the rest: heavily in the red. Once again New South Wales taxpayers are faced with tax increases, worth \$800 million, and massive cuts to capital works, of \$500 million, affecting basic areas such as hospitals, schools and trains. The Premier and the Treasurer would like us to believe that they are putting families first. Well, if the situation were not so serious we would all have a laugh. However, the people of New South Wales have had enough of this treacherous Government. The Carr Government has no concept of financial management and basic services delivery.

The Carr Government has no credibility, and certainly little or no public support. New South Wales is the highest-taxed State in Australia, yet it

is still recording a large deficit. Expenditure under the Carr Government is out of control, increasing by more than 20 per cent since March 1995, and yet the Government cannot deliver basic services. The Carr Government is a classic big-spending, big-taxing Labor Government, just like the Labor governments of Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia back in the ugly 1980s. The Treasurer has consistently got it wrong with each of his four budgets. The first budget was \$373 million out, in the red, promising a \$238 million deficit and delivering instead a \$611 million deficit. In his second budget he promised a \$5 million surplus, but delivered a \$452 million deficit—that is, \$457 million out.

Last year he promised a \$27 million surplus, and instead delivered a \$416 million deficit—that is, \$443 million out. Remember, that was the budget that taxed people for living in their own homes, introduced a bed tax and slugged New South Wales clubs, which have since risen against the Carr Government. In this year's budget we are promised a \$45 million surplus. But, guess what? It will, in reality, be like all the other Carr and Egan productions—hundreds of millions of dollars in the red, at least \$862 million to be precise. No wonder Ross Gittins, in relation to the alleged \$45 million surplus, said in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 5 June:

Take a good look at it, because today may be the last day you see it.

Why will the Carr Government produce a \$862 million deficit? Because the Government, if it is lucky, will achieve only half of its planned, unrealistic, asset sales, and everyone will suffer from the over-inflated revenue projections and slashed capital works. Let us look at the Australian Labor Party practices of ripping money from government enterprises, liquidating assets, selling off power stations and then leasing them back at taxpayers' expense—straight out of the Joan Kirner textbook on how to bankrupt a State's economy. In comparison with last year's budget, spending in key portfolios is down. For instance, health spending is down 4 per cent; law and order spending is down 16.3 per cent; social and community services capital expenditure is down 25.6 per cent; and infrastructure is being run down in our schools, hospitals, public transport and so on.

Meanwhile, Carr and Egan will blame everybody but themselves—the Federal Government, the Asian economy, the High Court, the failed electricity sell-off, the liquor industry, public sector pay increases, and any other convenient lifeline. But

the New South Wales public are highly intelligent and will decide the fate of this Government on 27 March 1999. The public know that hospital waiting lists and waiting times are longer than ever; crime is through the roof; too many police are now literally pen-pushers; police stations are unmanned; no new trains are coming into the system; vulnerable citizens are being threatened and attacked on our public transport system; school refurbishments are not being funded; the M4 and M5 tolls have not been abolished, as promised by the Government, for the people of the greater west; and the Department of Community Services continues to be underresourced, putting children at risk.

Carr and Egan inherited from the coalition in 1995 the best-performing economy in Australia. The Carr Labor Government promised the people of New South Wales three things: a balanced budget, lower taxes and restraint on government spending. Three years later the Carr Government has failed dismally to deliver on those promises. Rather than putting families first, this Government has taxed families first. This budget adds \$363 per annum to the family bill, so that now families are more than \$1,400 a year worse off under Labor than they were under the previous coalition Government. Taxes under the Carr Government have increased by 33 per cent. The budget will take an extra \$103 million in gambling taxes, an extra \$106 million in land taxes, another \$229 million in payroll tax and an extra \$24 million in drivers' licence fees. All this from a Government that promised "no new taxes, and no tax increases".

Carr and Egan have increased the Government's reliance on gambling taxes, with revenue from all forms of gambling having increased by 30 per cent—an increase of \$178 million. The doubling of machines in each hotel is socially irresponsible. State gambling revenue is now \$1.25 billion. At what social cost is that to New South Wales families? So much for putting families first! What a farce! What a social tragedy! It is interesting that in the budget the Treasurer is relying on a substantial increase in land tax: 12.6 per cent. That is contrary to estimates by New South Wales Treasury given to the land tax inquiry. Treasury predicted a downturn in the residential property market, hence the comment of Ross Gittins in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

His problem is tax collection simply can't keep growing at that rate—the property boom has passed its peak and the share market boom can't last.

That comment and many other editorial comments highlight the Carr Government's continual production of rubbery figures. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 5 June Max Walsh said:

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

John Laws said:

Will they ever believe Michael Egan? I doubt it.

The people of New South Wales know that if Labor is re-elected land tax will only increase, both on residential and investment properties. Treasury already has crunched the numbers based on a \$500,000 threshold—half the current level—and estimated an additional \$140 million revenue from taxing an additional 20,000 families across New South Wales. So much for putting families first! The coalition will immediately scrap land tax on family homes when it wins government next year. The coalition will not tolerate pseudo death duties in this State. I refer to the delivery of basic services, such as health. The budget figures indicate that 26,000 fewer people will be treated this year. How could this be? Who will miss out? Waiting lists have more than 50,000 patients on them, waiting times have doubled, wards are being closed and nurses have been sacked from Westmead Children's Hospital. The New South Wales health system is facing a management crisis, initiated by the irresponsible promise of the Minister for Health to halve waiting lists, and supported by his poor management and leadership skills.

Capital works spending of the Department of Health is down by \$13 million. Hospital projects that have been announced—such as Sutherland, Maitland, Illawarra, Nepean, Coffs Harbour and Royal North Shore—are all former coalition commitments stalled by the Carr Government over a period of three to four years. Lithgow and the inner-west hospitals have been delayed by two years. Sutherland Hospital received a demeaning \$600,000 for a \$79 million project. If it were up to the Carr Government, Sutherland shire residents would have to wait 131 years to have that project completed. The staff of the hospital and residents of Sutherland shire over the years have had to conduct sausage sizzles and garage sales to refurbish the emergency department and bathrooms. Well done, Minister, in putting families first! I can assure the House that in St George and Sutherland shire we will be putting Labor last. The only thing that will prevent this is if a One Nation candidate stands.

The people of St George remember the bad old Labor days. The coalition Government committed \$250 million to upgrade the St George Hospital to one of the finest teaching hospitals in Australia. Last weekend the cancer care lodge was opened. That community project is worth \$1.5 million, and what was the Carr Government's

contribution? It was a paltry \$50,000. The Minister should hang his head in shame. In St George we support our families, as we have with the Lions hydrotherapy pool, the St George hope-for-the-children Rotary project and the Georges River Keepers project. The people of St George lead the way in getting the job done with genuine team spirit. The councils of Hurstville, Kogarah and Rockdale pull together with local State and Federal members, regardless of politics, and rally the community behind many worthwhile projects for the sake of future St George generations.

I refer to the police portfolio. The budget papers show that police numbers are shrinking. So who is telling porkies when the Government congratulates itself on record high police numbers? One only has to speak to members of the Police Association to hear about low morale and massive disillusionment in the management of the portfolio by the Minister for Police. Experienced police officers are resigning in record numbers: 30 per cent in the Carr Government's first year and rising. The unsuccessful restructuring has seen Riverwood and Kingsgrove police stations reduced to a pitiful shopfront, with patrol officers from those stations crowded into the Hurstville police building. Conditions there were so unworkable that, as you know Mr Speaker, I had to move out to give the police patrol commanders some decent office space.

Meanwhile, police officers have resorted to seeking public donations to purchase bicycles to get their bicycle patrols going. My message to the Minister is: we need more bicycle and beat police in the Hurstville central business district and in Riverwood. For some time shopkeepers and residents have reported an unacceptable increase in crime, which is too often drug related, and an unacceptable increase in response times. In the suburbs of Oatley, Lugarno, Mortdale and Penshurst the elderly feel vulnerable to an increase in bag snatchings, muggings and theft for drug money.

The number of after-hours police cars needs to be lifted to bring police strength in the area to the same strength as the Bankstown patrol. Hurstville city is developing at a rapid rate and it needs its fair share of police numbers, vehicles and bicycles. That is how the Minister could start to put families first. Safety and security are uppermost in the minds of residents, they do not blame police for not being more visible because they understand the ridiculous administrative burdens placed upon them. New South Wales electors blame the Carr Government for not giving back more of the gambling, land and sales taxes to local communities to help them feel safer.

I refer to the education portfolio. Any budget increase will be swallowed up by the teachers salary increases that they dearly deserve. No additional funding has been allocated for education programs. The 1,405 so-called extra teachers are not provided for until the 1999 budget. And, what is worse, money is borrowed from next year's budget to fund this year's education allocation. This is indeed a true Labor budget: wages on Bankcard! The pathetic \$55 million back-to-school allowance could have paid for much-needed capital works, airconditioning, computers, literacy and special needs programs. The education system has had \$122.8 million ripped out of its budget with the Carr Government pretending that that will not affect schools. This year's capital works program is the lowest ever under Labor—it is a low \$129 million, \$71 million less than under the last coalition Government.

Penshurst Public School has been planning and waiting for several years for a much-needed \$1.7 million refurbishment of its 1920s building. Student enrolments have grown steadily in the Hurstville area as it has grown as a regional centre and the sale of surplus land has enabled the school to draw up plans for a new hall, administrative block and library, and redesigned larger classrooms. However, the school needs \$350,000 to complete the project and is inconvenienced by the delay which has necessitated nine demountables on site, taking up playground space. This is an intolerable learning environment and I call upon the Minister for Education and Training to quickly intervene and allocate the additional funding needed for the plans drawn up by his Government's Public Works Department. The staff, students, school council, parents and citizens association, and parents have been patient long enough. What has happened to families first?

I refer now to community services. The budget has cut funding to refugees, child protection, family and individual support. It is ironic that the Premier makes much to do about the families first program, which actually does not produce any practical assistance in this financial year, and yet completely ignores the work done by the Family Support Services Association of New South Wales and the Rotary hope-for-the-children project, which already operates successfully in the Sutherland shire with the backing of its patron, former Children's Magistrate Barbara Holborow, and its ambassador, Rachel Ward. The program is operational in St George and will shortly operate in many rural and regional areas, the eastern suburbs and the city of Sydney. Why has the Premier not given support to these established, credible and community-backed organisations? For all the public discontent about the

Department of Community Services, it received only an extra \$7 million. Where is the emphasis on child protection? Where are families being put first?

The transport portfolio has been cut by \$122 million, with 11,000 rail jobs to go. What does that mean for rail services? Last week the coalition highlighted once again the rising incidence of crime on the public transport system. When will the Minister for Transport return armed transit police to our trains with power to arrest and detain not just for a few hours at night, but throughout the early evening until peak hour morning shifts? The elderly and women—indeed, all New South Wales travellers—feel vulnerable to violence on after-hours train services. If the Premier wants to put families first, he should bring back the State transit police and improve safety and security on after-hours trains and buses.

I am disappointed that neither the Minister for the Environment nor the Minister for Land and Water Conservation has acknowledged the greater community spirit of the councils and communities bordering the Georges River, the most highly urbanised river in Australia. Those councils have established the Georges River Keepers program. A co-ordinator has been appointed and the role will be educative and investigative. The program will provide inter-agency co-ordination and, if necessary, assist and/or initiate prosecutions against polluters. I urge both Ministers to closely monitor the progress of the Georges River Keepers program and the strong community and volunteer backing it is receiving with a view to help funding such a program not only for the Georges River but for all New South Wales rivers. That would be a practical way of putting families first.

I refer to the M5 East extension. I suspect that the full cost of the project is not disclosed in the budget because the Carr Government has overseen a \$250 million blow-out in the cost of its construction. The project has seen unacceptable delays and poor environmental designs incorporating a massive pollution stack which emits toxic fumes over the residents of Turrella and surrounding Rockdale City Council suburbs. It is definitely not a proposal that puts families first in the Rockdale electorate, and I suspect we will hear more about this in the lead-up to the March election.

I urge the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads to hasten the widening of King Georges Road through the Hurstville and Kogarah municipalities. That project has dragged on for several years and has been poorly managed by the Roads and Traffic Authority. Moreover, major

intersection upgrades at King Georges Road and Stoney Creek Road, Beverly Hills, need to be completed for the sake of safer traffic flow. Attention needs to be given to the intersection of King Georges Road and Hillcrest Avenue, South Hurstville, to alleviate the increasing traffic congestion associated with the growth of Hurstville as a regional centre. Traffic and parking problems have developed in the residential streets of South Hurstville. I have made representations to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads, which I hope he took seriously.

In conclusion, the only good thing about the Carr Government's fourth budget is that it is its last budget. It is the last budget that will really sock it to New South Wales taxpayers; it is the last budget that will dress up public sector pay rises as spending and service increases; it is the last budget that will savagely cut capital works spending. In the words of Max Walsh, "It is impossible to come up with a single measure of economic competence of the Government." Carr and Egan have no credibility when it comes to budget forecasts or financial management. On 27 March 1999 New South Wales voters will have a clear choice between the responsible financial management of capital works, and the low taxing and strong service delivery of the coalition, and the Carr Government's record of proven mismanagement, high taxing, poor service and low capital works delivery. The choice is clear: New South Wales families will put the coalition first.

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle) [10.50 a.m.]: I am proud to be the member for Newcastle. The Carr Government has brought down another budget directed towards ensuring that the people of New South Wales live in a secure and caring society. The budget provides a great opportunity for economic growth. It also deals with the environment. The Carr Government has addressed these issues during its term of office. Members of the public, government organisations and non-government organisations have been crying out for funding for essential services during the past seven to 10 years. The Government has allocated funding for public transport and safety on public transport, and has increased funding for health, education and community services to a record level. The Government is seeking to ensure that children and adults who are at risk are provided with a safe and secure environment. The budget takes into account the economic needs of the State and the fact that people need a caring and thoughtful government. Bob Carr and Michael Egan have provided that in this budget. Members opposite are laughing at that

statement. I guess they are laughing at the thought that that is a positive statement.

I refer to my electorate of Newcastle. The city of Newcastle is going through a period of change. There has been a focus on and massive government spending on that city during the past four years through the building better cities program. Much of that spending goes through the Honeysuckle Development Corporation, which has the brief to develop some 45 hectares of surplus government land. The land along the Throsby Creek section of Newcastle Harbour to the city foreshore was once rail yards and port infrastructure. That section of the city is extremely important to the revitalisation of Newcastle.

As population changes have occurred, the central business district of Newcastle and the surrounding suburbs have suffered a loss of population to the outlying areas of the city, as occurs with most cities. This situation created a problem for retailers in inner-city Newcastle. The building better cities program recognised the need to inject capital spending into that area and to utilise that capital spending for both the commercial development of the city and the revitalisation of the city's population. The Honeysuckle Development Corporation planned to revitalise that land during the next 20 to 25 years. However, the building better cities program injected almost \$100 million during a short period of time, which had the potential to kick-start Newcastle.

I refer to the budget allocations for Newcastle. A sum of \$4 million will be spent to develop the port of Newcastle. In particular, the funds will be used to improve access to the port, particularly to the eastern basin and The Dyke end section, and to improve the amenity of people living in that area, particularly those in Carrington. That budget allocation is important because the port of Newcastle is Australia's leading bulk export port and the world's foremost coal export port. I am sure honourable members are aware that the port exports approximately 60 million tonnes a year and has plans to export 100 million tonnes a year. As honourable members can see, Newcastle is a major port.

Infrastructure must be developed to improve employment in the area and to improve the mix of materials moving through the port. Toll Transport Pty Ltd, the winning tenderers, and Newcastle trucking companies recently announced substantial investment in the port. An integrated transport terminal will be built on the eastern basin, which

will link the flow of goods out of the port, whether by road or rail. The budget allocates funds for that project. An amount of \$852,000 has been allocated to the development of the road entrance to that port, which is a \$2 million project. An additional \$1.8 million has been dedicated to extend the heavy-vehicle road out of the port of Newcastle via Booth Street and Parker Street, linking onto Elizabeth Street and the industrial highway.

That road will provide an effective entry to the port, by-passing residential areas and linking to the F3. I emphasise the importance of that project. As the successful tenderers for the integrated materials movement said, they see the road extension as a link between Newcastle and western Sydney in particular. The port will have the opportunity to compete with and to complement Port Botany and Darling Harbour. It will be able to move goods to the port of Sydney, the Upper Hunter, the New England and along the golden highway to Dubbo and the west. Newcastle will have an increased capacity to move goods.

Some \$530,000 will go towards extending the wharf in the eastern basin, some \$330,000 will go towards lighting and some \$750,000 will go towards providing a rail spur—a very important infrastructure development—down The Dyke end. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour is looking at me with envy. He realises that that will facilitate the movement of containers, in particular, out of the port of Newcastle by rail and will link Newcastle to the national rail systems. I congratulate the Government on funding that project. I also congratulate the Newcastle Ports Authority, particularly its chief executive officer, Glen Oakley, and the board on their foresight. They are ensuring that the port of Newcastle develops in a competitive way and they are seeking further investment to increase the port's general cargo-handling capacity. That is one funding allocation in the budget.

Although the people of Newcastle expect high outcomes from the Honeysuckle development, which is an exciting development, they are concerned about the slow rate of private sector investment into the area. In some ways that concern has resulted from a heightened expectation that expenditure on infrastructure would make private sector investment fall out of the air, but that has not happened to date. The investment in infrastructure for future housing developments across the city is supply driven. Also, a large investment has been made in housing for the city. Newcastle City Council, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and the Honeysuckle Development Corporation have undertaken a great deal of research into affordable housing, including

an innovative housing design suitable for city living. That important research will guide the private sector in the types of environmentally sound housing that can be built in the inner city to cater for the present population and the types of dwellings that are required to meet the demands in that inner-city environment.

Mr Fraser: What are the types of dwelling?

Mr GAUDRY: They include medium-density housing, cluster housing and high-level or multistorey housing. There is a demand for these types of housing in Newcastle. There has been a rapid burst of development in Newcastle running from Perkins Street to the eastern section of the city; a substantial number of developments have been approved and are under way. I mention the Menkins apartments, a multistorey commercial-residential development on the site of the former George Hotel on the corner of Watt and Scott streets; complete refurbishment for residential purposes of Irene Hall, which was the former nurses home; and Kingston Towers, which is a high-quality apartment building that has been built in recent years on the esplanade at Newcastle East.

There is a tremendous demand in the private sector for the development of high-quality housing in that part of the city, which will include a mix of medium-density, cluster and multistorey housing with innovative housing being designed through the Honeysuckle project and affordable housing, packages that will ensure that people on low incomes maintain the ability to live in inner-city Newcastle. The Honeysuckle Development Corporation has been allocated some \$67 million under the building better cities program for capital works within the boundaries on site, including \$8 million for restoration of the Honeysuckle workshops, Wickham Public School and the Lee Wharf buildings; some \$12 million for an affordable rental program and demonstration housing within the site; \$11 million for open space development; \$11 million for roads within the site, which is important to underpin future development; \$12 million for underground drainage and power services; and \$11 million for planning studies and administration.

I take this opportunity to welcome the visitors in the gallery who have been observing this parliamentary debate. I hope that they find the rest of their visit to the Parliament interesting. Off site, \$19 million has been allocated to a combined committee of all government sector agencies in the area. That includes \$13 million for housing and \$5 million for a transport interchange, and a further \$13 million has been allocated to other State agencies for

capital works. One issue that is foremost in the minds of the people of Newcastle is public transport. Earlier I referred to a transport interchange. One important aspect of inner-city development is the construction of a transport interchange so that people can transfer from trains travelling all the way into the city to regional and interstate buses, and vice versa. An interchange is an important part of the public transport network.

One issue in Newcastle over the past several years has been the provision of a standing area for buses. The lack of a standing area has been a problem since 1992, when the former Liberal-National Government sold off the bus layover site in Newcastle. That is a major problem for the number of people who travel to and from the city by bus. As Newcastle is a peninsula, a layover area in the inner city is necessary to service the needs of the people of Newcastle. There are some 1,000 bus movements in and out of Newcastle daily. When a suitable location for the bus layover area could not be found in the inner city it was decided to locate the standing area at Newcastle station. That decision created a great deal of controversy.

The budget includes an allocation for a crossing on Stewart Avenue and the extension of Stewart Avenue to link with Hannell Street. Indeed, moneys for that project have been set aside for some years. Almost two years ago Newcastle City Council agreed to that project in principle but subject to studies to determine whether it would have a detrimental effect on the area. Several studies had been conducted by the council over a number of years, including the Wickham Urban Village study, the Newcastle west end study, the Wickham Maryville study and the Honeysuckle development study. The project would provide important infrastructure to facilitate the flow of traffic, which currently causes a snarl on the corner of Hunter Street and Hannell Street. The allocation of funding is important to complete the link, to remove the dogleg on the road and to complete a series of developments in the west end of Newcastle. Those developments will have a positive effect on urban development in that area that focuses on Wickham station and on revitalisation of that important part of the city.

Another project addressed in the budget is completion of a set of crossings on the rail line to facilitate development of the Honeysuckle area. If the residential development proceeds as expected, those crossings will provide important access across the railway line to businesses, especially those in Union Street and Hannell Street, and give them a great boost. It will also link the new central business

district with the foreshore, and in particular to the future thriving section of Civic, which is currently a workshop site. Those important projects have come to fruition through this budget and former budgets under the building better cities program. These projects will benefit the city greatly, and that is always in the mind of the Carr Labor Government. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr ELLIS (South Coast) [11.10 a.m.]: Many speakers have addressed the broad aspects of this budget, but the logical and commonsense coalition rejects the budget's broad concept. The South Coast electorate has its base in Nowra because events that affect Nowra impact on the electorate. My contribution to the budget debate will relate mainly to the Shoalhaven area. The amount of \$14 million has been allocated in the budget to the South Coast electorate for the acquisition of land for the expansion of Jervis Bay National Park. My problem is not with the expansion of the national park but with the fact that \$14 million will be paid to one person for the compulsory acquisition of land to add to the existing 1,000-hectare Jervis Bay National Park.

Mr Jeffery: How many?

Mr ELLIS: The entire \$14 million will go into one person's pocket because one person owns the bulk of the land required to take maximum advantage of the 6,000 hectares for the Jervis Bay National Park. The land to be acquired is zoned 1B, which means that it cannot be used for any purpose other than for a national park. Therefore it will be available for many years. Although the \$14 million is much appreciated, it could be better spent on other pressing needs of the Shoalhaven area. For the benefit of those honourable members who are not sure where the Shoalhaven is because it is outside the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong net, it is just south of the Kiama electorate. The people of the Shoalhaven require the same services as those who reside in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

One pressing project for my electorate has been the construction of the Mollymook primary school. Four years ago, before this Government was elected to office, that project was at the top of the list. Another high priority project was the construction of a school for the Callala Bay and Callala Beach area. This year, because the community got stuck into the Government and the Minister for Education and Training, funds have been allocated for the construction of Callala Bay school. Land has been acquired to build a school at Mollymook to relieve pressure on Milton school, which has a population of more than 600 students.

Milton school comprises mainly demountable classrooms and is in desperate need of help. It is difficult to understand that of two school projects on the priority list the budget allocated funds to only one. However, \$14 million has been made available to acquire land that cannot be used for any other purpose than to add it to a national park.

The community expected funds to be provided for the commencement of stage two of the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. No funds have been allocated, but \$14 million was made available to compulsorily acquire land that cannot be used for any purpose other than to add it to the national park. I regret that I may sound repetitious, but I must emphasise that the land to be acquired for the national park cannot be used for any other purpose. The Shoalhaven has many urgent needs. Sussex Inlet and the Wandandian area desperately need an ambulance station. The Government seems either to have forgotten that pressing need or will not even consider it. A small portion of the \$14 million allocated for the acquisition of national park land could have been used to build the ambulance station.

Roads south of Nowra need to be improved. A six-kilometre stretch of road south of Nowra was to have been upgraded to multiple lanes, but no funds have been made available to commence that project. In the past four years that stretch of road has been the scene of many major accidents. Other urgent projects include sporting facilities for the Shoalhaven. Many Government members referred to funds being allocated to their electorates for sporting projects. Astonishingly, \$12 million has been provided to relocate a football team to the central coast. That money could have been used to provide sporting facilities that would keep tens of thousands of children throughout the State occupied and off the streets.

The Government is throwing money around the State willy-nilly. It is not directing it to needy projects such as the reduction of law and order problems by the provision of sporting projects and more beat police to enforce law and order. Many of the budget allocations related to areas that are not so needy. I bring to the attention of the House, and particularly Government members, the input of rural New South Wales to the economy. Exports from rural Australia feed more than 80 million people, provide wool annually for up to 500 million people and provide cotton for more than 100 million people worldwide. Rural regions, particularly in New South Wales, provide an input to the bulk of the economy.

The Government must recognise that people do live outside NSW—Newcastle, Sydney and

Wollongong. Residents outside those cities want to protect the environment as much as anybody else. Their environments suffer when an influx of city dwellers want to appreciate the environment of the bush. Residents of rural areas require the same services as people in other parts of the State. The Government has turned its back on rural people and the people of Mollymook and Ulladulla by providing \$14 million for the acquisition of land for a national park. No money has been put aside for the construction of the Mollymook school, the planning of stage two of the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, the ambulance station at Sussex Inlet and Wandandian, or much-needed sporting projects.

Approximately 12,000 students are enrolled in schools in the Shoalhaven. The high school and the primary school at Vincentia desperately need funds for the construction of sporting facilities. Land opposite those schools was set aside for the development of sporting facilities, but no funds have been provided in this budget. Substantial funding has been allocated for roadworks on the north coast, but no funding has been allocated for roadworks on the south coast. I repeat, \$14 million will be paid to one person to compulsorily acquire land that is zoned 1B and cannot be used for anything but a national park or recreation area. It will be money misspent.

Ms HALL (Swansea) [11.20 a.m.]: The Carr Labor Government family first budget has delivered to the people of New South Wales and to the people of Swansea electorate. It reflects the Government's recognition of the fact that families are having a real problem balancing their own budgets as a result of attacks on their security, employment and standards of living by the Howard Federal Government—a government that sanctioned the mass sackings of workers by Patrick stevedores merely because they were members of a union. The Carr Government appreciates that budgets are designed to deliver services to the people. I do not believe that government can deliver services by implementing policies that lead to job losses and privatisation. It is important to contrast what has happened in New South Wales with what has happened at the Federal level. In New South Wales there has been a steady program of debt recovery.

New South Wales has a AAA credit rating, which speaks volumes about the way the Carr Government has managed the economy. A good budget is not merely a statement about the State's financial situation; a good budget recognises where we as a community want to go, and plans for the future. It reflects the values and needs of the community; it reflects what the people of New South Wales want and hope to achieve. A budget is a good budget only if it delivers all those things. A

budget should be about fairness, about families and about spending in areas of need—areas associated with the care of children and the provision of health services for the people of New South Wales, including the disabled and the elderly. A budget should be a commitment to the ordinary people of this State, and that is what I consider the 1998-99 budget to be. I will go into that in a little more detail later.

On the other hand, the Federal Government has delivered a budget that is hurting the people of Australia. It produced a budget surplus built on the back of deficits in the lives of ordinary people. As a result of the Federal Government's budget people are left without adequate dental services. They can no longer get their teeth fixed or afford life saving medication and they have had to resort to backyard child care. The Federal budget has imposed additional costs on families who are looking after elderly parents, and has denied them access to nursing homes. A consequence of the Federal budget is that young people will no longer be able to plan for their future by attending university; it is becoming more and more difficult to obtain employment or apprenticeships.

The Federal Government's budget has victimised the unemployed and provided limited opportunities for training; it has betrayed the States through the Medicare agreement; and it has laid the groundwork for the introduction of a goods and services tax to transfer the tax burden to those who can least afford it. The people of New South Wales do not want a government whose focus is on economic rationalism, a government that uses terms such as "rightsize" and "downsize". They are terms that people are rejecting; they are terms that I reject. Prior to the 1995 State election the Labor Party promised the people of Swansea that a Labor Government would commit \$1.5 million to rehabilitate and restore Green Point, a beautiful reserve on the foreshore of Lake Macquarie. The Carr Government has honoured that promise and restoration work has taken place over a three-year period.

It was my pleasant duty to present the third payment of \$500,000 to Lake Macquarie City Council last month. The former coalition Government refused to contribute any funds to Lake Macquarie City Council when it was seeking to obtain land for the people of that region. That stands in stark contrast to the activities of the Carr Labor Government, a government that cares about the community and listens to what the community wants. Those opposite push their own agenda. When in office the previous Government closed Swansea

police station. The Carr Government has a designated police officer on duty in the police station between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

In addition, police are now rostered to patrol the Swansea area. The former Government not only closed Swansea police station, it also failed to roster police to patrol the area. The Carr Government has put a police presence back into Swansea. During the past three years the Carr Government has allocated funds for a new high school at Blue Haven. It recognised the need for a school in that area and it recognised that the people of the central coast had the right to expect a school to be built for their children. The Government allocated funds for the rebuilding of Belmont Public School, over and above the insurance funds provided after the school was burnt down.

Funds have also been allocated to build a new high school at Lake Munmorah—a high school that is desperately needed and one that I am sure would not have been built if the Carr Government had not been in office in this State. The investment of these funds will provide quality education for New South Wales children, whose future will be determined by the education they receive. The Carr Government is ensuring that children have access to quality education. This year's budget includes education funding of \$6.8 billion, an increase of \$1.2 billion since the 1994-95 budget. Let me compare that expenditure with what has occurred in Victoria.

The New South Wales Government has created 2,250 teaching positions, compared with Victoria, which has slashed 9,000 teaching positions. The creation of extra teaching positions will have a beneficial effect on the quality of education that children in New South Wales receive. Parents of New South Wales schoolchildren receive a back-to-school allowance. The Opposition has pledged to abolish that allowance if it is elected to office. Mothers of children in my electorate have come to my office and have said, "Thank you for the back-to-school allowance. I have been able to buy shorts for my young boys to wear to school, and shirts, socks and a school bag."

Those things would not have happened if the back-to-school allowance was not available. The Federal Government has instituted massive cuts to the education and training budget and there has been a 7.2 per cent decline in real terms since the 1997-98 budget. New South Wales on the other hand has increased its budget by 5.2 per cent. The New South Wales Government is showing a commitment to education. The Howard Federal Government is

sacrificing children's education by making savage cuts to the education budget in order to achieve a budget surplus. The Howard Government should be attempting to ensure that every child in every Australian State has a future and that can best be done by ensuring that they receive a good quality education. This year the Federal Government's reduction in funding for schools and for TAFE will put higher education outside the range of ordinary, average families in this State.

The 1997-98 budget contains a total funding allocation for health of \$6.6 billion. That is an increase of \$1.3 billion since 1994 and an increase of \$426 million over last year's allocation. Since 1994-95 health funding has increased by 37.4 per cent in real terms. That is to be compared with an increase of only 12.8 per cent at the Federal level. The Federal Government has shifted the burden of providing health care to the States. This is unacceptable. The Federal Government has also abolished the Commonwealth dental health scheme. That has caused a great many problems for the people of this State. When my constituents talk to me in my office about being unable to obtain dental care, I cannot think of any excuse to justify what the Howard Government has done and its impact on the people of New South Wales.

A massive capital works program is being undertaken for hospitals and health care facilities in New South Wales. Since 1995, 61 capital works projects have been completed, and 101 further projects are now in progress. This shows a real commitment by the Government to improving the hospitals in this State. On the other hand, the Federal Government has failed to address the additional costs imposed on the States by the declining membership of private health insurance funds and the increasing cost of technology. On the one hand the Federal Government has failed to provide adequate funding to the States while on the other hand the State Government is making a commitment to the people of New South Wales.

That lack of funding is a stark demonstration of the commitment of the Federal Government to the people in the Swansea electorate. It has closed the local Medicare office. It could be argued that the closure would have saved money, but guess what happened? The office was closed, the employees were redeployed to Charlestown—which the Federal Government spelt as Charleston, so it cannot even get the name of the suburb correct—and the Federal Government has had to buy out the lease. The staff moved at the end of March but last weekend boxes of computers were still sitting in the office. I have received reliable information that the rent being paid

by the Federal Government to buy out the lease on the premises it was renting at Belmont is well above what it would have paid had it not moved. It is determined to deprive the people of the Swansea electorate of a Medicare office where they can claim rebates and use that money to purchase medicine for their children or for themselves. It is a disgrace and it shows how little commitment the Federal Government has to the people of New South Wales.

Since 1996 the Howard Government has ripped \$200 million from the New South Wales health budget. The Federal Government's aged-care proposal is imposing further costs on New South Wales. Elderly people are being forced to remain in public hospitals for much longer than they formerly did, simply because they have to sell their houses to obtain the necessary money to get into nursing homes. That is disgraceful. The Federal Government stands condemned for its actions in relation to health services and aged care. There is also a big difference between what is happening at the State and Federal levels in relation to child care. Since 1996 the Federal Government has slashed \$1 billion from the child-care budget. That is affecting the ability of families to earn extra income. Because they are unable to afford the cost of child care families have to take their children out of child care, put them in situations where they are getting less than the best quality care, impose upon their parents to look after the children, or give up their employment.

My electorate officer told me last week that her child-care fees have increased by \$3 a day. That means she is paying more than \$35 a day to access quality care in a community child-care centre. She can afford it, but many people cannot. That is to be compared with what has happened in New South Wales, where the Government is committed to child protection and education, supported accommodation programs, and family support. Pre-schools and day care centres have received increased funding and the Government has worked hard to maintain some funding for vacation care, while the Federal Government is ripping money out of vacation care, as well as before and after school care. That is a tax on children and families, and people are hurting. The Federal Government is attacking families and ripping off money from those who can least afford it. I am sure members opposite support those same policies.

I acknowledge the funding that has been allocated to Swansea electorate for roadworks and capital works. The roads in the area have been gradually upgraded. That has continued this year with money being allocated for work on the Pacific

Highway at Cams Wharf Road, a cycleway from Eleebana to Valentine, the Pacific Highway at Park Street, Belmont North, and the Pacific Highway at the Belmont to Cardiff Road. Funding has been allocated for Kanangra Drive on the central coast, and for cycleways and much-needed traffic lights near the North Lakes High School and North Lakes Public School. That is another indication of the Government's determination to maintain the State's assets.

Recently I was talking with an engineer from Lake Macquarie council. He thanked the Government for allocating the required amount of funding for necessary roadworks in the Lake Macquarie area. I congratulate the Government and repeat that the State Government is committed to providing services to the people of New South Wales. On the other hand, the Federal Government is determined to increase the costs of those services. It intends to introduce a goods and services tax that will tax health care, education, child care, aged care, council rates, electricity, water and used cars, whilst on the other hand it will reduce the tax on imported luxury goods. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [11.40 a.m.]: When the coalition was in office legislation was introduced to allow for a referendum that would ask the people whether they wanted to limit by legislation the ability of the government of New South Wales to run deficit budgets. I was in the Chamber at the time and I well remember the panic that set in on the other side. Labor Party members, then in opposition, were traumatised to think that the people of New South Wales may agree to the introduction of legislation that would prevent a State government of New South Wales from running into deficit budgets. The Treasurer, when presenting the budget this year, boasted that there would be a \$45 million surplus. This is another Labor Government smoke-and-mirrors trick. Former Labor governments have talked about budget deficits. In the past Labor has simply borrowed the money needed to balance the budget and called that earnings—an accounting trick. In the past Labor governments never really ran surplus budgets anyway.

I wonder how long it will take this \$45 million so-called surplus to materialise and whether it will last, or whether it is just another hoax perpetrated on the people of New South Wales by another incompetent Labor Government that cannot manage money. Many people, myself included, are of the view that Labor governments find it very difficult to manage the finances of the State or of any jurisdiction they control because they simply do not have the right attitude to finance and money; they

are big taxers and big-spenders. When a Labor government runs into money difficulties the first thing it does is question what new taxes it can find. Labor governments do not think of trying to save expenditure; they simply look for ways of imposing new taxes, and they are pretty adept at doing so. It is estimated by some that since 1995 tax income for the State has increased by approximately 33 per cent.

It is believed that each year people in New South Wales pay \$1,063 more than people in Queensland and \$417 more than people in Victoria. The present Government says that it is careful with its money and is managing the affairs of the State well. I doubt that it is able to do that. The Treasurer said in his Budget Speech that the Government will reduce payroll tax to 6.7 per cent on 1 July 1999. Why is the Government not doing that on 1 July 1998, rather than waiting for 12 months? It is possible that this time next year the Treasurer will not be Treasurer and the Government will not be in office, yet the Government is promising tax reductions that it may not be in office to deliver. The Treasurer has promised other tax cuts he may not be able to deliver. He said that land tax will be reduced from 1.85 per cent to 1.7 per cent in 2000. That is a couple of years out yet, and one wonders whether this Government will be in office to deliver on its promise.

The Treasurer has said that some people will benefit from the abolition of the \$43 levy on car registrations this year. Unfortunately, most people in the State will not enjoy that benefit until 1 July 2000—another promise well in the future, a promise that the Treasurer and the Government may not be able to deliver. The Treasurer is promising tax cuts that he and the Government may not be in office to implement. He is, however, maintaining the unfair land tax on people's homes. Of all the taxes that this Government administers, this is the most unfair. The Treasurer has spoken of the tax as being a tax on millionaires, but he knows as well as everyone else that many of those who are caught by the tax are not millionaires. They may live in houses situated on land valued at more than \$1 million, but many of them will be hard-pressed to pay the tax. It is a bad principle to impose a tax on homes in which people live and raise their families. The tax will force many people out of their homes.

The tax does not apply to anyone in my electorate, but it applies to many people in Sydney—people who have lived in their homes for 20 years and even longer. Through no fault of their own, their land value has increased. Many people just cannot afford to pay the tax. As I have said, the

principle at stake is very bad. It would be very easy for governments in the future to lower the threshold and broaden the tax to take in more and more homes. I could never agree with this principle. I turn to the float of the Totalizator Agency Board. The Labor Party when in opposition did not agree with selling off public assets. It was appalled by the coalition's sale of the State Bank, which it considered to be a dreadful, retrograde step. I remember the shock and horror with which Labor Party members greeted that proposal. Now the same people, in government, are very happy to get rid of the TAB and sell any other State assets that they can get their hands on. It is disappointing to see Labor members adopt such a hypocritical attitude.

My greatest disappointment with the budget concerns the way in which my electorate is being treated. I am particularly disappointed that the Albury electorate is not receiving the support that it needs and deserves. The same could be said for many other country areas in the State. The Government is interested only in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. It has turned its back on the bush and is ignoring the needs of country people. Albury, large provincial city that it might be, and the rest of my electorate are being ignored by the Government. When the coalition was in office Albury was provided with a state-of-the-art, brand new base hospital and a first-class police station, which had been needed for many years.

A new school was built at Jindera, a new hall was built at the Lavington school and work was started on expansion of the school at Thurgoona. A magnificent bridge was built over the railway at Guinea Street in Albury and a great number of road works were undertaken in the electorate, including an upgrade of the road out to the Hume Weir. That road had been neglected for many years and a number of young people had been killed on it. The coalition upgraded a large section of the road. Local people are waiting for the road to be finished, as there is still a section that needs to be improved. Approximately \$7 million is needed to complete work, which will guarantee a very safe road for the many people who use it.

Unfortunately, in this budget the Government has allocated just \$1.3 million for the road, which is certainly nowhere near enough. People in my electorate are very disappointed about that. The road is located in the Hume shire, and for many years the shire council has agitated to have the road upgraded to a safe standard. The Government has ignored those pleas and has turned its back on that need, ignoring the important safety issues at stake while the road remains in its current condition. This

budget allocates very little else for my electorate. A sum of \$361,000 is being provided to upgrade the automotive section of the Albury TAFE college. I am delighted with that welcome provision. The Government is providing \$2.87 million for new buildings for ecotourism at the TAFE facility at Thurgoona, which is just outside Albury.

I am delighted that \$1.3 million has been allocated for the completion of a much-needed multipurpose service building at Tumberumba. That project was begun by the coalition and is merely being completed by the present Government. In addition \$1.33 million has been allocated to complete the upgrade of the Culcairn multipurpose centre, which was badly run down. That project was also initiated by the coalition and will be completed by the present Government. It will be a great benefit to the people of Culcairn and the surrounding district. I am disappointed that no funding has been made available for a multipurpose service at Henty, a facility the people of Henty are keen to have. They regard the multipurpose service as the way ahead for health for their district. The service would guarantee the continued existence of the Henty District Hospital. They are anxious to have the project proceed, and I strongly support them.

Health care is important to country people. In recent times the people of Henty have suffered many setbacks. Bank branch offices have been closed and other services have been withdrawn from the town. The people of Henty believe that if anything happens to the hospital they will lose their general practitioner—an outstanding doctor who has a real interest in the people and the community—as well as the newly established chemist shop. The continued existence of the hospital and its upgrading to a multipurpose service is important to the future of the people of Henty.

The Albury electorate has not received a great deal in the budget, and I am disappointed by that. Notwithstanding that many community needs do not require a great amount of expenditure, they still cry out for government assistance. I am pleased that the Government has allocated funding for a series of bridges across the Murray River at Howlong and across the flood plain. The contrast between the New South Wales and Victorian sides of Howlong is stark. Bridges on the New South Wales side are old and in a bad state of repair but on the Victorian side the wide, concrete bridges across the flood plain are brand new and in first-class condition.

The funding for these bridges is certainly not nearly enough; a great deal more will be needed. I hope the Government will strengthen the

commitment to that important project and that work will go ahead as quickly as possible. I hope also that the funding will not remain unspent after being allocated. The bread and butter issues, health and education, are important in my electorate. Some of my colleagues have spoken about the back-to-school allowance, which involves the distribution of a great deal of money across the State. Many people in my electorate have said that \$50 does not go very far and that they would have preferred the Government to allocate lump sums to individual schools so that the money could be put to practical use.

As the honourable member for Swansea said, some parents use the allowance to buy shoes or shorts for their children, but many others simply waste it or put it to other uses that yield no benefit for the children. Albury has a first-class hospital. Indeed, it is claimed to be the best hospital between Sydney and Melbourne, with the exception of those in Canberra. The Albury Base Hospital is staffed by highly skilled doctors, dedicated nurses and ancillary staff who do a magnificent job with limited resources. However, they just do not have sufficient funding.

People constantly telephone or write to my office and complain about the lack of services at the hospital. They complain that when they take desperately ill family members to the emergency section of the hospital patients are left to lie on trolleys all day. Nothing is done and, ill though they might be, they are simply sent home at the end of the day with their families to try to cope with serious problems. That is a cause for serious concern. I receive constant representations that the hospital resources in the electorate, particularly in Albury Base Hospital, are inadequate. People have been waiting for a desperately long time for elective surgery. Recently a lady who had trouble with her hands came to see me. I am not sure of the medical term for her conditions but her fingers were contracting and her hands were taking on a claw-like appearance. She had been told that she might have to wait for a long time before she could undergo surgery.

After I made representations to the Greater Murray Area Health Service, the service arranged for her to travel to Wagga Wagga Base Hospital where a doctor from Sydney would be in attendance. Unfortunately the doctor was not able to attend, although the lady was prepared to travel to Wagga Wagga, and that appointment was cancelled. It was then arranged for her to travel to Sydney, but unfortunately for her she contracted a heavy cold and her appointment was cancelled again. Albury has a brand new state-of-the-art hospital and this

lady cannot get the attention she needs in the town where she lives; she has to travel to Wagga Wagga or to Sydney. Country hospitals need more resources and, as far as I am concerned, the Albury electorate should be on top of the list.

Recently the Minister for Health announced that the obstetric service at the Albury Mercy Hospital would be closed and contracted out to Wodonga. Some years ago a former Labor Minister for Health closed the obstetric service at Albury Base Hospital and transferred responsibility for all obstetric services in the Albury area to the Albury Mercy Hospital responsibility. The Mercy Hospital provided an magnificent service, one of the best in Australia in my opinion, and was acclaimed by the parents and children who used it. It is ironic that the present Labor Minister for Health is contracting out that service from the Mercy Hospital to Wodonga. The big question is whether mothers and children will receive the same wonderful service or service of a lesser standard at Wodonga. Will it simply be service at a price or will the real needs of mothers and babies be taken into account? That is also a matter of concern to the people in my electorate.

At one time the Government said it did not believe in, and was opposed to, the contracting out of services of any kind. Members of the present Government were very much against the contracting out by the coalition of radiology services at the Albury Base Hospital. The same people are now contracting out obstetric services—not simply to the wider community but to another State, of all places. Although I have a high regard for the standard of health care in Victoria, I wonder why a first-class service at Albury has been closed and contracted out across the border. Many people in my electorate are asking the same question.

When the Minister made the announcement he said that the former services would be maintained. I am anxious to ascertain whether the same level of service will remain available to the people I represent. I will certainly be keeping a close eye on that. My electorate has received some benefits from the budget, but a great many matters have not been dealt with. I hope that when the coalition is elected to government at the next State election it will remedy some of the discrepancies in the budget as they relate to the people of my electorate.

Mr ROGAN (East Hills) [11.59 a.m.]: I am delighted to speak on the budget, which has been very well received in the community and in the media. I take up the words of the Treasurer and commence my speech in the tone in which he completed his speech: this really is a Labor budget.

It concentrates on the key issues of health, education, public housing, law and order, the environment, and services to the community, the aged and the disabled. Health has received a record allocation of \$6.6 billion, an increase of \$303 million, which represents a 4.8 per cent increase from 1997-98. This increase has been achieved in a climate in which the Federal Government is increasingly withdrawing funding from the States, particularly New South Wales, and particularly in relation to health. The Carr Labor Government has increased health spending by more than \$1 billion in its three years in office and it has been forced to add another \$303 million to protect patients against the Howard Government's attack on health funding. The Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs issued a statement in May which said under the heading "Federal Government Health Cuts Amount to \$200 million":

John Howard's cuts to the New South Wales public health system have now grown to more than \$200 million . . . cuts have now cost the State's public hospitals \$103 million.

This year the budget has significantly increased the allocation for education by 4.5 per cent to a record \$6.8 billion, an increase of \$338 million on last year. That amount includes \$5 billion in total recurrent funding for school education-related services with programs for literacy and numeracy. I am delighted that a small sum has been allocated to Padstow TAFE college, which is in my electorate. It has received larger sums in previous years. Padstow TAFE has received \$36,000 to upgrade its hospitality facilities. The kitchen areas will be upgraded and refurbished at a cost of \$336,000 and will be completed in September 1999. The budget allocation for the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women has been increased by 11 per cent—a huge boost. That money will be well spent in an area that was disgracefully neglected by the Fahey and Greiner governments.

The Carr Government, despite the difficulties in framing the budget with Federal Government cutbacks, is trying to restore the services that were hacked out by the former coalition Government. I am delighted that \$8.7 million has been allocated for road works in East Hills: \$6.54 million for major works, \$1.42 million for maintenance, \$147,000 for minor works, and \$602,000 for road safety and traffic management. Constituents in my electorate will benefit from the M5 East extension from King Georges Road to near General Holmes Drive, which will be completed by this Government despite many

difficulties. The Sustainable Energy Development Authority has received extra funding this year. The authority is an Australian leader in reducing greenhouse gases and reducing the cost of electricity to consumers.

I raise within the context of the State budget several issues which together highlight the hypocritical and damaging development of the way in which the media are increasingly reporting the Parliament and its members. The media have failed to examine their standards and ethics. The standard of the media has never been high in the public's esteem. It almost seems as though the media have waged a campaign to reduce members of Parliament to the standards they enjoy within the community. Whilst politicians must accept their fair share of the blame for what is happening, in all my years in Parliament—25 years this year—I have never known the type of gutter journalism and the denigration of Parliament and its members that we are now experiencing.

I do not say that all members of the media are involved. Members of Parliament, both Government and Opposition, must accept their share of the blame. I do not necessarily blame individual journalists; to a large extent I blame editors who demand that journalists dig up dirt, sensationalise and ignore the truth to beat-up a story. I have asked young journalists who have commenced their career in this place why they do not report positively. The journalists have replied that they have tried to do so but when they take their stories to their editors they are virtually thrown in their faces. The journalists are then told to go back and write something a bit more sensational.

There is no better example of that than the reporting of the visit by a delegation of members of Parliament to California last year. The visit was given sensational treatment by the Murdoch press, which seemed to emulate the gutter standard of Fleet Street. The media produced headlines such as "Living it up at the Hotel California" and photos of the parliamentary delegates. It did not try to balance the story and highlight the economic and other benefits that accrued to New South Wales as a result of the trip. No other delegation of which I have been a member has provided such an extensive report to Parliament, nor brought such benefits to the State. Pfizer Pty Ltd, which announced a possible expansion of its business to Sydney, stated in a media release dated 25 June 1997:

Visiting Pfizer Director, Richard Costigan, and Dudley Schleier, Regional Director Australasia, Chairman and

Managing Director, today congratulated the New South Wales Delegation to California led by Senate President, Max Willis, and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, John Murray.

That business expansion would have gone ahead had it not been held up because of a pharmaceutical pricing policy of the Federal Government. ResMed Ltd announced its intention to expand its operations to Sydney. That company, which is the leader in producing respiratory devices, would rely heavily on local suppliers to construct devices that would comprise more than 80 per cent Australian content. In December last year the company and the New South Wales Department of State and Regional Development jointly announced that the company would expand its operations, which would create about 250 additional jobs. During the joint announcement the Chief Executive of ResMed, Dr Peter Farrell, said:

We appreciate the support of the NSW Government as well as their expeditious appraisal of our investment proposal. In particular, Speaker John Murray, Treasurer Michael Egan were of great assistance in supporting our decision to expand our NSW operations . . .

The company had not intended to expand its New South Wales operations but a Government delegation convinced the company that New South Wales was the best State in which to locate its head office. In relation to media reporting, I refer also to the so-called taxis scandal. Trying to emulate the Murdoch press, the *Sun-Herald* ran a front-page story under the headline "Like Thieves in the Night". The article stated:

State MPs kept a rorts debate going until a few seconds after midnight so they could cash in on another perk: taxpayer-funded cabs to and from home.

I spoke in another debate earlier that night, and I certainly did not drag out my speech to enable members to get taxis to and from home. One must question the priorities of the media when it sensationalises a story relating to \$100, which was the figure also quoted in another newspaper. Although the trip to California was a front-page story for nearly a week and my photograph and name appeared in an article, I did not receive one phone call or letter at my electorate office about the matter. The media denigrate politicians and lower further the esteem in which they are held.

Why does the media question the expenditure of \$100 by members of this House when members of the press gallery occupy space in this building that is valued at \$320 to \$339 per square metre in the central business district? The press gallery occupies 334 square metres, which equates to about \$117,000 per annum, but does not make a

contribution to the costs involved. Electricity and cleaning services for the space occupied by the press gallery are paid for by the Parliament. Yet the media has the audacity to report that members of Parliament have obtained taxis to and from home—something that industry provides to employees who must work late hours. Media reporting has absolutely no balance. One must question the morality and priorities of the media when that happens.

I get no delight from reading about people's misfortunes or personal plights, but reporting in the Murdoch press is selective. It attacks public figures and members of Parliament, but when Rupert Murdoch announces that he is getting divorced the story is treated obliquely and minimally in the paper. Indeed, the *Sun-Herald* ran the headline "Murdoch separation—don't read all about it. Stop the presses!" As I said, I get no pleasure from reading about people's personal problems, but such reporting shows hypocrisy and the difference in standards. Some two years ago I tried to get the media interested in a paper—I congratulate the Parliamentary Library on the assistance it gave me during preparation of that paper—that highlighted the deplorable way New South Wales is treated in the tax-sharing arrangements. I am not talking about \$100; I am talking about of the order of \$1 billion per year.

I released a press statement and a 17-page report on the matter. However, I did not receive one centimetre of space in the media. Perhaps the media found it difficult to comprehend the matter. As a result, I wrote to the financial editors of newspapers, including Ian Lovett, Terry McCrann and the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, and Ross Gittins, Max Walsh, Elizabeth Knight and the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I even sent a second letter to Ross Gittins. Did I receive a reply or a thank you for sending the letter, which I thought they might have found interesting? I did not receive one reply to my press statement, although it relates to an issue of great concern to the taxpayers of New South Wales. The people of New South Wales are subsidising the other States by more than \$1 billion a year. The Budget Speech refers to a figure of \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 30 May last year Ross Gittins asked why this State's electricity assets should be sold and proposed ways to spend the money raised from the sale of those assets. He said:

It's the opposite of a black hole. So in what pleasant way would we like to fill it? Mr Egan proposes to increase recurrent spending on schools, hospitals, public transport, police and community services.

But let's not forget an alternate use: to reduce State taxes.

When I read that I decided to write another letter to Ross Gittins about my earlier press statement on a matter that should have received fair coverage in the media. In my letter I said that given the importance of the subject I was disappointed, understandably, about the lack of press coverage given to my call for a fairer deal for New South Wales taxpayers. I drew to the attention of Ross Gittins his failure to speak out previously on the issue. I further said:

Surely the injustice N.S.W. taxpayers are now suffering calls for a little better than some cryptic remarks . . .

Politicians must take a good hard look at themselves, as the media must do if it continues reporting in the same way. Although politicians are accountable through parliamentary processes and the bodies that oversight them, the media is not accountable. I can see the time approaching when people of standing and integrity will not choose to come here because they can carve careers in industry and enjoy a life free of criticism and the awful hours that all members of Parliament must endure.

While I do not agree with the Opposition on many issues, I acknowledge that members of Parliament on both sides work exceedingly hard for and achieve much for their electorates, considering the odds against them these days with funding cutbacks. It is time the media reported positively on this institution and those who serve in it. Let the media take a good, hard, critical look at its role and the double standards it adopts, and the total hypocrisy it applies in its reporting. The media indulges in what I can only call gutter journalism to report news and events in the Parliament.

Mr BLACKMORE (Maitland) [12.19 p.m.]: Like a child comparing Christmas presents, I am comparing what my electorate received from the budget with what other electorates received. When the coalition was in government I was proud to announce what my electorate had achieved from each budget. In all fairness to this Government, Maitland has received funding for some projects, but funds for other projects remain outstanding. On the positive side, the final \$950,000 has been allocated to Maitland's major project: the redevelopment of Maitland Hospital, with which I am proud to be involved.

Maitland High School will receive a new gymnasium with the help of \$150,000 seeding money at this stage. A further \$109,000 will be provided to complete the upgrading of Dungog primary school. An education training facility will be built at Tocal Agriculture College at a total cost

of \$1 million, of which \$80,000 has been allocated in the budget. Prior to the budget an announcement was made about the provision of security officers for passenger trains after 7.00 p.m. Yesterday the honourable member for Waratah announced that \$200,000 has been allocated to complete the feasibility study into providing a new road between Thornton in the Maitland electorate and Beresfield in the Waratah electorate. This link road will run parallel to the New England Highway and will provide welcome benefits to residents of Thornton, Beresfield and Woodberry.

Morpeth water treatment works is the overall big winner in the budget, with \$7.8 million of a projected cost of \$25.9 million being allocated. This project is long overdue and holds the key to future development in Maitland suburbs such as Morpeth and Tenambit. Bolwarra and Farley sewage treatment works will have a waste water transfer system installed during the next three years at a cost of \$3.5 million. All of these works involving water, sewage and waste water are an integral part of the future development of Maitland city. However, the down side of the budget is the allocation of funds for the Clarendetown sewerage works. Clarendetown is located on the Williams River. Last year the healthy rivers study identified the need for reticulated sewage treatment works in Clarendetown. Water run-off through the kerb and guttering will find its way into the Williams River and further down to the weir at Seaham.

Hunter Water takes water from the Williams River and it ultimately finds its way into the households of many Hunter homes. It is certainly not suitable to have an area without sewage treatment works providing town drinking water in the Newcastle area. That has been the situation for many years. During the 1995 election campaign the Labor candidate for Maitland promised a solution if Labor were elected to office. The same promise was made regarding Lochinvar, which is a small area on the western extremity of the Maitland electorate. In a letterbox drop the Labor candidate informed each household that he had a solution. It is now 1998 and funds for those projects have not been made available. In this regard, I refer to a headline that appeared in the *Maitland Mercury* of 26 February 1995. It stated "Ashtonfield Primary School ALP Promise". In 1998 construction of the school has not commenced and funds have not been provided.

In November 1994 the shadow minister for police—who is now the Minister for Police—was reported in the local newspaper as saying that Maitland was 12 police officers short. Cessnock, Maitland, Raymond Terrace and Port Stephens

police stations have since been amalgamated to cover one area. Maitland did not obtain the promised additional 12 police officers. While it is fine to say that the commander has overall responsibility to move police around to areas in most need, a shortfall remains. Two years ago funds were allocated for the construction of Thornton police station. However, it has disappeared from the program. I was not a supporter of Thornton police station; I preferred locating a minimum of three additional officers at Beresfield.

The new roadworks that received funding allocations this year would have provided easier and quicker access for Beresfield police officers to enter the area. The five-kilometre difference between Beresfield and the site of the proposed Thornton police station will provide a greater coverage rate than funds being spent on bricks and mortar. I will not nail the Government to the wall by saying the police station has not been provided, but a promise is a promise and it was not fulfilled. A promise was made to reopen east Maitland police station. It is quite obvious from budget allocations that that police station will not reopen.

When the coalition came to office it reduced staff at Dungog railway station. To its credit, the Labor Party promised to provide staff for two shifts per day at the railway station. The staffing level has now been reduced to one shift. This railway station pays its way through the sale of Countrylink and CityRail fares, which would justify the retention of two staff. It is a vital service, especially as that railway station is being considered as a stop for the XPT train. It is essential for the tourism industry that in areas such as Dungog people are available to assist tourists with their luggage. I ask the Government to replace the second shift worker. I acknowledge that the Government initially kept its promise, but it should not ignore the need to provide an essential service.

The budget has allocated funds for a number of roadworks in my electorate, but the majority of those projects are funded by the Federal Government. However, it is pleasing that at long last traffic lights have been installed at Arthur Street, Rutherford. They will be switched on next week. There has been a pressing need for those traffic lights for many years so that people can safely cross the New England Highway. I congratulate the Federal member for Paterson, Mr Baldwin, on achieving those road funds. However, I compared the allocation of funds for capital projects in last year's budget with this year's budget and found that \$505,000 of Federal money was allocated for noise barriers to be installed in the east Maitland area.

Those noise barriers have not been installed. An amount of \$300,000 has been allocated for the project in this year's budget. a reduction of \$205,000.

This document was given to me by the Treasurer of New South Wales and I believe the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads has an obligation to pursue this matter, to ensure that the Maitland electorate receives the full value of the funds allocated for noise barrier works. It is ironic that last year, when funding of \$505,000 was announced, \$600,000 was also allocated for the provision of noise barriers in an adjoining electorate. I say good luck to the people of that electorate because they, too, had a problem with noise. However, that work must be continued up the highway and into Maitland. Maitland people are no different to those in any other electorate in New South Wales. Noise can be a problem no matter where one lives, particularly when there are 23,000 vehicular movements each day, and that number is increasing.

Another disappointing aspect of the 1998-99 budget relates to the lack of funding for a property at 88 Scott Street, Newcastle—which is outside my electorate. I know that the honourable member for Newcastle has pursued funding for this project on behalf of the Pensioner Advisory Service, of which my father is president. Funding is desperately needed to enable that service to continue to provide voluntary assistance to pensioners in the area, which includes Singleton and Muswellbrook. People ring the Pensioner Advisory Service to obtain advice on numerous matters pertaining to senior citizens. The office out of which the service operates is in need of repair, but no authority wants to allocate the necessary funding to give the service a permanent base and enable it to continue to provide this valuable community service.

I turn now to the provision of court facilities. The East Maitland district courthouse cells do not conform to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. As a result, custodial matters are not conducted at that courthouse. I do not blame the present Government entirely for this problem, because it was brought to the attention of the previous Government. However, no funds have been allocated to rectify the problems that presently exist there. This matter is of concern because district court matters involving custodial proceedings have to be transferred to Newcastle or another centre at considerable inconvenience to those involved. There are two courthouses at Maitland—a District Court and a Local Court—but the Local Court does not have a jury room. Maitland

is disadvantaged because, although it has two courthouses, only Local Court matters can be dealt with.

I wonder how long this situation will be allowed to continue. The constituents of Maitland have the right to expect to have matters heard by the court within a reasonable time. Court delays are unacceptable and custodial matters now have to be heard at Newcastle because of the anomaly in the system related to the two holding cells at East Maitland. I urge the Government to ensure that repairs are carried out and that any other matters that need to be addressed are taken into account and the necessary infrastructure provided to enable District Court hearings to be resumed at East Maitland.

I have mentioned some of the better aspects of the budget, but a closer reading of Budget Paper No. 4, the State Asset Acquisition Program, indicates that the new gymnasium for Maitland High School has been allocated \$150,000 for this financial year. It is interesting to note that the starting time for that program is 1999 with completion in the year 2001. The total cost of the project is \$1.4 million but only \$150,000 has been allocated for this financial year. While it is great news that Maitland High School will receive \$150,000 this year, it will not have the benefit of the gymnasium until 2001. This has been going on for two years. The school community has been working with the staff of the school, planning, designing and trying to get the biggest building it can with the funds that are available. It is disappointing that the work will not commence until 1999.

Upgrading work commenced at Dungog Public School in 1996. The estimated total cost of the project was \$2.4 million, \$2.3 million has already been expended, and this year's allocation of \$109,000 is really only to complete the work. Whilst it is a good announcement, it is a repeat announcement. It is the thimble and the pea trick, but that is not unusual; it happens with all governments. Although I accept that the electorate of Maitland has fared reasonably well in the 1998-99 budget, regardless of which party is in government some matters must be taken into account and completed for the benefit of the citizens of New South Wales, particularly those in the electorate of Maitland.

Mr CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [12.36 p.m.]: Before I commence my contribution to the debate I wish to refer to a few of the issues raised by the honourable member for Maitland in his concluding remarks. His comments were churlish in the

extreme. He claimed that somehow the Government is taking credit for the Dungog school extensions. It is the usual approach for any government in its budget papers on capital projects to list works in progress. The Dungog primary school upgrade has received total funding of \$2.38 million. The fact that only \$109,000 remains outstanding is immaterial. Work is still in progress. Perhaps the honourable member does not want the little extras that will complete the project. That is a very sad commentary on the approach adopted by the honourable member for Maitland.

The honourable member also mentioned the Maitland High School gymnasium. There are undoubtedly a range of reasons why that school will not receive funds from the State Treasury until 1999. It may well be that construction will not commence until February or March next year, in which case only one progress payment will be required before 30 June next year. That also was a very churlish comment and unworthy of the honourable member. The budget is, as the Treasurer said, every inch a Labor budget. Whilst the Government is funding the Olympics and making sure we do not have the hangover after the event, it is also making sure that the people of New South Wales—especially those in regional New South Wales, of which the electorate of Wyong is certainly a part—are getting the infrastructure they need.

It is well recognised that the Wyong electorate, and indeed the central coast, is one of the fastest growing regions in New South Wales. The annual growth rate is 3.7 per cent. The 1998-99 budget allocation will go a long way towards providing the services required for an ever-increasing population. I want to refer to one aspect of the Treasurer's speech. When he introduced the appropriation bills the Treasurer pointed out that this year's health and hospital expenses equal the total of all the Commonwealth health payments of \$1,992 million; New South Wales land tax revenue of \$945 million; revenue from lotteries of \$274 million; poker machine taxes of \$826 million; wagering and other gaming taxes of \$342 million; plus a further \$2,254 million from other revenue sources.

Jack Lang introduced the lotteries to fund hospitals. I am sure many honourable members would agree with me when I say that he had the right solution. If this Government put lotteries money towards health care, it would solve our problems. The Treasurer must have had the same idea when he incorporated that figure in his Budget Speech. It is important to emphasise that the State Government receives \$274 million in revenue from lotteries. In the next financial year the Government

will spend \$6,633 million on health care. A quick calculation would show a shortfall from lotteries of about \$6,300 million. It might have worked for Jack Lang in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but it will not work with today's complex health care system. Given the demographics and our ageing population, the Government will have to spend even more money, a greater percentage of the State budget, on health care. That is a fact of life that cannot be avoided, and I am pleased that the Treasurer accepts it.

I am pleased also that the Government is following tradition by expanding rapidly the health resources in the Wyong electorate, both in capital expenditure and in recurrent funding. One should avoid making promises one cannot keep. In the lead-up to the 1995 State election the Labor Party made only three promises that involved my electorate. It promised to re-establish the Toukley paramedic service, which the then Minister for Health—the current Leader of the Opposition—discontinued. The Government also promised planning for stage three of the Wyong Hospital and it promised the necessary funding for the operation for the maternity and obstetrics unit at Wyong hospital.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, when he was Minister for Health, opened the obstetrics unit amid great fanfare, but he did not provide the funding to operate it. Two years ago the Government made sure it provided the funding for the unit to operate. All funding commitments made prior to the 1995 State election have been honoured in full in the Wyong electorate. The Labor Party has provided far more than it promised in the lead-up to the 1995 election. It has provided funding for a community health centre at Lake Haven, adjacent to the Lake Haven shopping centre. In this budget the Government is providing funding for a community health centre at Tuggerah.

The area health service intends to provide a community health facility close to Westfield Shoppingtown and Homemakers Supa Centa at Tuggerah, which are commercial precincts of some significance. People will be able to have their health needs met in a good location, because transport links with those places are much better than elsewhere on the central coast. The sorts of services that will be provided at the community health centre include child and family health care, aged care and rehabilitation, speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, and mental health services. Again, this is good news for the central coast.

Lest the people of the Wyong electorate think the Government is looking after them only because

they are represented by a Government member, it is important to recognise that the Government is providing the same community health facilities and services in Erina, which is also a major centre on the central coast. The honourable member for Gosford was reluctant to acknowledge that in his speech to this Chamber. A new day surgery facility is to be built on the Wyong hospital campus.

It is important to recognise that in the last three financial years day surgery procedures on the central coast increased by almost 40 per cent. One reason for that increase is that young children and older people who require surgical procedures do not like to be hospitalised. These days parents prefer to spend time with their children in hospital rather than leave them, and day surgery enables procedures such as tonsillectomies to be carried out on a same-day basis. That ensures that the family routine is not disrupted because one parent is with the child in hospital while the other family member or guardian looks after the other children.

It is important that the Government recognises the strain on families, and the construction of this \$5.2 million day surgery facility will assist to overcome some of that stress. Prior to the 1995 State election the Government promised only to fund the planning for stage three of Wyong hospital. It has gone well beyond that. The planning strategy adopted by the Central Coast Area Health Service has been funded, and the budget also provides ongoing funding. The Government is implementing that plan and the Wyong day surgery unit is part of that implementation.

Education is another critical, basic area of State government administration. Again there is great news for the expanding population of the Wyong electorate. The Government acknowledges that most of the growth on the central coast in the next five to 10 years will occur in my electorate, because of the land that is available there. It has planned for that growth and is putting its plan into action. The funding for Wadalba high school is a new item in this budget. Construction of that school is due to commence in 1999. After several discussions with officers in the property department of the Department of Education and Training I hope the first students can be enrolled at the Wadalba high school in January 2000. That will be of great benefit to the people of the Wyong electorate because it will obviously relieve overcrowding, principally at Gorokan High School.

I note also that the budget provides funding for Lake Munmorah High School, which is not in my electorate. When the Government was considering the construction of a new high school on the upper

central coast a real problem emerged with the Gorokan High School and North Lakes High School being too close together. The usual procedure would have been to build a high school between Gorokan and North Lakes. The fact is, the school at North Lakes was built at the wrong location. One always has 20:20 vision with hindsight, but this is an issue that needs to be addressed. The only way that it will be possible to resolve the overcrowding problems at North Lakes and Gorokan high schools is to build a high school beside them. That was a challenge to the Government, and we welcome the fact that it is being met by the Treasurer and the Department of Education and Training.

In addition to the Wadalba high school, funding for an upgrade of the Tuggerah Public School and the stage two upgrade of Ourimbah Public School is proceeding. There have been problems in ensuring the expenditure of funds at Tuggerah Public School, mainly because the site is very constricted and a large proportion of it has a steep gradient. Environmental considerations also need to be taken into account. In 1993 I had the pleasure of attending the centenary of Tuggerah school. Unfortunately, that quaint little country school will grow substantially because of urban development in the area adjoining the school. Growth cannot be avoided, but the Government is making sure that there is sufficient funding for first-class educational facilities for the students of that school.

This budget contains funding for a new fire station at Berkeley Vale. Honourable members may be aware that Berkeley Vale is an industrial-commercial area and that a number of major factory operations are located there, such as Sanitarium, Krone (Aust) Technique Pty Ltd and Masterfoods. Companies have made a great investment in their establishments. The budget recognises the need to protect those company investments and to ensure that the area has the most modern and up-to-date firefighting equipment so that if the worst happens and a fire breaks out it will be possible to respond quickly to protect both the property of companies and the jobs of those employed at the factories. If a major fire occurred, people would need to be stood down until repairs were effected or would perhaps even lose their employment. This provision is a smart move, representing good insurance and highlighting great planning by the State Government.

The Government has reinforced its support for the State's 70,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers. The Government has allocated \$55.5 million to local councils across New South Wales for new

firefighting equipment and operating costs of the Rural Fire Service. The service's \$39.7 million capital funding includes \$19 million for the purchase of 155 new and up to another 150 second-hand fire tankers to boost the service's response capabilities. The Government is making sure that the Rural Fire Service is not neglected but is there to meet the needs of the outlying rural areas of my electorate. Roads issues are important in my electorate and in the central coast in general. The budget allocates approximately \$15,000 for a cycleway from the Norah Head caravan park to the Soldiers Beach surf club. The provision of that cycleway may not involve major expenditure, but it is certainly an issue of great concern to the Norah Head ratepayers association, which has for a long time argued that young people need a paved cycleway to the beach. I am pleased that the cycleway will be achieved with this budget.

The precinct committee and the school council of Toukley primary school asked only for a wombat crossing at the dangerous intersection adjacent to the school at the corner of Crossingham Street and Evans Road. In this budget, rather than provide a wombat crossing that still would not afford absolute safety for the children, the Government has allocated \$100,000 for a set of lights, which will immeasurably increase the safety of children crossing the street. All students at Toukley public school play sport at the Harry Moore oval, which is near the school. The new set of lights will allow students to cross the street to the Harry Moore oval and play their sport in a safe manner. This budget is great news for the Wyong electorate. It represents a commitment by the State Government to the people of the central coast and the Wyong electorate. I am proud to be a part of the Government.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr D. L. Page.

[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 12.56 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 119 (Mr Paul Mullins) standing in the name of the member for Ashfield to be moved at the conclusion of question time today with the following speaking times:

Mover	5 minutes
5 other members	5 minutes

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) [2.15 p.m.]: At this time yesterday I informed the House of damage to the lower Hunter Valley caused by gale-force winds that swept through the area early yesterday. Unfortunately the situation has deteriorated considerably since then. As honourable members will no doubt be aware, the cold snap, high winds and flooding have already claimed one life. I must urge people across the State to be as careful as possible should they encounter flooding, high winds and damaged power lines in many areas.

The State Emergency Service reports that across the State more than 2,000 requests for assistance have been received, almost 1,800 of which were received from the Hunter Valley, with the worst affected areas being Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens. Local SES units are being supported by teams from as far away as Coffs Harbour, with a total of 1,200 volunteers involved. Some clean-up operations will require cranes, cherry pickers and specialist crews.

The Volunteer Rescue Association at Cessnock has received 95 calls, and the New South Wales Fire Brigades report more than 150 calls to incidents caused by the major storms, including roofs off houses and house fires in the Newcastle area. The Blue Mountains SES has received 300 calls for assistance, and five response crews from western Sydney have been sent to help local operators. Six properties have sustained major damage and three homes have been evacuated. Other teams in the Sydney region remain on standby. One hundred such calls in Sydney and 55 calls in the Illawarra have been received.

The high winds of the past day have brought down numerous power lines with 8,500 customers in Sydney, Newcastle and the Illawarra still without power. The electricity demand across the State reached record levels at six o'clock last night. Other parts of the State are affected by flooding. The Namoi River at Gunnedah has broken its banks and is causing widespread flooding of rural properties. A number of roads have been cut and properties have been isolated. The Belubula River at Canowindra in the central west is expected to reach its peak at about now. Land-holders have been advised to move machinery and stock to higher ground. Again, roads in the area have been cut.

Elsewhere in New South Wales flood warnings have been given for the Peel River, Snowy River, Mandagery Creek and streams in the Bombala area. Emergency crews have worked through the night and through today to provide help to householders and businesses affected by the wild weather. The vast majority of emergency workers involved in the operation are volunteers. I believe our volunteer emergency workers are the best of any in the world. Their work for the community comes at enormous personal cost, and I congratulate them on their hard work and success over the past 36 hours.

Numerous families have been left with damaged homes and property as a result of the wind, rain, snow and flooding around the State. Special assistance is available through our existing natural disaster relief arrangements for those who have suffered personal hardship and distress. People wishing to apply for help under those arrangements should contact their local office of the Department of Community Services. The outlook for the next 24 hours is hopeful. The rain and flooding is expected to ease, although the SES warns that the possibility of high winds and damage will remain until late tonight. Let me again stress that all householders, motorists and particularly children throughout the State should be asked to take the utmost care in those dangerous and uncertain conditions.

Mr COCHRAN (Monaro) [2.20 p.m.]: The Opposition joins with the Government to again extend thanks and best wishes to the members of the State Emergency Services and other emergency services, including police, fire brigade and volunteer rescue associations, who have been involved in operations during the past 48 hours because of extreme weather conditions and heavy snowfalls to a wide area of New South Wales that have caused considerable inconvenience to many members of the community.

If it were not for the instinctive reaction and sound training of the emergency services, solutions to many of the problems caused by the extreme conditions would not be so immediate. In many areas the loss of power has caused considerable discomfort, particularly to the elderly. I pay special tribute to the maintenance gangs that respond quickly to calls for assistance from the elderly to replace fuses, powerlines and power poles, and cut down dangerous trees. Plans are formulated in advance to meet such contingencies; people are given specialised training with specialised equipment to attack such problems.

I warn untrained people to be extremely careful when they come across downed powerlines;

they are often the cause of considerable injury and, of course, death. I have no doubt that members representing the electorates of Maitland, Coffs Harbour and Myall Lakes and other electorates that have been affected by the wild storms of the past 24 hours will have been in constant contact with local emergency services. And I am sure that, just as I have, they have been kept constantly aware by those services of what is happening in their electorates. Honourable members have no doubt heard of the tragic loss of a lady in flooded waters at Crookwell: a fair warning to all people travelling in rural New South Wales during extreme weather conditions to be careful when trying to negotiate flooded creeks and waterways. The powers of nature can be potent and people must be forever vigilant.

Ironically, however, there is one upside to the recent weather conditions: the Snowy River is in flood—something that has not been witnessed for many years. Only a matter of weeks ago when in Dalgety I saw the Snowy River trickling through a 100 millimetre pipe. The river is now in flood and no doubt regenerating the ecology of the region. We should all take some time to give some thought to the families of emergency service workers, who wait at home while their loved ones are out giving support in hazardous and often life-threatening conditions. I am reminded of a story told to me not long ago: in May 1946 a train conveying soldiers who had returned from the Second World War was blocked by four feet of snow between Queanbeyan and Cooma. Weather conditions have changed dramatically since that time. I join with the Minister to extend thanks to emergency service workers.

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.**

Israel Heroin Addicts Program

Petition praying that the heroin addicts program in Israel be evaluated with a view to establishing a similar program in all States of Australia, received from **Mr Oakeshott.**

Ryde Hospital

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

Land Tax

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

Sale of Knives and Extended Police Powers

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

Surry Hills Area Policing

Petition praying that police foot patrol numbers in the Surry Hills area be increased and that a permanent police van be located in the Taylor Square area, received from **Ms Moore.**

Tresco House Conservation

Petition praying that, because of the important heritage and historic value of Tresco House, the interim conservation order on the property, covering the house and grounds, be made permanent, received from **Ms Moore.**

Affordable Public Housing

Petition praying that proposed changes to the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement be abandoned, that the provision of affordable public housing for low to moderate income groups remain a priority, and that additional resources be allocated to expand the public housing system, received from **Ms Moore.**

Port Macquarie Area Mining

Petition praying that mining operations south of Port Macquarie near Lake Innes be discontinued, received from **Mr Oakeshott.**

Local Government Policy Formulation

Petition praying that the Local Government Act be amended to prohibit local councils from using closed workshops to develop policies, received from **Mr Oakeshott.**

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON VICTIMS COMPENSATION

Reports

Mr Stewart, as Chairman, tabled the following reports:

The Collection of Restitution From Convicted Offenders, dated June 1998.

Complaint by the Walsh Family concerning Rakus Solicitors, dated June 1998.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

LIVERPOOL TO PARRAMATTA BUS TRANSITWAY

Mr COLLINS: I address my question to the Minister for Transport. Has former ministerial adviser Greg Sutherland warned that the report by PPK consultants on the Liverpool to Parramatta bus transitway had "serious shortcomings", used "rubbery figures" and did not accord with publicly available costs on an existing transitway project? What guarantee can the Minister give that the cost of this project will not blow out past the \$100 million price tag he has quoted?

Mr SCULLY: PPK consultants was selected by a tender process, and I am confident that it will be able to give impartial, objective advice. During the estimates hearings, which the shadow minister for transport attended, the Hon. I. Cohen and others expressed concern that PPK consultants was alleged to have a bias in relation to light rail. I gave an assurance that I was confident that PPK consultants would give impartial, objective advice. I decided to proceed with a mass transit system based on a bus system because I thought that the appropriate way to build up a transport system in western Sydney, which may justify investment in light rail or heavy rail at a later stage, but I did not preclude the possibility of adding light rail or heavy rail at a later time.

The Leader of the Opposition should read *Questions and Answers*; if he did, he would know that either the shadow minister for transport or the shadow minister for roads asked me a question on notice about the cost of the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway. The shadow minister should know that the estimated cost of \$100 million is for construction of the roadway. There will be additional acquisition,

planning and design costs. The Opposition's lead question without notice today is the same as an Opposition question upon notice in *Questions and Answers*. The Leader of the Opposition is wasting the time of the House. When the coalition was in government it did absolutely nothing about transport in western Sydney.

The Leader of the Opposition has the gall to ask me this question. Let us talk about what he did. During the seven years he was a Minister, including the time he was Treasurer, how much money did he allocate to transport in western Sydney? Absolutely nothing. Did the coalition Government show any concern by allocating funding to western Sydney? In 1989 the coalition Government said that the way to provide transport in western Sydney was to set up a corridor and call it regional environmental plan 18. It simply drew a line on a map and said that western Sydney public transport could go to hell. This Government will proceed with a Liverpool to Parramatta transitway for the people of western Sydney.

The Leader of the Opposition should know that as a result of the announcement finally to proceed with the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway the Government is undertaking detailed costings relating to the construction, what will be acquired and the proposed route. In the near future I hope to be able to make a further announcement. Detailed consultation, costings and planning assessments have yet to be undertaken, but the transitway will be built. If the coalition gets elected next election, I can promise that the transitway will not be built. This Government will proceed with the project. Next time the Leader of the Opposition should read *Questions and Answers* before he asks a question.

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

ONE NATION PARTY IMPACT ON JOBS

Mr NAGLE: I direct my question without notice to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. What is the latest information available on the impact of the One Nation Party on jobs in New South Wales?

Mr CARR: I note, in parentheses, the resignation of a man of great principle—Dr Peter Wong, from the Liberal Party of New South Wales—in protest at the party's failure to speak out against One Nation.

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

Mr CARR: Dr Wong is a principled leader of the ethnic communities in New South Wales and is a former Chair of the Ethnic Schools Board.

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

Mr CARR: I greatly respect Dr Wong. Today I sent him a letter congratulating him on his decision to quit the Liberal Party in response to its lack of action on One Nation.

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

Mr CARR: Overseas investment is helping to win jobs for New South Wales. One Nation's policy is to end foreign investment. The Department of State and Regional Development has advised me that over the past five years the Government has secured 50,000 new jobs by actively pursuing foreign investment in this State. That is 25 per cent of total employment growth in the same period. I tell the Leader of the Opposition once and for all: say that you will not trade city or country preferences with One Nation. As I have said in this Chamber on eight occasions now, the coalition's procrastination on preference deals is giving legitimacy to One Nation.

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

Mr CARR: I want this State to continue to enjoy a first-class reputation when it comes to attracting foreign investment that generates jobs in New South Wales.

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

Mr CARR: I use as an example the coalmines in the central west. Baalbone, Clarence, Springvale, Ulan and Western Main Mines are all part-owned by Japanese and Korean companies, and there are 5,500 jobs as a result. We want those jobs. The mining industry and mining communities, the honourable member for Bathurst and the union want those jobs. Overseas investment in the coal industry in New South Wales constitutes 38 per cent of all investment in the industry. I am advised by the Minister for Mineral Resources that this week he met a Japanese delegation that is visiting New South Wales to look at investment opportunities in the Gunnedah basin. We want to send to these potential investors the message that their money and the jobs that result from that investment are welcome in this State.

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

Mr CARR: In the Hunter, Goninans employs 600 people. It has a \$200-million contract to refurbish trams in Hong Kong. There are jobs for tradesmen in the Hunter and in Newcastle as a result of that work. Given what is happening to the Australian dollar, Goninan's chances of picking up new contracts in Hong Kong are extremely good. The honourable member for Lane Cove interjects. She has been distributing copies of page 2 from the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Out it goes, a mischievous undermining of her leader! He is a good Leader of the Opposition and I do not want to lose him for one moment! Let me return to overseas investment in New South Wales and the jobs it is creating. Hunter Screen employs 100 people in the Hunter and exports mining products to China. What a terrific export-oriented performance!

Industrial Switch Gears employs 77 people in Newcastle and recently opened a factory in Vietnam. Do the members of the Opposition want to endanger the outward looking success of good innovative Australian companies through the policies of One Nation? They are mad if they do. It means jobs in New South Wales. Manufacturing and mining are not the only industries involved. In 1997 more than 50,000 overseas students were studying in New South Wales. TAFE New South Wales and government secondary schools received nearly \$15 million in revenue from fee-paying overseas students. The Government will continue to make them welcome. It means income, and building relationships with countries of east Asia will produce further benefits for New South Wales in the long run.

Sydney is having great success in persuading international companies to establish regional headquarters. We are beating the other States hands down. To be fair to the regional centres of Australia, Sydney, the international centre of Australia, should consider redirecting investment to some of the outlying States—like Victoria! It is estimated that by 2002 the Government's regional headquarters program will have brought in \$600 million and more than 4,100 new jobs to the State. The Department of State and Regional Development is receiving inquiries at the rate of 100 a month from potential international investors.

Mr Smith: What about our sawmills?

Mr CARR: Sawmills, he says! Another great success! In Lithgow last week 20 new jobs were created, as well as in Lismore, and the Government assisted with \$1 million through the forestry

package. It was a terrific breakthrough, a great win. Other overseas companies investing in this State include Oracle, the world's second largest information technology company, which is coming to Sydney. Johnson and Johnson is setting up an \$18.9 million biomedical research centre, a great future industry. Phillips will locate its world headquarters for traffic control systems in Sydney's west—I was out there recently—and export the systems to Korea, China and around the region.

Mr Armstrong: Phillips-speak!

Mr CARR: It is good because it means jobs. Can't the Leader of the National Party get it into his head? He says he favours English as the official language of New South Wales, but he cannot understand it. This is all positive news; it means jobs. The Leader of the National Party is coming out with some terrific policies. He intends to punch an autobahn through the Blue Mountains, he intends to turn the Clarence River west and, not intimidated by criticism, he believes that English should be the language of New South Wales! Forget all this backbench mumbling in Gaelic, forget the interoffice memos in Aramaic. He said it will be English from now on; he will not accept second best. The final example is foreign investment—the *bête noire* of One Nation—by Germany's Deutsche Bank. Over four years it will bring 500 jobs to New South Wales. Again I appeal to the Leader of the Opposition to say "No" to One Nation on behalf of the Opposition.

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

Mr CARR: Stop prevaricating, stop hesitating and give a firm "No" to One Nation, so that together the long-term Government and the long-term Opposition can send a positive message to potential foreign investors about the great State of New South Wales.

LIVERPOOL TO PARRAMATTA TRANSITWAY

Mr PHOTIOS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. Why did the Minister award the feasibility study on bus transitway to PPK Consultants, ignoring confidential government advice about its serious shortcomings and that its associate, McCormick Rankin, had a conflict of interest because it sold the transitway concept worldwide? How can the Minister guarantee an impartial feasibility study—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ermington is aware of the standing orders relating to

questions without notice. I will permit him to rephrase his question.

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE

Mr PRICE: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What is the latest information available on the meningococcal disease in New South Wales?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Last week a young baby in New South Wales died from suspected meningococcal disease. That tragedy highlights the need for people to be aware of the symptoms of this disease, particularly as we enter the peak season for meningococcal infection. At any one time a small proportion of the population carries the meningococcus bacteria without symptoms or illness. Others, when they come into contact with the bacteria, can become ill. Transmission from person to person is via droplets or discharges from the nose or throat of a carrier. Risk behaviour includes close contact such as kissing, sharing food and drink, and coughing. Meningococcus cannot be spread through touch, through sharing the same table or chair, or by food handling. The incubation period is usually three to four days, but sometimes lasts as long as 10 days. Symptoms may include the sudden onset of fever, headache, stiff neck, nausea, weakness, drowsiness and a distinctive rash. Early intervention is crucial in avoiding serious complications and possible death.

My message to parents and families is clear: they should be able to recognise the early symptoms and, if they do, seek medical attention immediately. In most cases the infection is treated effectively with antibiotics. This rare disease can be fatal if not treated quickly. Complications can include nerve damage and, rarely, gangrene and amputation of limbs, fingers or toes. We can protect our families and our community by being alert and taking appropriate and immediate action. Cases of meningococcal disease generally increase each year in late winter and early spring. Young children and young adults are particularly at risk, although persons of any age can be infected. Those who are in close contact with those suffering from the disease are also clearly at an increased risk of infection.

In 1997 there were 222 cases of meningococcal disease reported in New South Wales, compared with 165 in 1996, 113 in 1995, 143 in 1994 and 153 in 1993. The moderate increase in cases in 1997 is consistent with expected year-to-year variations in the incidence of this disease. However, there is some evidence that a new strain of serogroup C meningococcus may have emerged in Sydney in the last two to three years. Similar

moderate increases in infections have been reported recently in other western countries. In 1998 in New South Wales 56 meningococcal cases have been reported so far. We note though that numbers of reported cases by month onset increased significantly in July last year.

This is consistent with an increase in meningococcal disease which is generally anticipated in late winter and early spring. In New South Wales in 1997 the number of reported cases increased from 16 in June to 34 in July and 32 in August. Public health units use local newsletters to remind doctors in their areas of the importance of early treatment of the disease. That process reminds doctors everywhere to heighten their suspicion for cases, notify suspected cases to the public health unit by phone, treat suspected cases with penicillin even before the case is transferred to hospital and take cultures from suspected cases. I assure the community that New South Wales Health is taking appropriate action to inform the public about the onset of the meningococcal season and will take immediate and swift action to contain any possible meningococcal cluster identified in the State.

That important process includes identifying of close contacts; ensuring that those contacts are given comprehensive information and are offered preventative treatment where appropriate; encouraging contacts and the public to seek immediate medical advice if they experience any symptoms of meningococcal disease; undertaking a comprehensive media awareness strategy; advising local health authorities, doctors and hospitals in the affected region; working with the local health authorities in other States where appropriate; ensuring that the public are given contact details so that they can seek advice or information from local health units; and working with laboratories to identify common strains of this bacteria to help to identify common links.

It is the importance of early intervention that the Government is stressing to families and doctors today. Early treatment is critical in controlling the meningococcal disease and preventing its spread. The Government is taking action to ensure that doctors across New South Wales renew their efforts to recognise possible symptoms of the disease. Doctors are strongly advised to treat suspected cases immediately, even before they go to hospital, with antibiotic injections. It is important that any parent whose child has a sudden onset of fever, combined with a headache, a stiff neck, a rash or drowsiness, should see their doctor immediately. Meningococcal cases can be expected to increase in coming weeks.

With doctors and families remaining vigilant and alert to symptoms, we can work together to prevent the spread of this disease and avoid needless tragedy.

LIVERPOOL TO PARRAMATTA TRANSITWAY

Mr PHOTIOS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. Why did the Minister award the feasibility study on the Government's bus transit way to PPK consultants, ignoring confidential Government advice about its serious shortcomings and that its associate, McCormick Rankin, had a conflict of interest? How can the Minister guarantee an impartial feasibility study when the former Minister ruled out the firm because it had a conflict of interest?

Mr SCULLY: What a wet lettuce! For the benefit of the Opposition I will tell the House why the Government is building the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway. Members of the Opposition do not know where that part of Sydney is.

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

Mr SCULLY: I will send them a copy of *Gregory's Street Directory* and show them how to get to Liverpool. The fact is that if members of the Opposition had any knowledge of that part of Sydney they would know that in the last 18 to 20 years there has been massive growth in the Liverpool and Parramatta area. Literally thousands of homes and jobs—

Mr O'Farrell: On a point of order. The question did not relate to what is happening in the west. It related to a tender process.

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

Mr SCULLY: In the Liverpool-Parramatta corridor there are thousands of new dwellings, one of the largest industrial estates in Australia, and scores of schools and places of leisure. But the area does not have the substantive public transport that should have followed that massive development.

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

Mr SCULLY: The coalition had seven years to respond to that massive development, but did absolutely nothing.

Mr Photios: On a point of order. My point of order relates to Standing Order 138. My question was specific. If it was good enough for the former Minister to rule the company out on the grounds of probity, why was it not good enough for the present Minister to do so?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. I call the honourable member for Ermington to order for the second time.

Mr Glachan: On a point of order. From time to time the honourable member for Londonderry quakes like a duck. I consider that to be unparliamentary.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Albury has asked me to look more closely at the actions of the honourable member for Londonderry. I will take that advice.

Mr SCULLY: There has been a dramatic development in the Liverpool-Fairfield area of western Sydney—perhaps the fastest growing area in the country, let alone in the State. In the seven years during which the coalition was in office the area certainly did not have the substantive and significant public transport infrastructure that was necessary to accompany that development. To improve the quality of air in western Sydney the Government is trying to get people out of cars and onto public transport. Members of the Opposition will listen to this. They asked for a lecture and I will give them one. One has to understand the background of this matter, but the Opposition is not interested in that. It is difficult for people in western Sydney to travel north-south across the rail lines. To travel north-south they have to get into motor cars, and that is what the Government wants to avoid. That is why the Government proposes to build the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway. The Opposition should stop whingeing and whining about what the Government is doing.

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

Mr SCULLY: This should be a bipartisan issue. The Opposition should get behind the Government and acknowledge for the first time in 20 or 30 years—

Mr Phillips: On a point of order. You have asked members of the Opposition to make their questions succinct. The question was succinct. You have ruled time and again that you cannot direct a Minister how to answer a question. However, the answer must be relevant. The question was succinct

and the Minister should return to the substance of the question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition claims that the Minister is not answering the question. In my view he is discussing the subject matter of the question in an appropriate way.

Mr SCULLY: The Government proposes to put in place a bus transit system which will dramatically encourage people to use public transport. The use of buses that are airconditioned, wheelchair accessible, environmentally friendly and with two- to five-minutes headway will lead to a dramatic global shift in western Sydney from the use of cars to the use of public transport. The Government's objective of clearing the air in western Sydney, an objective which requires a dramatic shift to public transport and a huge reduction in air pollution, will be achieved in part by this initiative. The coalition should be getting behind the Government instead of nitpicking about PPK Consultants.

As I said in answer to an earlier question from the Leader of the Opposition, I have absolute confidence in that firm providing to me impartial and objective advice on the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway. I was asked this question during the estimates committees hearing. What a joke that process was! Honourable members should have heard the questions put forward by the shadow minister for transport. The Hon. I. Cohen asked me questions about this topic. I was asked questions about the PPK report because it is alleged that they had concerns about light rail. The Opposition should ask questions about light rail. The Opposition should ask whether light rail is suitable for this particular transit corridor. It may be at some later stage, but the problem with light rail is that it provides a solution in certain parts of Sydney—

Mr Photios: On a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind the honourable member for Ermington that on the last occasion he took a point of order he was called to order for the second time.

Mr Photios: I well appreciate that and at great personal risk I take this point of order. The Minister is giving the House a lecture on light rail and the transitway, when my question—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr Photios: The point of order is relevance and the question was about the tender.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's remarks are relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Ermington will resume his seat.

Mr Photios: Will the Minister please address the tender!

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

Mr SCULLY: As the shadow minister for transport would know, the concern about PPK arose because of an alleged lack of commitment to light rail. Therefore, how dare they give me advice on the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway! Unfortunately for the shadow minister for transport the problem with some devotees of light rail is that they regard light rail as a solution searching for a transport problem. I do not want the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway to be the problem that light rail solves. The honourable member for Ermington knows that, he heard it in the estimates committee hearing. I do not know what PPK Consultants has done to warrant being maligned and defamed in this House by the Opposition. It is a well-regarded, professional outfit that will provide impartial, independent advice on the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway. Honourable members should hear what Jeff Angel from the Total Environment Centre said about the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway:

The Liverpool-Parramatta transitway is a strong glimmer of hope that western Sydney may at last be getting the public transport focus it deserves. . . . The transitway is the main sign of a new public transport system for the chronically ill-served and polluted suburbs of the south-west. While there is a lot more to do the Government's announcement means its transport plan for the next decade could at last be heading in the right direction.

I could not agree more.

REGIONAL AIRLINES ACCESS TO SYDNEY (KINGSFORD-SMITH) AIRPORT

Mr NEILLY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. How will the Howard Government's changes to Sydney airport affect regional airlines?

Mr SCULLY: The people of country and regional New South Wales must have guaranteed access to Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport. Recently I referred a number of issues relating to the operation of regional airline services to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development. I did this in response to concerns

raised by the people of regional New South Wales regarding the continuation of their access to Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport arising from a number of proposals from the Federal Airports Corporation. One of those issues involved the operation of the slot system at the airport. They also included the amount charged for access through landing fees.

In one week's time the Howard Government will hand over control of the Sydney airport from the Federal Airports Corporation, which is under the control of the Minister for Transport and Regional Development, to the new Sydney Airports Corporation, which is under the supervision of the Minister for Finance and Administration. That move and the behaviour of the management of the soon to be corporatised and renamed FAC give plenty of cause for concern to regional airlines and their patrons in regional New South Wales. For some time the FAC management has been seeking increases in landing charges at the airport.

These increases have been resisted by the regional operators and the communities they serve. I am pleased to say that both the Minister for Transport and Regional Development and I have taken a strong stand against any measure proposed by the FAC which could result in reduced services and access for regional New South Wales. In March I met with the Federal Minister who is responsible for Sydney airport, at least for the next seven days, and raised our concerns with him. The Hon. Mark Vaile is a reasonable man—

Ms Moore: No, he's not. He is terrible, he is a disgrace.

Mr SCULLY: He is a reasonable man who hails from Taree. I have a good working rapport with him. Mr Vaile acknowledged the concerns of regional airline patrons. He gave a commitment that any final changes made by the FAC will have to be with his authority. The airlines were principally concerned with the proposal by the FAC to increase the landing fee from the present \$27 per aircraft. The regional airlines were not against the FAC charging more per landing but argued that it would be more equitable for the charge to be calculated on a per passenger basis. What has happened? While the FAC went some of the way to alleviating the concerns of regional airlines by extending the period during which landing charges would not be increased from three to four years, it proposed a flat fee per aircraft, not per passenger as had been requested by the airlines. A flat fee per aircraft will discriminate against regional operators, increase costs and ticket prices, and make services operated at Sydney airport by regional operators more marginal.

Not surprisingly, many people in the bush are suspicious that that is exactly what the FAC is trying to achieve and thereby to get rid of the regional airlines. The FAC management has done nothing to dispel that suspicion. Last week FAC management advised the regional airlines that it proposes to introduce a flat fee of \$140 per landing from October 1998. What an auspicious start for the new Sydney Airports Corporation! The Federal Government has not considered properly the implications of the FAC's discriminatory proposals. The proposed increase in landing fees at Sydney airport would result in a 410 per cent increase in landing charges. That means that country travellers are being discriminated against compared to interstate travellers and international tourists. It is another example of the Federal Government short-changing regional constituents.

They are not only being discriminated against by bearing an unfair burden with the increase in fees but they are receiving little benefit from the increase in revenue to the FAC. The upgrade of Sydney (Kingsford-Smith) Airport by the FAC will do little to meet the infrastructure needs of regional airlines. Regional airline operations cause the least impact, the least noise and take the least terminal space at the airport. However, with the refocus of airport administration on the airport retail opportunities there is a strong suspicion that the FAC would prefer regional airlines to disappear, thus enabling it to maximise the number of potential retail customers using the terminals. If the Federal Government can achieve that objective, what does it mean for regional New South Wales and urban Sydney? It will mean more big jets getting more of the 80 slots per hour.

Such an approach would demonstrate breathtaking cynicism on the part of the Howard Government. Its much-heralded but more often lampooned aircraft noise sharing plan would be a joke. The plan is currently based in part on smaller regional airlines using the airport. About a third of the 80 movements per hour are supposed to be regional aircraft. If the Federal Government were serious about the aircraft noise plan, why would it let the FAC price the regional airlines out of the airport? That discrimination will have significant effects on country New South Wales. In the Orana region about 150,000 people depend on Dubbo airport, predominantly for business travel. Any increase in the cost of flying to Sydney will put in jeopardy economic opportunities for that region. The Federal Minister for Transport has claimed that the interests of regional airlines are protected with the slot system, arguing that 35 per cent of slots in the allocation system are ring fenced for regional airlines.

That is only a minor concession. If one airline drops out of a particular route there is no guarantee that another regional airline wishing to fly that particular route will be allocated that slot. As the honourable member for Tamworth has pointed out, these discriminatory landing charges could price regional airlines out of the market. If one is not in the paddock, ring fencing is not much good.

The Opposition's response to the legitimate concerns of the people of the bush to the impact of increased landing fees is typically out of touch. The shadow minister for transport has said that his political colleague, Mark Vaile has wiped that from the floor. It is a shame Mark Vaile did not tell the FAC. He should try telling the regional airlines, who still face the prospect of discriminatory landing charges under the proposals of the FAC, that their concerns have been wiped away.

The Federal Government must reassure the people of regional New South Wales that their regional airlines will continue to have access to Sydney airport on equitable terms with other airport users. While the prospect of the Department of Finance in Canberra assuming responsibility for the new Sydney Airports Corporation will do nothing to allay the concerns and fears of regional New South Wales, at least the Federal Minister for Finance and Administration, the Hon. John Fahey, has some idea of the concerns of those in the bush. He or his colleague Mark Vaile needs to direct the FAC to back off on its discriminatory proposal and abandon any measures that threaten the viability of access to Sydney airport.

GOULBURN BASE HOSPITAL ELECTIVE ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

Ms SEATON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Why has all public elective orthopaedic surgery been cancelled at Goulburn Base Hospital for the past six weeks, with the exception of one emergency case? How many patients have been affected by this shutdown?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I do not have the orthopaedic operating list details of Goulburn Base Hospital with me at the moment, but I can point to a number of issues.

Mr Carr: What is the Federal Government doing for health?

Dr REFSHAUGE: There is considerable interest about the Federal Government's attitude to health.

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

Dr REFSHAUGE: The member opposite who makes the most noise certainly has some interest in the Federal issues. The shadow minister for health, the honourable member for North Shore, said during a radio interview that she does not know anything about the details of Medicare.

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

Dr REFSHAUGE: What can one expect from someone who admits to not knowing anything about the details of Medicare? I can understand the contribution of each and every Opposition member to the results of the opinion poll found at page 2 of today's *Sydney Morning Herald*, which has been circulated not only to Opposition members but to Government members also.

Mr O'Doherty: On a point of order. I refer you to Standing Order 138. The Minister has already admitted that he does not know the answer to the question—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. The member for Ku-ring-gai will resume his seat.

Dr REFSHAUGE: I will stand firm with my Liberal colleagues in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania and my Liberal colleague in the Northern Territory, Minister for Health Denis Burke.

Ms Seaton: On a point of order. The question asked about public elective orthopaedic surgery in Goulburn. I ask you to bring the Minister back to the point of the question.

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

Dr REFSHAUGE: As Denis Burke says very clearly, John Howard can be honest or dishonest: he can be honest and say that he supports Medicare and provide the funding, or he can be dishonest, as he is now, and say that he supports Medicare but not provide the funding.

REGISTERED CLUB COMMUNITY ORGANISATION FUNDING

Mr THOMPSON: I ask the Minister for Gaming and Racing what the Government is doing to help community organisations obtain funds from registered clubs.

Mr FACE: The interest of the honourable member for Rockdale in community projects and the

registered industry is well known. The Government has come to an agreement with the club industry that will see \$30 million a year go towards community projects. I have approved guidelines to allow larger registered clubs to claim a tax deduction for community projects. The guidelines have been developed by the Government in consultation with the Registered Clubs Association and the Council of Social Service of New South Wales, NCOSS. The effect of the guidelines is to provide those registered clubs earning taxable poker machine gaming profits in excess of \$1 million with a tax deduction of a further 1.5 per cent, reducing their tax to 24.75 per cent. Not only will larger clubs benefit from reduced taxation, their donations will benefit the communities they serve.

The Registered Clubs Association and NCOSS will be working closely with the Government, individual clubs and community organisations to establish the primary areas of need into which clubs' profits can be best directed. The final decision as to where and into which organisations the money is channelled will remain with the board of directors of individual clubs. There will be no government interference. Some examples of the areas identified by the Registered Clubs Association and NCOSS include family support, child care, aged-care services, neighbourhood centre activities, youth facilities and employment advocacy and placement services. Donations to junior and other non-professional supporting teams will also be allowable as a deductions. The Registered Clubs Association will soon advertise on a statewide basis in local and regional media seeking funding submissions from relevant community organisations.

As regards the second category, being expenditure on other community development and support, the Government, together with the Registered Clubs Association and NCOSS, has found it most expedient and efficient to define this category by way of exclusion rather than in a definitive, inclusive way. As a guide, other community development and support expenditure will be disallowed if it falls within the following areas. First, if it concerns professional or semi-professional sporting bodies or persons when whole or part of the expenditure is to be used for directly financing the professional or semi-professional sporting activity, or if it concerns non-professional sporting expenditure that is used to make monetary payments to the sportspersons or persons directly participating in the sporting activity.

Second, expenditure will be disallowed for professional entertainers and entertainment provided for patrons of the club and used for the purpose of directly promoting activities associated with the

commercial operation of the club. Third, expenditure on operating a club's commercial activities and expenditure that is directly related to a club fulfilling its obligations under the requirements of its licence and the various Acts and regulations that apply to its commercial operations, for example, occupational health and safety, will be disallowed. A minority of clubs have tried to gild the lily over a number of years by claiming for capital expenditure on club facilities when the project was primarily commercial in nature; non-members were excluded, or severely restricted from using the facility; or expenditure was related directly to the upgrading or enhancement of gaming facilities.

The Government is assisting the hospitality industry, which is in stark contrast to a letter written by the Leader of the Opposition that I received in recent days. The Leader of the Opposition wrote to Mr John Thorpe, a former president of the Australian Hotels Association. Mr Thorpe condemned the honourable member for Manly in no uncertain terms. In fact, had his claims been made in a public forum, the member would probably have good reason for defamation action. The Leader of the Opposition is in league in trying to defeat the honourable member for Manly, as Mr Thorpe said to a meeting. The Leader of the Opposition is now trying to pre-empt the gaming inquiry by saying that he would allow 30 machines of any mixture in hotels.

Quite frankly, I would have to be as appalled as anyone else as Mr Thorpe's parting words were, "Thank heavens for Pauline Hanson." That in itself has to be a worry for those involved in the hospitality industry. Decisions regarding community development and supporting expenditure will always remain with the clubs' boards of directors, but there are guidelines to give them a clear direction in making their decisions by identifying broader community priorities and the needs for the areas in which their profits can be best directed.

CONDUCT OF JUSTICE VINCE BRUCE

Dr MACDONALD: My question is directed to the Premier. What process and procedures does the Premier intend to put in place within the Parliament, and particularly this House, to deal with the report from the Judicial Commission concerning complaints against Justice Bruce?

Mr CARR: Let it be understood that there is no departure from what is the universally understood procedure in the way the Parliament is dealing with the complaints against the said judge, none whatsoever. First, Parliament has a long-established

right to remove a non-performing judge. That is part of the Westminster system that can be traced back to the Act of Settlement 1701. The provision was originally enacted to prevent judges from being dismissed by the will of the Crown. That is the essential point to understand about the right of the Parliament. It is either the Parliament removing a non-performing judge, or the Executive, or the Crown, removing a non-performing judge. That is the choice. In 1986-87 judges expressed a view about Terry Sheahan's Judicial Officers Act. Judges said that they did not want the Judicial Commission to be able to remove a judge; they wanted that to be determined by Parliament. That was the view of the bench at that time.

[Interruption]

For the benefit of those honourable members who are in a comatose state when Parliament is sitting, the matter is being debated in the Legislative Council. If the motion is passed in the upper House tomorrow it will come to the Legislative Assembly for consideration. The Parliament has two Houses: the upper House and the lower House. The matter will be debated in the upper House tomorrow. If the upper House carries the motion it will come to the lower House for consideration. I assure the honourable member for Manly that the judge will then be able to address members in this place, just as he addressed members in the other place. Was it ever an issue for one moment?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will remain silent. The Premier is giving a direct answer to a straightforward question. The House will remain silent.

Mr CARR: The Judicial Commission reports to Parliament; Parliament considers the report—that is the procedure in accordance with the Constitution Act and the Judicial Officers Act. That is how it is meant to work and that is how it is working.

Dr MACDONALD: I ask a supplementary question. Will the Premier therefore support the matter being debated and dealt with by the Legislative Assembly notwithstanding the resolution of the Legislative Council?

Mr Clough: On a point of order. The honourable member for Manly has asked a new question, not a supplementary question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The question is in order. It arises from the answer given by the Premier.

Mr CARR: The matter will come to this House if the motion is carried in the upper House.

FOSTER CARERS

Mrs BEAMER: My question is directed to the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women. What is the Government doing to encourage people to become foster carers

Mrs LO PO': Honourable members should give bipartisan support to foster carers looking after children. In the most profound sense, to look after children is to look after the future of our community. Some children, through no fault of their own, cannot be cared for by their family. These children need specialist attention so that they can grow up with the same opportunities as other children. The Carr Government is committed to ensuring that children who are away from their family get the best possible care. Foster care—the best option for most of these children—gives troubled children a stable home, with the individual care and attention they deserve.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If members want to engage in personal conversations they should do so outside the Chamber.

Mrs LO PO': There is an ongoing need for foster carers, but that need is currently acute because of a national and statewide shortage. In response to a request from face-to-face workers who identified this need, I am pleased to announce that this morning I launched a statewide foster carer recruitment campaign. I have been informed that the campaign is already an outstanding success. The New South Wales Foster Care Association is overwhelmed by the flood of calls to a specified toll-free number. Perhaps the best part of the campaign is what was partly made possible by an anonymous donation by a generous foster carer.

A gentleman approached the department and offered to put \$5,000 towards an advertising campaign on radio station 2UE to help recruit more carers. Starting tomorrow, the gentleman and the department will run a series of advertisements on radio station 2UE. That gentleman is not only selfless and generous but he is modest. As much as I would love to sing his praises to honourable members, he insists on remaining anonymous and prefers not to be publicly known for his generosity and initiative—and I respect that wish. I thought members of the Opposition would be cheered by this story—as I was when I learned of this gentleman's

offer—but I can see that nothing will cheer them after this morning's papers.

The foster carers recruitment campaign commences tomorrow, 25 June, and runs for the next three weeks. The campaign is being co-ordinated by the Department of Community Services—DOCS—in conjunction with the New South Wales Foster Care Association and various non-government agencies. The special statewide foster carer recruitment program involves targeted advertising in Sydney, suburban and regional newspapers, including selected ethnic and Aboriginal papers; advertising on radio station 2UE; a toll-free number to take inquiries from the public—which is already running hot—and an information package. The package includes information about government services and non-government agencies, and the New South Wales Foster Care Association's video entitled "What you need to know about fostering".

The department looks for people of good character because it has to be sure that the children will be in safe hands. Foster carers have to be willing to share their home with a child or a young person who may have been through some hard times. Foster carers also have to be prepared to allow stringent scrutiny of their character. The community expects to ensure the quality of foster care for the sake of the vulnerable children. Foster carers need to be realistic about what to expect. For example, they do not get a perfect child and they often have to let the child go back to his or her family.

Mr Souris: Isn't every child precious? What do you mean they do not get a perfect child? You have got to realise what you have just said.

Mrs LO PO': It can be hard for the carer and the foster child to say goodbye just when they have got attached to each other. I know that caring is a big ask, but foster carers receive help and support; they do not have to do it all on their own. Foster carers tell me that fostering is not an easy task but a rewarding one. Foster carers can and do make a real difference to a child's life and can improve a child's life chances. The statewide foster carer recruitment campaign is aimed at finding more foster homes across New South Wales. The toll-free number is 1800 015 550.

Mr Souris: How about apologising to all the foster kids around the State for what you just said?

Mrs LO PO': I hope that the campaign will encourage more good people, who can open their

hearts and their homes to care for our children and young people, to come forward as foster carers. The Deputy Leader of the National Party is totally off his bike. I said that foster carers do not get perfect children—but they often make them into perfect children. The department does not guarantee a perfect child to foster carers. The department certainly ensures that foster carers—the salt of the earth—get all the support and care they need. I commend the campaign to the House.

NORTH EASTERN FORESTS COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT

Supplementary Answer

Ms ALLAN: On 17 June the honourable member for Ballina asked me a question and I wish to provide additional information. Land-holders in the Walcha area were recently advised by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that land either owned or leased by them had been nominated for wilderness assessment. Government policy requires these assessments to be integrated with the upper north-east and lower north-east comprehensive regional assessment processes, which must be finalised prior to CRA negotiations. These negotiations are expected to commence on 1 September.

The assessment will include areas adjacent to those nominated. As there are no compulsory acquisitions nor declarations, without the landowner's explicit consent, the just terms legislation is not appropriate for use in those circumstances. The above process is consistent with the Wilderness Act, and the intent of the CRA and regional forest assessment—RFA—processes to make a balanced land-use decision. Officers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service have attended public meetings and met representatives of the New South Wales Farmers Association in relation to this matter. The service intends to maintain such contact throughout the remainder of the assessment. Stakeholders' concerns centre around a perceived impact on property values and the impact of potential activities on land identified as wilderness.

While private property may be identified as wilderness, it cannot be declared over freehold or leasehold Crown land without the landowner's explicit consent. Identified wilderness is not always declared. These decisions will be made as part of the Government's RFA process and will take into account appropriate land use decisions arising out of this process. There is no need to utilise the powers of the just terms legislation as none of these areas

have been identified as wilderness. In any case, the Government—I am not sure about the alternative government—has repeatedly stated that compulsory acquisition for wilderness will not occur.

INLAND FISHING LICENCES

Supplementary Answer

Mr MARTIN: Further to my reply yesterday to the honourable member for Myall Lakes with regard to fishing licences, I advise that to date 191 out of 289 agents have signed up to sell freshwater licences throughout the State, including areas along the borders with the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia. Gold licences will be sold by 191 agents, about 66 per cent of the total number of agents. On 1 July, when those agents start selling licences, they will donate the commission back to the trust fund for recreational fishing. I seek leave to table a complete list of the gold and non-gold licence agents, to which more will be added as time goes by.

Leave granted.

Questions without notice concluded.

CONDUCT OF JUSTICE VINCE BRUCE

Dr MACDONALD: I seek leave to suspend standing and sessional orders to allow General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 135 standing in my name to be debated forthwith.

Leave not granted.

PAUL MULLINS PRESS GALLERY SILVER JUBILEE

Mr CARR (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs), on behalf of Mr Whelan [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates Paul Mullins for his 25 years service to the New South Wales press gallery as political roundsman for Channel 10.

This motion is an unusual but deserved gesture by the Parliament. Paul Mullins' length of service would be unprecedented, particularly in modern times. The fact that someone who started covering the State rounds when Sir Robert Askin was Premier is still here is worth thinking about. Paul's journalistic career began as a copy boy—I can boast that my journalistic career also began as a copy boy on the *Sun* and later the *Australian Financial Review*—

Mrs Skinner: So did mine.

Mr CARR: Yours did too? Therefore, there is some warmth in my reflection on Paul's career beginnings. It has been said that journalism can lead anywhere, provided you leave it early enough. Paul opted not to leave journalism but to continue to be wedded to what is a noble profession, one on which the people of this State depend for the material on which they make decisions about civics. He is a highly respected correspondent. What he brings to bear on the great challenge of gathering information in this place, compressing it in the time available to him, and which Channel 10 reports—

Mr Hazzard: Five seconds.

Mr CARR: No, about 90 seconds—and with those of us lucky enough to be interviewed given five seconds each. This is a great challenge and no-one does it better. That reflects Paul's experience not only as a copy boy but as a reporter based in London. He was the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's State political reporter until 1976, when he joined Channel 10 and he has been there ever since. He was honoured by his peers with a Logie award for the best news documentary in 1977—which was about the Katingal maximum security prison—and the New South Wales Thorn award for the same piece. He won the national award with Ken Burslem in the early 1980s for a news report on the Woodward drugs royal commission.

Paul Mullins knows the stuff of which State politics is largely comprised. He is a former President of the New South Wales Parliamentary Press Gallery. Political leaders cannot do their jobs unless there are good, professional, conscientious and basically fair people in the press gallery, such as Paul Mullins, doing their jobs. This is an opportunity for honourable members to congratulate him on his journalistic prowess. However, it is not only that for which he is noted. It is worth recording that between 1965 and 1971 he played rugby league for North Sydney. North Sydney currently enjoys the favour of both sides of the House, as a recent decision made very clear. Congratulations to Paul Mullins for a job well done. To sustain one's interest in this Parliament, its proceedings and the politics that emanate from it for 25 years is a considerable achievement, and not one that too many of us could emulate.

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [3.38 p.m.]: I join the Premier in saluting Paul Mullins for his service to this Parliament over a quarter of a century. I am the only

person who can do so who as a contemporary of Paul Mullins in the parliamentary press gallery in 1973. I well recall those days in which there was a different media culture and a different Parliament. In those days Paul and I shared some memorable incidents. One of the more interesting incidents occurred in the all-purpose room, which served as the press gallery. Members of the press would eat there and decide on the stories of the day. I am sure it is entirely different today as each furiously independent news organisation goes about its business. In those days journalists would often gather over lunch.

I well recall an occasion on which a slightly intoxicated—wrong, heavily intoxicated—member of Parliament entered the press gallery to take issue with a journalist about a story he had written. That journalist was not Paul Mullins. Paul and I stood back to watch this spectacle: the then correspondent for the *Australian* was assailed by a member of this Parliament, who is no longer with us. Those interesting and colourful days make up the rich tapestry of New South Wales politics that has been carefully, meticulously and objectively chronicled by the New South Wales parliamentary press gallery.

When I met Paul he was working for Australian Broadcasting Corporation's television news and I was working for *This Day Tonight*, which was the flagship program for ABC public affairs. I am sure that the situation in the ABC is entirely different these days, but in those days there was a lot of tension between the news and public affairs organisations. Indeed, I can recall one incident when both Paul and I were working in the press gallery, and I cannot blame him for what happened. During the constitutional turmoil in November 1975 I was between the two halves of Hyde Park when the then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam was addressing a large gathering. An urgent message came over the radio for a news car in the vicinity of Hyde Park to report in, which I duly did. When it was discovered that a public affairs crew was on hand we were told that the story was unnecessary and we could proceed on our way.

I am sure that news gathering has improved since then and that the rivalries that existed no longer exist. Paul and I never felt such rivalries; they never divided us. Mullows, as he is affectionately known in the press gallery and in the Parliament, will leave an indelible mark and an unprecedented term on the Parliament. He had the advantage of working mostly on a one-hour television news program. That meant there was more coverage of State political stories, and members of this House should be extremely conscious and

protective of that as they fight against global competition, which the modern media represents, for available air time. Honourable members run the risk of the New South Wales Parliament being reduced to little more than municipal politics unless they are vigilant about protecting the sovereignty of the Parliament on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

Paul Mullins has carried out his job with good humour at all times. Indeed, I have been reliably informed about an incident that occurred when he was accompanying the Premier and a delegation on a trip to Lebanon in 1997. Apparently, on that occasion he enjoyed the legendary Lebanese hospitality so much that he did not realise that one local custom is to serve Scotch whiskey in lieu of table wine. The consumption of Scotch whiskey over a successful dinner while building relations between New South Wales and Lebanon took its toll on Paul and halfway through the meal he excused himself to go to the rest rooms. He nearly caused a diplomatic incident when he fainted on the way to the rest rooms. Paul Mullins will be remembered more for doing his job fairly and with a great sense of humour and common decency. He has made a tremendous impression on all members of Parliament and on the people of New South Wales, whom he has served so well for a quarter of a century.

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [3.43 p.m.]: I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating Paul Mullins on achieving 25 years of sterling service to the New South Wales parliamentary press gallery. Today marks a milestone in the New South Wales Parliament. I am sure all honourable members would join with the Premier and others in congratulating Paul Mullins, or Mullows, on 25 years of reporting the State's political history. The word "sir" means different things to different people. When Paul Mullins says "sir" to members of Parliament, whether Ministers, backbenchers or Opposition members, at press conferences it is time to end the press conference. Paul has said, "Thank you sir" many times. I am sure that Paul has given well-meaning advice to all honourable members at some stage. Paul Mullins has many idiosyncratic features. He has done well for a boy who attended North Sydney Demonstration School and Crows Nest Boys' High School.

Mr Brogden: There is nothing wrong with that school.

Mr WHELAN: I agree that there is nothing wrong with that school. At those schools Paul

Mullins learnt to love sport. As the Premier said, Paul played rugby league for North Sydney. Paul is a good friend of the current public relations manager at North Sydney, who has advised me that Paul played 20 second grade games for the Bears. However, Paul may not see one of his ambitions fulfilled, that is, that the Bears will win the rugby league final one day. As Mullows was such a good player, scoring a few tries and kicking many goals, it has been suggested that he should put his boots on and rejoin the Bears to help them win the final. I am sure Mullows will be cheering a new Bears team as a result of a Federal-State initiative.

I note the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Hawkesbury. The honourable member and the Minister for Gaming and Racing were here when Paul joined the press gallery in 1973. New South Wales has had eight Premiers during the 25 years Paul has been in the press gallery. Paul is part of the political folklore of New South Wales. When I entered Parliament the press gallery was dominated by men, including John O'Hara, Dennis Ringrose, Stephen Gibbs from Radio 2UE, Ken Hooper and David Jones, to name a few. In those days the offices of members of the press gallery, which was secretive, were located in a different part of the building. Current members of the press gallery might like to see a return to the glory days when the press gallery had its own butler.

Communications have improved greatly over the past 20 years. Channel 10 and Mullows were the first to use direct cross and live-eye television. During the time I have been in Parliament I have enjoyed joining Paul for a drink and to watch sporting events. Most of all, I have enjoyed Paul's professionalism as a journalist. Indeed, he was given an award from his peers for a fantastic story about Katingal. That story showed the immediacy of Paul to get to the heart of Katingal and to portray it as a terrible place. That television report lives in the memories of governments. To some extent the story was instrumental in the decision to close Katingal. Paul, thank you for your great work over the past 25 years, which I am sure will continue. Best wishes for the future. I am sure you will retain the same professionalism you have exhibited over the past 25 years. Congratulations and thank you for being fair in your quality reporting.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [3.47 p.m.]: No-one who has spent 25 years in this place deserves to be congratulated more than Paul Mullins. Indeed, people who have been here for 25 years must be masochistic. No doubt Paul Mullins' professionalism and his great love for and pride in journalism have enabled him to

work in the Parliament during the terms of eight Premiers, as the Leader of the House said. As the average term of office of members in this place is about six years and seven months, 25 years equates to three generations of members of Parliament. Paul Mullins deserves every accolade bestowed on him today. I am pleased to congratulate him on his remarkable achievement of 25 years of continuous service in the New South Wales parliamentary press gallery.

It is fair to say that in this day and age people who spend 25 years in the same job must be fairly special. That is a fair tribute in an age when there is much mobility in the workplace. As has been said, Paul came to the Parliament as a reporter for the ABC, when Sir Robin Askin was Premier. Paul quickly learnt the ropes with the help of the Premier's wily secretary, the late Allan Green, whom I am sure the honourable member for Hawkesbury and the Minister for Gaming and Racing remember. Paul saw Premiers come and go. One of them was the Hon. Tom Lewis, who was Premier in the 1970s. Tom Lewis remembers Paul very well for something that he left in the pocket of Tom's expensive tweed jacket whilst on a light plane trip to the country. One might say, "Any pocket in an emergency on a light plane trip!" Paul has earned his stripes in the tough world of media and politics. He survived because of his professionalism, his keen news sense and his accuracy.

Paul is a natural gentleman and, of course, supports one of the great sports of gentlemen—boxing. Paul has covered all the big political stories that originated from the New South Wales Parliament. His political commentary on television and his weekly reports on radio station 2KY presents an accurate and well-informed view of this State's politics. For the past 20 years he has been the Channel 10 reporter in this place and he has seen many changes in the Parliament and the press gallery. No doubt he has shared secrets and confidences, as good reporters do. In the years I have known Paul I doubt he has ever breached the trust placed in him by people in high places, which no doubt is one of the many reasons he is trusted by politicians of every political hue and his peers from every professional outlet.

Younger reporters could do much worse than to observe the way Paul goes about his political news gathering. They will soon recognise that contacts across the political spectrum are the most important asset a reporter can obtain. On behalf of the National Party I pay tribute to Paul Mullins. Often these speeches of recognition tend to be made in hindsight. I make it clear that we wish Paul well

for the future in this place and do not want this to be regarded as a retirement speech because Paul's prestige and professionalism is needed within the media. I hope he continues his work for many years. I take this opportunity to wish him well in his pursuits outside this place.

Mr CLOUGH (Bathurst) [3.51 p.m.]: I join with the other members of Parliament in paying tribute to Paul Mullins. My tribute will be slightly different because I am critical of the Leader of the House in his references to North Sydney Rugby League Football Club. Paul Mullins did play second grade for North Sydney and his loyalty is still with that club. Loyalty for North Sydney football club is a deeply rooted faith. When I came to this place 22 years ago in 1976, it had been 54 years since North Sydney had won its last competition. I have been a North Sydney supporter for 50 years and we have never won the competition! The team has done some stupid things in the last few seconds of football games and the best the club has been is runner-up. North Sydney is the only football team worth supporting, and Paul's loyalty to that team drew us together.

Another arena in which I was closely connected with Paul Mullins was on the receiving end of his medium pace bowling in cricket games between the Parliament and the press. Paul's bowling skills were a little better than medium paced. He used to bounce them into your ribs. I would describe it as intriguing to open the batting against Paul Mullins because you knew there would be some bruises before the innings was over, if it lasted. In the many years that Paul captained the press cricket team, the games were interesting and keenly fought. That typifies Paul's approach to sport. My first contact with him was as a member of Parliament with 10 days experience. The discussion at the time concerned the Port Botany coal loader. Some of the older members present will recall that the proposal was to install a coal loader at Port Botany to assist the western coal fields.

During debate a division was called and as the Government had a majority of only one, I got up to walk to the Opposition benches to oppose the motion. Neville Wran grabbed me by the elbow and said, "Don't you do anything bloody stupid." That was typical of the way Neville worked. After the division Paul approached me and said, "I'd like to interview you concerning the Port Botany coal loader. I'll ask you questions about so and so." I said, "Okay." In the intervening period I prepared myself for this interview with the Channel 10 reporter. This happened 22 years ago, so Paul has been with Channel 10 for a fair while.

He took me onto the front verandah and I was ready for the questions. The first question had nothing to do with what he told me he was going to ask, and I was so surprised, it scared the pants off me. I got my brain into gear and then I was able to answer appropriately. In his time in this place Paul has been an inspiration to the members of the press corps. Paul is not a has-been by any means. He remains loyal to North Sydney and I doubt very much that he could get those short-pitched deliveries into the ribs these days. Then again, I could not see them or play them! I congratulate Paul. He is a fine person and a fine journalist. I value him as a friend and have done for many years.

Mr ROZZOLI (Hawkesbury) [3.56 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues in the House in congratulating Paul Mullins on his 25 years service in this establishment and to welcome him to that select group of what might be called quarto-centenarians. My friend and colleague the Minister for Gaming and Racing and I belong to that illustrious group, and now Paul has joined us. However, if we are to talk about people who have displayed masochism by remaining in this place for 25 years or more, we should include Russell Grove, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Russell has been here much longer than any of us. I do not know quite what classification of masochism he falls into!

My memories of Paul Mullins' early days in this place are similar to the memories of the honourable member for Bathurst. One of the first major scoops that Paul worked on was the announcement in about August 1973 by former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam that there would be an airport at Galston. That sensational news story ran for quite a while. For those who do not have any concept of what this place was like in those days, no facilities were available for interviews. The press gallery was a small room behind the present press gallery and certainly no television interviews were conducted in that room.

The pick of the spots for interviews had as a backdrop what used to be the Speaker's garden, which is now almost impossible to geographically pinpoint. The foliage provided a pleasant background. If reporters wanted to conduct a top-class story, they took you there. You had to dodge the cars that dropped Ministers and other staff at Parliament House. You took your life in your hands, but the backdrop made it worthwhile. Paul interviewed me there on a number of occasions during those stirring debates over the Galston airport

proposal. We are still arguing about the location of the second Sydney airport, a subject that continues to raise the ire and passions of the community.

As other speakers have indicated, Paul comes from the old school of journalists—which does not make him in any way old—whose code of ethics and level of integrity I would commend to the younger members of the press gallery as something of great value; it was valued by journalists, by parliamentarians and by the community. There were certain unwritten codes about what was to be kept confidential and what was not, the standards of reporting that were acceptable and those that were not. When young journalists did the wrong thing they received short shrift, not from parliamentarians but from their editors or their editor-in-chief because of that code of ethics and that integrity. That standard has deserted not only the press gallery in recent years; it has regrettably deserted almost all of the professions.

Paul has told me he is writing a book about his years in the press gallery and his observations of State Parliament. It is well known to him that I, also, am writing a book on the Parliament. It is not a book of my reminiscences, but an academic work in relation to the functions of Parliament. Paul and I have granted one another reciprocal rights of interview to gather material for our books, but we actually have to find the time to take up those offers. We will get around to it some time during the next five or 10 years during our continuing service here. I congratulate Paul on his 25 years in the press gallery. I do not think it is necessarily a matter of masochism or a capacity for survival. This is a great place to work. Those who work hard will be rewarded. I look forward to working with Paul for some years to come.

Motion agreed to.

BILL RETURNED

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

Thoroughbred Racing Board Amendment Bill

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the resumption of the adjourned second reading debates of the Police Legislation Amendment (Protective Security Group) Bill and the Parliamentary Remuneration Amendment Bill at this sitting.

**POLICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(PROTECTIVE SECURITY GROUP) BILL****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 23 June.**

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.02 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this debate because the shadow minister for police is indisposed. The Opposition will not oppose the establishment of the protective security group and welcomes the fact that it will be subject to guidelines and controls. The aspects that need to be clarified in relation to that group have been raised by the Opposition on previous occasions. They relate to the integrity of records and ensuring that the focus of the protective security group—which is, of course, the old Special Branch under another name—will be to guard against terrorist acts and acts of organised violence, to protect official visitors to New South Wales, and to protect people in public office against politically motivated crimes of violence designed to intimidate them and prevent them from carrying out the duties and functions of their office.

People in public office are no more important than other members of the community, but the nature of their office renders them liable to organised violence or violence targeted at intimidation with a view to securing a certain political or social result. It is important, therefore, that the Police Service should have the facilities and the community support to enable it to carry out that aspect of its charter. The Opposition is pleased to note that internal audits will be conducted in accordance with various stipulations laid down in the bill. It is essential that during the 2000 Olympic Games, when the security of the people of Sydney and of the Olympic Games will be paramount, there should be a focused group within the Police Service able to prevent the entry into Australia of terrorists or people who wish to disrupt the games for their own political purposes.

The tragic events that occurred during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 remain fresh in our minds. On that occasion terrorists were able to hijack the Olympic Games to satisfy a political agenda. However, one aspect that needs to be addressed is the protection of the public from unauthorised activities by the Police Service. This was borne out in the study into the former Special Branch which revealed that comprehensive files had been kept without authority and that Special Branch had become a law unto itself. As the Minister for Police said, they were the days of the gumshoe brigade that simply suspected people and followed

up those it did not like; that acted more on its own personal preference for organisations and individuals rather than upon the needs of the community of New South Wales.

We have had the unfortunate example in recent times of the Police Service monitoring telephone extension numbers of police officers in an attempt to prevent the disclosure of information to journalists. There has been no allegation of any breach of the law; there has been no allegation that the Listening Devices Act has been breached. However, there has been an allegation, not denied by the Commissioner of Police, that internal monitoring systems have been installed in the police building in College Street, Sydney. The system is designed to ensure that when calls are made to various journalists the relevant telephone extension numbers are recorded.

Mr Whelan: That is not correct.

Mr HARTCHER: It is correct, because the Commissioner, in the last paragraph of his statement, admitted that internal monitoring systems were in place in the Police Service.

Mr Whelan: They have been since 1991 or 1992.

Mr HARTCHER: The Minister says they have been in existence since 1991 or 1992. No-one is making this into a political issue. No-one is suggesting it is an Australian Labor Party plot against the people of New South Wales. The Opposition is saying that it is an area of concern that needs to be looked at and monitored through the Police Integrity Commission. The system is in place and, allegedly, has been used against journalists. Certainly Mr Goodsir and Mr Ogg believe it has been used. The Hon. M. J. Gallacher in another place—who was a police officer for more than 16 years, has worked undercover, has been involved in internal affairs issues, and has extensive links to people throughout the Police Service—also believes it is happening.

During an estimates committee hearing the Minister was asked if he would guarantee that the system is not being used against members of Parliament. Those questions appear at pages 8 and 30 of the transcript of the hearing. There is no more vital concern to members of this House than that they have the right to speak freely to the citizens of New South Wales. The Minister was not prepared to give an undertaking or assurance to the estimates committee that that monitoring system is not being used and would never be used to monitor calls from telephone extensions in the Police Service to

members of Parliament. I make it clear there is no allegation of illegality, but there is an allegation that calls may have been monitored. The Minister was asked the following question:

Minister, will you give an undertaking to the Committee indeed to the Parliament that telephone monitoring facilities currently employed by the New South Wales Police Service will not be used to identify the place of origin of telephone calls made to police phone numbers ascribed to Members of Parliament where it is believed they are made from within the New South Wales Police Service.

The Minister declined to answer the question.

Mr Whelan: He asked the question during the wriod.

Mr HARTCHER: Let me turn to the right period, which appears in the estimates committee proof at page 30. The Hon. M. J. Gallacher again put questions to the Minister about the telephone system. Again the Minister was not prepared to give the undertaking. The Hon. M. J. Gallacher asked:

... I again hark back to the point on the use of telephone facilities at the Police Headquarters to monitor the location from where telephone calls are made inside the Police Service to outside sources.

That question was put in the correct part of the estimates committee hearing. What did the Minister for Police do? He proceeded with the great skill he has accumulated from his years as a lawyer, from his years as Leader of the House and as a Minister and a shadow minister to go off on a tangent. Everyone admires the Minister's skill; he is very good at that. He is a role model for the ordinary member of this House who wants to get out of answering difficult questions. Before members of the new government go into the estimates committee hearings next year, I intend to play to my colleagues videos of the Minister's performance so they will all know how to avoid answering really curly questions.

I ask the Minister now whether he will give an assurance to Parliament that the Police Service monitoring facilities will not be used to check whether calls are being made to members of Parliament. That is a simple question. That is all the Opposition is asking of the Minister at this time. Surely it would not be beyond the resources of the Minister or the Commissioner to give that assurance. In the estimates committee hearing the Minister used a mass of obfuscation to avoid answering questions about the Police Integrity Commission Act. When things really got difficult the Minister asked whether the committee wanted him to read the section, and he then proceeded to read out the section of the Act as part of his answer. That was really good! The

Minister's performance will be used in the credits for next year's estimates committee hearings. The Parliament of New South Wales has every right to be concerned that the protective security group does not become another special branch.

Mr Whelan: Hear! Hear!

Mr HARTCHER: The Minister says "Hear! Hear!"

Mr Whelan: I was wondering when you intend to get back to the bill.

Mr HARTCHER: My remarks are relevant to the bill because the protective security group will be doing much the same job the special branch did: it targeted people they did not like, people from the left. The Minister is from the left of the political spectrum, or he is supposed to be. People like the Minister were targeted by special branch. Everyone knows that, and what happened is not right. People should be targeted because of the danger they pose because they have broken the law or threatened violence to society. It is appropriate that the Police Service, under the Listening Devices Act, should monitor telephone calls. However, it is not appropriate that extension numbers at police headquarters should be monitored when calls are made to members of Parliament. The Commissioner of Police is able to do that, and the Minister is not prepared to deny that the commissioner will use that facility.

It is an extremely serious matter, and in a few minutes time the Minister will have the opportunity to give an undertaking to Parliament about it. I know exactly what the Minister will say. He will say it is an interesting question; he will thank the honourable member for Gosford and other members who have contributed to the debate and say that their views will be taken into account. Honourable members are familiar with that, but they are a wake-up to the Minister's tactics. If the Minister is not prepared to give that assurance, the people, the Parliament, the media, and Mr Goodsir and Mr Ogg, are entitled to assume that the Minister is prepared to allow the commissioner to use that facility. That would be a travesty of the parliamentary and democratic system.

It is important to place those matters on record. It is important to acknowledge the role of the Hon. M. J. Gallacher in raising them. He has an outstanding record of service to the people of this State as a police officer. He has been commended for his bravery, and for the conscientious way he carried out his duties. He is a working class boy

who came from the Mount Druitt housing commission area. He left school early and put himself through university. He joined the police force and the Liberal Party, and he is now an excellent member of the Legislative Council. When he raises issues of concern brought to him by members of the press gallery or by his friends and colleagues in the Police Service who think highly of him, those matters should be taken seriously by Parliament. They are serious issues, and I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say in reply.

Mr WHELAN (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [4.15 p.m.], in reply: I was tempted to take a point of order when the honourable member for Gosford was speaking on the grounds of relevance, but a challenge has been issued and I like a challenge. It is true that on 23 June I attended the estimates committee hearing and it is true that I was asked a series of questions. The Hon. M. J. Gallacher did ask me:

Will you give an undertaking to the Committee indeed to the Parliament that telephone monitoring facilities currently employed by the New South Wales Police Service will not be used to identify the place of origin of telephone calls . . .

I answered him as directly as I possibly could. I said in part:

The same telephone system existed 6½ years ago. And it still exists today, there have been no changes to the system. And the same journalist who complains now is the same person who was a journalist with former Commissioner Lauer and was his press secretary and worked under the existing regime, the same and existing regime.

He probably would have used the same telephone system and, indeed, the same telephone that existed at that time. I am pleased that the honourable member for Gosford mentioned the estimates committee hearing, because it revealed to me the clear, unambiguous attempt by the Opposition not only to discredit the Police Integrity Commission but to ensure that it is wound down. I refer honourable members to page 36 of the Committee transcript where the Hon. Virginia Chadwick let the cat out of the bag about the future intention of the Opposition. A series of questions was asked alleging that the Government is spending too much money on the Police Integrity Commission. I was asked why its staff numbers have increased from 67 to 107 and why its budget has increased from \$10.2 million to \$12.9 million in one year. On page 36 of the transcript the Hon. Virginia Chadwick said:

I understand all of that but it is a worry, is it not—

She said it is a worry that the Government is providing additional resources to the PIC.

Mr Hartcher: It is the cost overruns.

Mr WHELAN: It is not a cost overrun. This Parliament gave the Police Integrity Commission and the commissioner four additional tasks to perform which deal with serious misconduct and serious criminality by police officers. The Opposition voted in this Parliament to support the legislation that had been sponsored by the Government that gave the Police Integrity Commission and commissioner those additional tasks. The Government cannot give the Police Integrity Commission an additional work load and not provide it with additional resources. When the coalition was in government it established an authority called the Child Protection Enforcement Agency.

When the Labor Party came to government the Child Protection Enforcement Agency had been established and had a charter. However, it had no staff, no premises and no-one working in it. The Government cannot give the Police Integrity Commission and the commissioner new work, which it has done by means of the legislation to which I have referred, without providing additional staff and additional funding. I warn the Opposition that its plan to wind back the financial and staff resources of the Police Integrity Commission will have dire consequences on the attempt to clean out the New South Wales Police Service.

Yesterday the Hon. Virginia Chadwick laid bare the coalition's intentions for the Police Integrity Commission. She was very critical of the Government's allocation of a record budget of almost \$13 million to the Police Integrity Commission. She was concerned that the PIC budget had increased by 15 per cent and that staff numbers had increased from 68 to 107. It saddens me to realise that is the coalition's position, but I am not surprised by it. Coalition members have continually opposed and tried to undermine police reform. They consistently and unfairly attack Commissioner Ryan and criticise the performance of the Police Integrity Commission, and they voted against the establishment of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service. The Government established the PIC in response to the key recommendations of Justice Wood.

Not only does the PIC prevent, detect and investigate serious police misconduct and criminality, it also deals with prosecutions and

appeals arising from the investigations of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service. This year's record PIC budget also provides for the establishment of a telecommunications interception facility and an independent audit of the reform of the Police Service to make sure that restructure and change are taking place. Unlike the coalition, the Government is prepared to put its money where its mouth is, and is providing the PIC with the resources it needs to do its job properly and effectively. The Government will continue to give full and unequivocal support to the PIC. I reject the stance taken by the Opposition. Having said that, I thank Opposition members for their support for the bill, to quote the words used by the honourable member for Gosford.

Mr Cruickshank: He asked you a specific question.

Mr Whelan: I have answered that specific question, and I refer the honourable member to the third-last paragraph of page 8 of the proof of the estimates committee hearing. I read out the answer so that members of the public may understand it. It is clear that the New South Wales Opposition wants to wind the clock back so that corrupt police once again are able to go about their business in the New South Wales Police Service. Shame on the Opposition!

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 June.

Mr Hartcher (Gosford) [4.23 p.m.]: It is customary each year for the Parliament to pass one or more statute law amendment bills. On the understanding that this bill deals only with minor and inconsequential matters that would not be appropriately addressed by separate amending legislation, the Opposition has no objection to its passage. The Opposition supports this bill on the Government's assurance that the legislation is of a minor, technical and inconsequential nature. The Opposition relies upon the implied assurance from the Government that any matter of a material or consequential nature would be included in a separate amending bill, and that if the bill relates to matters that are neither minor nor consequential then the

Government will withdraw those aspects from the bill and introduce an appropriate amendment to the principal Act. Accordingly, the Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr Cruickshank (Murrumbidgee) [4.24 p.m.]: I endorse the comments made by the honourable member for Gosford. However, I point out that the Regulation Review Committee has serious reservations about the way in which this bill has been dealt with by the Parliament. From the committee's point of view, there are certain matters that should be questioned seriously. When I read the bill I noted that, apart from making more postponements of the staged repeal of regulations, schedule 1.9 makes 40 amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The amendments are said to be necessary to facilitate the implementation of the integrated development scheme introduced by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 1997. It is proposed that the scheme will commence on 1 July 1998.

The amendments are also said to be mainly procedural, but many of them contain regulation-making powers. Schedule 1.9[40], for example, adds a regulation-making power to impose obligations relating to fire safety. If passed, that amendment will commence on the date of assent. At the same time as these amendments to the Act are being dealt with, the Regulation Review Committee is considering an amendment to the environmental planning and assessment regulations which is also said to facilitate the implementation of the integrated development scheme. That amendment was published on 25 May 1998. Among other things, it inserts an entirely new part in the regulation, part 7B, concerning fire safety and the building code of Australia. The amending regulation will commence at the same time as the rest of the integrated development scheme on 1 July 1998.

The explanatory note for the regulation states that its enabling power is section 157 of the Act. However, when the regulation was made there was certainly no power to impose obligations on persons regarding fire safety. That is only now being introduced by schedule 1.9 to the bill. It is significant that the Minister in her second reading speech stated that the amendments add to the regulation-making powers. I should mention that the explanatory note to the regulation is phrased rather curiously. It states that each of the parts and clauses inserted into the principal regulation are proposed parts and clauses. I know that the regulation will not commence until 1 July, when the amendment Act commences, but it is not a proposed regulation.

The parts and clauses of the regulation itself are not expressed to be proposed, and as the explanatory note is not part of the regulation that can serve only to confuse the public, who have already been provided with a draft during the debate on the environmental planning and assessment amending legislation. I cannot help but get the impression from the explanatory note that the draftsman is having a bob each way and that the reference to the proposed parts is made in anticipation of this bill. I have known many cases in which a regulation is published before it commences, but the regulation is never described in the explanatory note as being proposed.

Therefore, even though the regulation was made on 25 May 1998, the regulation-making powers to enable the regulation are only now being inserted into the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 by this bill. Does that mean that there was insufficient regulation-making power under the Act when that regulation was made, and does that therefore affect the validity of the regulation? If there was sufficient power, this amendment is unnecessary and should be withdrawn. In all my years on the Regulation Review Committee, I have never known a regulation-making power to be inserted after the regulation is made.

Even though the regulation has not yet commenced, I do not understand how it can be validated retrospectively. The Interpretation Act enables the exercise of certain powers between enactment and commencement of Acts, but when this regulation was made there was no such power in the Act. It seems that the power should have been included in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 1997 but was somehow overlooked. I should indicate that the regulation comprises 180 pages, yet because it was made only as an amendment it did not require the preparation of a regulatory impact statement. It is the largest amendment the Regulation Review Committee has seen, and it is certainly the largest amendment without any regulatory impact statement.

On 25 June 1998 the Regulation Review Committee is holding a briefing on the regulation with concerned stakeholders. The whole philosophy of the planning legislation is directed at the full assessment of the impact of proposals. It is significant that this major planning legislation has itself been exempted from full assessment by making this amendment rather than a new principal statutory rule. It is questionable whether that accords with the spirit of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act under which the regulation was made. I note that a motion to disallow the regulation

has been moved in another place. Unless the Minister can show a clear enabling power, it should be disallowed as it is unsafe and will only lead to great loss if people act upon it and it is subsequently set aside by a court. A proper regulation could then be put in place after full assessment by means of a regulatory impact statement.

I turn to another important aspect, that is, the lack of consultation that preceded the changes being made by the bill to the Subordinate Legislation Act. On 16 April 1997 the Regulation Review Committee wrote to the Premier saying that it would welcome the referral to it of any bills which affect the publication, validity or disallowance of statutory rules. On 16 June 1997 the Premier advised that he could see no difficulty with informal consultation with the committee prior to the introduction of bills which change procedures concerning regulations. The bill before the House is in that category. In his letter the Premier said he would ask the officers in his administration to arrange for the informal consultation to take place where practicable. I suppose the words "where practicable" are the key words because in this case no consultation occurred at all. The committee did not hear from officers of the Premier's Department—not a single line, not a single telephone call.

I suppose after the Premier made his qualified offer that his staff would consult, they just forgot about it. When the bill was ready to go someone probably said, "Hadn't we better let the Regulation Review Committee know we are making changes to the Subordinate Legislation Act?" There was no practical use in the Premier notifying the committee on the date he did so. In the case of the amendment to the Subordinate Legislation Act which postponed the repeal of the Clean Waters Regulation 1972 the committee received notification of that from the Premier two days before the notice of motion was given. Notification to the committee of a further postponement of the repeal of the Dangerous Goods Regulation 1978 was received from the Premier on 16 June 1998, which was 13 days after notice of motion of the bill had been given.

I do not say that the changes to the Subordinate Legislation Act are unwarranted. They postponed the sunseting of various regulations and, from the little information our committee has been given, the reasons for the changes have substance. But that is not the issue. Why did proper consultation not precede the change? Why, for example, was it not possible for officers of the Premier's Department and relevant departmental officers to briefly explain to the Regulation Review Committee at one of its meetings the proposals it

had in mind? Surely, that does not lie outside the words "where practicable" that were used in the Premier's letter. After all, the knowledge that the repeal of these regulations would have to be postponed was probably known by those officers for a year or more.

When bills come into this House without adequate consultation they even fail the test applied to regulations. That is a curious situation. When a Minister recommends the making of a regulation, he or she must certify that all the requirements of the Subordinate Legislation Act have been complied with. Sufficient and relevant consultation is critical. That is common knowledge to all Ministers in the regulatory context. It is inexplicable that those same Ministers believe it is all right to send a bill on its way without the same wider community involvement. When any bill comes into the House without sufficient consultation I realise the Government has still not strayed far from the imperious belief that what it considers necessary does not require community consultation.

To conclude on a positive note, I should like to take this opportunity to commend the Premier for acting on the committee's recommendation that regulatory impact statements prepared by government departments be tabled by the relevant Minister. The committee regards that as a step that will give parliamentarians better background information and one that will tend to raise the standards of those documents because departmental officers will know that Ministers can be made accountable in the House for any departure in these documents from the requirements of the Subordinate Legislation Act.

Mr SHEDDEN (Bankstown) [4.34 p.m.]: I shall confine my remarks to amendments in the bill to the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989. In a letter dated 13 May 1998 the Acting Premier advised the Regulation Review Committee, of which I am chairman, of the proposal to postpone, by a statute law amendment to the Subordinate Legislation Act, the staged repeal of the Motor Traffic Regulation 1935, General Traffic (Pedestrian) Regulation 1937 and the General Traffic Regulation 1916. The repeal of those three traffic regulations had been postponed by a similar amendment in 1996 when the regulations exceeded the maximum number of postponements permitted under the staged repeal program in the Subordinate Legislation Act. That program makes provision for the sunsetting and repeal of each regulation after five years. That repeal can be postponed by the Governor by order published in the *Government Gazette*. A maximum

number of five postponements, each of a year in duration, are permitted by the Act.

Postponements are usually required when the principal Act is being amended and is likely to result in major changes to the regulations. After a request by the committee, the Premier issued guidelines setting out the limited circumstances in which a postponement will be agreed to. The history of the matter was outlined in the committee's twelfth report to Parliament. The Cabinet Office wrote to the committee in October 1996 and sought its preliminary view on a proposal that the repeal of the traffic regulations be further postponed.

The office also sought the committee's view on an alternative proposal that the rules be put beyond the reach of the Subordinate Legislation Act by including them in schedule 4 to the Subordinate Legislation Act. The postponement of the regulation for a sixth and seventh year was outside the scheme of the Subordinate Legislation Act and, therefore, had to be made by amending the Act. The amendment was said to be justified because uniform national roads legislation was then being prepared by the National Road Transport Commission and was expected to be implemented by 1998.

In reply, the committee said that it would not support an amendment to the Subordinate Legislation Act so as to put those particular regulations beyond the reach of that Act. The committee considered such a proposal unacceptable as it departed from the spirit of the Act, it did not comply with the Premier's guidelines on postponements and it was inconsistent with the approach taken at the national level under the guidelines of the Council of Australian Governments.

While the committee did not object to a further postponement of the repeal of these regulations for one year by way of inclusion in the Statute Law Miscellaneous Bill, it said that it was important that the current process of developing uniform national road rules, including the process of consultation and timing, should be examined by the parliamentary committee. Accordingly, the committee, while supporting a further postponement of the regulations, believed that that should be done in conjunction with an examination by the Staysafe committee of the current process and timetable.

The committee, accordingly, recommended to the Premier that he refer this matter to the Staysafe committee for examination. In a letter dated 28 July 1997 the Premier advised that the Minister for

Roads would introduce new rules by 1 September 1998 and that this would obviate the need for the inquiry by the Staysafe committee. In his letter of 13 May 1998 the Acting Premier advised that while most elements of the National Road Transport Commission reforms should be implemented by August 1998, the road rules component encompassing driver, rider and pedestrian behaviour will not be finalised by that time.

The Acting Premier stated that no firm timetable has yet been agreed upon for the implementation of these changes, but completion by the end of 1999 may not be unrealistic. In the course of its consideration of the matter the committee sought the view of the Staysafe committee. On 20 May 1998 the chairman of the Staysafe committee wrote to the Regulation Review Committee and expressed concern about the matter. He said:

As the regulations are to be replaced by the Australian Road Rules, under agreements signed by New South Wales in the early 1990s, it is of concern that the development process for the Australian Road Rules has lagged so far behind the initial target date.

The StaySafe Committee has serious concerns with the process of developing the Australian Road Rules, and may consider it appropriate to examine this matter in detail at a later stage.

The objective of drawing up Australiawide rules is laudable, but the Minister should provide comprehensive details in relation to the progress made and outline whether the rules will be finalised in the short term. On 22 May the Regulation Review Committee sought these details from the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. The Minister stated in his reply of 17 June:

The Australian Road Rules (ARR) cover a broad range of matters under the General Traffic (Pedestrian) Regulations 1937, General Traffic Regulation 1916 and the Motor Traffic Regulation 1935 that deal with the regulation of driver, rider and pedestrian behaviour on roads, but do not deal with the more serious offences like drink-driving and dangerous driving. These more serious offences will be retained in jurisdictional law.

The completion date for the ARR has been delayed by the National Road Transport Commission on a number of occasions, because of its lack of resources or priorities given to other National Road Transport Commission projects. The National Road Transport Commission has now acknowledged that completion of the Australian Road Rules to enable their implementation in New South Wales is unlikely until late 1999.

The RTA is currently reviewing the impact of the delay in the development of the Australian Road Rules with a view to determining what course of action is appropriate, given the requirements to repeal regulations under the Subordinate Legislation Act prior to September 1999.

As a consequence of this advice, I wrote to the chairman of the Staysafe committee on 18 June and asked whether the committee would monitor the current RTA review. I have not received a reply from him but I believe that that would be an appropriate course to assist in the finalisation of the Australian road rules.

Mr OAKESHOTT (Port Macquarie) [4.42 p.m.]: The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill has been introduced to repeal certain Acts, to amend certain other Acts and instruments in various respects, to effect statute law revision and to make certain savings. The Government has said that it will continue the statute law revision program that commenced in 1984 to make minor and non-controversial amendments to Acts that Ministers consider are too inconsequential to warrant the introduction of separate amending bills. I was recently appointed as a member of the Regulation Review Committee. Last week the committee considered the amendments to the Subordinate Legislation Act in proposed clause 1.20 of schedule 1 to the bill.

This clause further postponed the staged repeal of three traffic regulations that had been postponed by similar amendments in 1996, and postponed another three regulations concerning dangerous goods, clean waters and marine navigation. Honourable members should ask themselves what this means to the people of New South Wales and whether it is only a minor technical amendment that is non-controversial and of interest only to the Regulation Review Committee. I say that it is not. Let us make this clear: the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill means that regulations that impact on public safety have not been assessed since they were introduced. In the case of the traffic regulations, that is more than 80 years.

In 1989 the staged repeal program was introduced with the Subordinate Legislation Act, which makes provision for the sunseting and repeal of each new regulation after only five years. Old regulations such as these were to be progressively repealed in stages set out in the Act. Substantial concessions were made in that Act to enable that repeal to be postponed for up to a further five years. Most of the old regulations have been repealed and many have been replaced by new regulations within the ample time permitted by the Act. However, and somewhat alarmingly, these remaining few untouchables have exhausted the avenues for their postponement under the Subordinate Legislation Act and so resort had to be had to special legislation to amend that Act to give the regulations more time.

Although the principal Act is being reviewed in a number of these cases—and, indeed, entirely new legislative packages will be introduced—I cannot see why any review, however complex, could not have been completed in the eight years since the Subordinate Legislation Act commenced. It is timely to mention that Parliament is being asked to act as the jury over the future of a judge who has been criticised for delaying decisions. The hypocrisy of this should not be lost on honourable members: Parliament could not make a decision, on several occasions, within an eight-year period. In the future I hope to be part of a process that deals with better administration. I am aware that the Regulation Review Committee was established to minimise and prevent abuse of regulations by this House. I hope to be part of an administration that protects and enhances the principles of regulation in this State, that always focuses on public interest and not on what is always easy and convenient for bureaucracy and Ministers.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Macdonald.

UNLAWFUL GAMBLING BILL

RACING ADMINISTRATION BILL

GAMBLING (TWO-UP) BILL

Bills introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.45 p.m.]: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

These bills provide a framework in which long-established prohibitions are imposed on certain gambling activities, and provide for the licensing of racecourses and the authorisation of certain other forms of gambling. The Gaming and Betting Act 1912—which is to be replaced by these bills—is the principal legislation dealing with prohibitions against unlawful gaming, betting or wagering in New South Wales. The Gaming and Betting Act is now more than 85 years old, and is acknowledged as having shortcomings, being an effective instrument to enable detection of, and subsequent action against, serious unlawful gambling activities.

That conclusion was the key finding of the inter-agency gaming and betting laws task force

which reported in 1995. That finding, and the policy response taken by the Government in the formulation of these bills, was supported by the royal commissioner, in the final report of the Wood royal commission, as sensible, facilitating law enforcement, particularly in relation to prohibited gaming devices, and constituting a useful anticorruption strategy. The Gaming and Betting Act contains a number of obsolete concepts and provisions. The Act has been amended many times, often in a piecemeal fashion. These bills address that situation and also take the logical step of separating the criminal prohibitions from provisions dealing with the administration of racing and the regulation of two-up.

Through the introduction of these bills, the Government has recognised community expectations that the law should not permit certain gambling activities unless the conduct of those activities occurs within an appropriately controlled environment. I will briefly address the subject matter of each of the three bills separately. The objects of the Unlawful Gambling Bill are to prohibit and restrict, in the public interest, certain forms of gambling; to prevent the loss of public revenue that is otherwise derived from lawful forms of gambling; and to deter criminal influence and exploitation in relation to gambling.

The Unlawful Gambling Bill carries forward many of the provisions of the Gaming and Betting Act, but many of them have been rewritten to recognise that emerging technologies have provided more sophisticated means by which to conduct illicit gambling and consequently to avoid its detection. The Unlawful Gambling Bill introduces several reforms. The first and most important of these is a new offence, which the bill inserts into the Crimes Act, for conducting an unlawful gambling operation. This offence is designed to target the activities of organised criminals who seek to undertake larger scale and more sophisticated unlawful gambling activities.

Other important reforms include provisions for proceedings for certain offences to be dealt with summarily unless the prosecuting authority or the person charged elects to have the proceedings dealt with on indictment; for the responsibilities of the Gaming Tribunal are to be devolved from the District Court to the Local Court; and for a penalty notice infringement scheme to be introduced to enable police to issue infringement notices for less serious gambling offences. These and other reforms will assist in lifting some of the potentially significant burden on the court system by simplifying procedures and ensuring that a particular

matter is dealt with before the appropriate court, and in accordance with the gravity of the offence. A new offence provision is also introduced which targets persons in New South Wales who bet with unlicensed bookmakers via the Internet, pay television and other on-line telecommunication services. This offence complements provisions in the Racing Administration Bill which provide for the Minister to authorise licensed bookmakers to conduct electronic betting.

I now turn to the Racing Administration Bill. The objects of this bill are to ensure the integrity of racing in New South Wales, ensure that certain betting activities by licensed bookmakers are conducted properly, minimise the adverse effects of lawful gambling and protect a source of revenue that is derived from lawful gambling. To achieve these aims, the Racing Administration Bill, among other things, carries forward the racecourse licensing, betting auditorium, and telephone and sports betting provisions that are presently contained in the Gaming and Betting Act. The Racing Administration Bill also introduces new provisions enabling the Minister to authorise licensed bookmakers to conduct electronic betting via the Internet, pay TV or other on-line telecommunications systems.

These provisions will provide much-needed regulatory controls in this area and reflect the Government's commitment to ensuring that the public is not taken advantage of by unlawful operators. The bill also carries forward the betting information and advertising restrictions that are currently contained in the Gaming and Betting Act. These restrictions have been strengthened and updated to ensure that information and advertising using emerging telecommunications technologies are subjected to an equivalent regulatory environment as the traditional controls on printed matter. Upgraded offences will target New South Wales-based unlawful bookmakers operating on-line and other unlawful bookmakers whose service is provided to a person in New South Wales via a New South Wales-based Internet service provider. My department will continue to consult on these matters with interested persons.

The final bill in this package of three bills is the Gambling (Two-up) Bill. The objects of this bill are to legalise the conduct of games of two-up on Anzac Day, which has become an accepted practice, and games of two-up played in an authorised location in Broken Hill, as happens at present, to ensure that they are conducted honestly and with appropriate controls to prevent fraudulent activity, and to ensure that they are conducted free from criminal influence and exploitation. The provisions of this bill substantially replicate the existing provisions of the Gaming and Betting Act for the

regulation of two-up games in those unique circumstances. The savings and transitional provisions in this bill will mean that the current authorisation issued to Broken Hill City Council to conduct games of two-up in that great city will remain in force.

In conclusion, these three bills are modern statutes designed to replace or upgrade the outmoded concepts and provisions of an Act that is fast approaching the centenary of its enactment by this Parliament. This replacement package of legislation also better reflects modern legislative practices and generally facilitates better access to the law by separating the three distinct subject areas into separate bills. These bills also provide the legislative platform from which the fight against illegal gambling in this State may be continued in a more appropriately targeted, and better equipped, manner as we move into a new century. Overall, this package of bills represents a sensible, cohesive and overdue reform measure.

I wish to comment briefly on the motion relating to Paul Mullins. I entered the Parliament 25½ years ago, just before Paul joined the parliamentary press gallery. Indeed, I as the longest-serving member, place on record my admiration for Paul not only as a professional but also as a friend. Paul, who is affectionately known as Mullows, is a former president of the State parliamentary press gallery. He pioneered one-hour news programs, which were very different from the news programs we had been watching since the introduction of television in Australia in 1956. Paul joined the press gallery during a time of great turmoil. The Whitlam Government had been elected and there was change during the time that Askin, Lewis and Willis were Premiers of New South Wales.

I know Paul socially. I will not traverse my history with Paul and my media officer, Fred Smidt; suffice it to say that we have known each other professionally and as friends for many years. Paul used his investigation skills to research important consumer issues long before consumer legislation was developed to the level it is today. I can remember working with Paul on many occasions, both in opposition and in government. Many people would not know that Paul has been involved with many good causes in the community. Unfortunately, I will be unable to contribute at the testimonial to Paul in July. I now place on record my admiration for the professional way he has conducted himself in the parliamentary press gallery over the past 25 years. That is a great achievement and I compliment him on it. I commend these bills to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Fraser.

GREYHOUND RACING AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.57 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Greyhound racing in New South Wales is controlled and regulated by the Greyhound Racing Authority, a statutory body constituted under the Greyhound Racing Authority Act 1985. The authority's board consists of seven members appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for Gaming and Racing. As honourable members are well aware, the New South Wales TAB has been privatised and this will result in significant benefits to both the taxpayers of New South Wales and the racing industry. An important element of the privatisation package developed by the Government was the removal of unnecessary regulation to provide the racing industry and the TAB with the freedom to make properly considered commercial decisions in what they see as the best interests of shareholders and other stakeholders, including punters and racing industry participants.

Under the new commercial arrangements the racing industry is required to negotiate contractual agreements with the TAB for the supply of racing product and services in return for commercial payment. In addition, each code of racing has become responsible for the ongoing development and promotion of its industry and for determining its own internal funding distributions to areas such as racecourse development. As the Greyhound Racing Authority will have increased powers under the new arrangements and will be taking commercial decisions that affect the viability of greyhound racing clubs in areas such as racecourse development and the disbursement of industry funds to race clubs, the Government believes it is appropriate that race clubs and greyhound racing industry participants have direct representation on the authority's board.

At the same time, it is clear that the public expects that an industry offering a wagering product should be properly controlled and regulated to ensure the protection of contemporary standards of accountability and integrity. In order to address integrity concerns and to reduce problems associated

with the existence of conflicting factional interests within the greyhound racing industry, it was seen as desirable that some independence in the membership of the authority should be maintained in any restructure with the appointment of a number of ministerial nominees.

Following wide consultation with the industry and consideration of a broad range of options, it was determined that the most appropriate structure to serve the greyhound racing industry in this State would be to retain a seven-member authority, with the composition to be determined as follows: one member nominated jointly by the New South Wales Greyhound Breeders Owners and Trainers Association—GBOTA—and the New South Wales National Coursing Association, known as NCA, which are the two metropolitan greyhound racing clubs; two members nominated by other greyhound racing clubs, at least one of whom would be a representative of TAB clubs; one member to represent industry participants; and three members, including the chairperson, to be nominated by the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

The three members appointed on the nomination of the Minister are to be solely responsible for regulatory, compliance and integrity assurance matters, including the making of rules, and will comprise what will be known as the regulatory committee of the authority. The full board of the authority will be responsible for all other matters relating to the commercial management, promotion and development of the industry, including entering into contractual arrangements with service providers such as the privatised TAB. This separation of the authority's functions will ensure that the industry and club nominees will not be involved with regulatory matters that may give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest.

Another important part of the bill concerns the establishment of an independent greyhound racing appeals tribunal. This has been a matter of concern to successive Ministers. The Greyhound Racing Authority has advised me that time spent on hearing appeals is a handicap on its capacity to attend to its other functions and duties. It also presents the Minister with a conflict of interest, which happened when I became Minister and had to establish the Greyhound Racing Board. The bill addresses this unsatisfactory situation by providing the greyhound racing industry with an independent greyhound racing appeals tribunal to hear appeals on serious matters such as those where penalties of disqualification or fines exceeding \$200 have been imposed.

The authority's regulatory committee will hear the balance of minor industry appeals. The provision of an independent industry appeals tribunal will bring the greyhound racing code into line with the other two codes of racing—that is, the gallops and harness racing—both of which already have an appeals tribunal. As with the tribunals for the other two codes, the greyhound racing appeals tribunal must be either a judge of any court in New South Wales, a retired judge of any court or a person qualified for appointment as a judge of the District Court.

Finally, the bill will ensure that the authority will have protection from defamation action in respect of the conduct of inquiries and will provide the authority with the discretion to hold public inquiries. In addition, the authority will be given power to administer the oath to persons appearing before it at inquiries. These provisions are identical to those recently included in amendments to the Thoroughbred Racing Board Act. While it would be extremely rare for the authority to initiate its own inquiries and utilise these powers, the Government believes it is appropriate for such powers to be consistent for the controlling authorities of the three codes of racing. The Government is confident that the provisions of this bill can only assist the greyhound racing industry in this State and will enable the industry to capitalise on the benefits it will accrue from the sale of the TAB. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Fraser.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 June.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [5.03 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill. I am pleased to advise the House that the coalition does not oppose the bill. This bill deals with a number of important aspects relating to criminal legislation. I shall briefly outline the purposes of the bill. Schedule 1 amends section 7 of the Bail Act to clarify the expression "to appear before the court". Section 7 provides that if an accused person is granted bail in respect of a particular offence, a bail undertaking must be entered into to entitle the accused person to remain at liberty until required to appear before a court. On the face of it the expression "appear before the court" might seem a simple proposition, but at what stage is the person required to appear before the court?

If the case is listed for 10.00 a.m., is the person required to be present at 10.00 a.m. or at some later time during the day? The bill makes it quite clear that the expression "appear before a court" means that the person must be in the court premises and must submit to the custody of the court. At that time the bail arrangement ceases. If the case is called at 11.30 a.m. and the defendant is present, the bail technically is at an end and the person must submit to the custody of the court thereby complying with the bail undertaking. Schedule 2 of the bill amends the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act to ensure that the District Court is able to deal with a breach of recognisance of probation when exercising its functions as the Children's Court.

Under the present system when the District Court imposes on a child a recognisance or probation order, it does not have clear power to terminate, reduce or vary any condition or order in the event of any breach. The amendment to section 18 will overcome that anomaly. The amendment states that the court will have the requisite power to deal with a person in the event of a breach. Additionally, amendments to sections 40 and 41 will clearly enable, but not necessarily compel, the Children's Court to refer any application for breach of an order to the court that originally imposed the order to be dealt with by that court. The procedure is not new; it simply clarifies the existing procedure to empower the court that imposed the original order to vary, modify or otherwise deal with the original order.

The bill further amends the Crimes Act 1900. This amendment presents an interesting situation as it abolishes something that is deeply rooted within the New South Wales judicial system, indeed, within other parts of the Commonwealth. The ancient common law going back to 1557 granted immunity to a wife against prosecution for being an accessory after the fact to a felony committed by her husband. New South Wales law presently is that a person who, knowing a serious crime has been committed, gives an offender any assistance with the intention of enabling that offender to avoid arrest, detection or punishment, that person is guilty as an accessory after the fact to the felony.

As the common law presently stands, a wife who might have assisted her husband in a particular crime cannot be prosecuted for that assistance to her husband. That might have been acceptable many years ago, but presently it is not a reasonable proposition and should be amended. This bill addresses that anomaly. A recent decision of the Court of Criminal Appeal clearly confirmed the

present common law provisions. Under existing law, if a husband were to murder someone and the wife helped to bury the body the wife could not be charged for her role in the offence.

It is interesting to note, and honourable members should be aware, that no similar law has ever existed in respect of husbands. A husband who may have assisted his wife in similar circumstances has always been able to be brought to justice. There was an anomaly and it has now been addressed. Neither husband nor wife have immunity; both can be brought to justice. There are a number of reasons why the law has been changed. It dates back many years to a simplistic lifestyle when a wife was considered a mere chattel of her husband. The situation has changed dramatically. Even before the days of political correctness this law was an anachronism.

Schedule 5 will amend the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This is another important aspect of the legislation. Table 2 to part 9A of the Criminal Procedure Act sets out the indictable offences that must be disposed of summarily before a magistrate. The prosecutor elects to have them dealt with on indictment. These are the more serious offences. The amendment seeks to rectify an oversight in respect of table 2 offences and insert a provision relating to an attempt to commit an offence; or being an accessory before or after the fact to any felony; or aiding, abetting, procuring, soliciting or inciting the commission of a table 2 misdemeanour. The result is that some of these offences of attempt and being an accessory to an offence committed by another person are wholly indictable and therefore must be dealt with by a jury.

Even if magistrates can deal with the perpetrator of the crime summarily, a person who is an accessory to or aids and abets that particular offence has to be dealt with on indictment. That is clearly an inconsistency. The legislation does not create any new offences, it merely clarifies the procedural matters, which makes a lot of sense. The Criminal Procedure Act is also amended by schedule 5 to enable the trial judge at the completion of a trial of an indictable offence to deal with less serious related indictable offences that are capable of being dealt with summarily. In other words, after the trial has been completed under this legislation the trial judge will be able to deal with those offences that would normally go back to a magistrate to be dealt with.

That is sensible because the trial judge has had the benefit of hearing the trial. He knows the facts and is aware of the circumstances relating to the

offences. Finally, schedule 6 to the bill will amend the Justices Act. Section 48E of that Act provides that witnesses who are alleged victims of certain offences involving violence can be compelled to give oral evidence at committal proceedings when "substantial" reasons in the interests of justice are demonstrated. The section further provides in relation to all other witnesses that they can be compelled to give oral evidence at committal proceedings only when "special" reasons in the interests of justice are demonstrated. It will be seen that there is a distinction between the tests that are to be applied in each case.

Honourable members know that committal proceedings are the initial proceedings before a magistrate when a person is charged with a serious offence that could be sent to a judge and jury. The magistrate's role is to determine whether a prima facie case exists for that person to be sent for trial. For many years all witnesses gave evidence during committal proceedings and had their evidence tested before the magistrate. The law has since streamlined proceedings. I must admit a number of people were opposed to that course at the time. Now there is a distinction between cases that involve violence and those that do not involve violence. Quite clearly many people who are victims of crimes of violence in particular are reluctant to give evidence if it may mean a confrontation with the offender. The Opposition supports the legislation and considers it to be worthwhile.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.15], in reply: I have noted what the honourable member has had to say.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES

Mr O'FARRELL (Northcott) [5.15 p.m.]: I want to raise an issue concerning local government—in fact, it concerns 53 local councils throughout New South Wales, including one council

in my electorate. A fortnight ago Hornsby council determined not to alter the boundaries of its three wards in the lead-up to the 1999 local government elections. As a result of that decision there will be a variance of more than 8,380 voters between the smallest and largest wards, a difference exceeding 28 per cent. Currently there are 31,393 voters in ward A, 37,631 voters in ward B, and 29,251 voters in ward C. The growth area of the shire contained in ward B is being penalised.

The electoral voice of people living in the area is being muted and ratepayers in that area are not getting the level of representation they merit. It is unacceptable, unfair and undemocratic that the votes of Hornsby ratepayers will be unequal at the 1999 local government elections. It has been a basic tenet of Australian democracy to uphold the principle of one vote, one value. In the past we have witnessed strong protests when governments have attempted to thwart that principle. Hornsby's decision is a complete rejection of this important concept. It is an outrage.

One cannot have good, clean, open and honest government if that principle is offended. I contend that Hornsby ratepayers will not get good, clean, open and honest government until its council rectifies this situation and, so far as is practicable, introduces wards of commensurate size. I note that another council covering areas represented by the Northcott electorate has adopted a different approach. Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council is currently considering a proposal to redraw its ward boundaries. Option six, which I understand is the preferred option under consideration by council, would protect the one vote, one value option by ensuring that the voting population between wards was never greater or less than 10 per cent.

Under Ku-ring-gai council's proposal the largest ward, Comenarra, would consist of 14,722 voters and the smallest, Roseville, would consist of 3,816 voters. That is a difference of only 816, well under the 10 per cent differential applied in the State political arena. Redistributions are common in politics. This place is currently being affected by a State redistribution aimed principally at ensuring electorates remain equal in size. Section 28 of the Constitution Act 1902 mandates that the difference in the number of voters between State electorates shall not exceed 10 per cent. In other words, on the current quota of 38,000 voters per electorate, the size of electorates should not vary by more than 3,800 voters.

Under the new proposal with 44,000 voters per electorate the differential shall not be more than

4,400. In the Hornsby council elections next year the differential between wards will be more than 8,000 voters, more than double the existing State Parliament standard. Section 211(4) of the Local Government Act states that the division of the council's area into wards or a change to the boundaries of a ward must not result in a variation of more than 10 per cent between the number of electors in each ward in the area.

I believe that clause is clear cut and should operate as section 28 of the Constitution Act operates in relation to this place. Regrettably, that appears not to be the case. In writing to councils last year, the Department of Local Government indicated that the section was not mandatory but simply should apply. In an accompanying note from the head of the department, Mr Garry Payne, some light was shed on the size of the malapportionment problem in local government. Mr Payne indicated that at 1 July 1997, 53 councils had more than 10 per cent elector variation between wards and 34 of those councils had more than 20 per cent elector variation. Whilst urging a review of councils where wards were unbalanced, the department also provided an excuse for councils to ignore the problem and allow the gerrymander to continue. The letter stated:

Although after reviewing its wards, a council is not required by the Act to change its ward boundaries, the Department would encourage those councils with more than 10% elector variation between wards to seriously consider redressing that imbalance.

It is an intolerable situation. It is improper for the department to undermine the intent of the legislation in this way. There is either a 10 per cent variation or there is not. Section 211(4) of the Act is very clear, and the department should be doing what it can to enforce it to ensure that ratepayers gain full benefit from the principle of one vote, one value. I urge the Minister for Local Government to display as much interest in this important principle as he does in the voting system of the council of the City of Sydney.

I call upon the Minister to immediately instruct his department to uphold the letter and the intent of the Local Government Act. I urge him to ensure that decisions like that made by Hornsby council to thwart the proper operation of democracy in local government are overturned. I request that he report publicly on how many of the 53 councils currently in contravention of section 211(4) have decided to allow the existing malapportionment to continue. Ratepayers, whether in Hornsby shire or elsewhere, have a right to know if their council is operating democratically. They have a right to know whether

their vote is as equal as their neighbours. They have a right to know whether the Carr Government will enforce the provisions of the Local Government Act applying to ward boundaries. [*Time expired.*]

MINNAMURRA RAINFOREST ACCESS ROAD

Mr HARRISON (Kiama) [5.20 p.m.]: Minnamurra rainforest, within the electorate of Kiama, has become one of New South Wales' premier tourist destinations, having gained the 1993, 1994 and 1995 New South Wales Tourism award for environmental excellence. In 1996 it was awarded the Australian Institute of Horticulture award of excellence. The site contributes an estimated \$6.2 million per annum to the Kiama economy and generates an estimated 95 jobs. In recent times the Minnamurra Falls Road, from the river crossing to the rainforest entry gates, has deteriorated markedly, even to the extent that coach operators are questioning the use of the road on safety grounds.

Vegetation clearing and maintenance works have been carried out on the road, but further improvements and remedial works are required. Kiama council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are seeking funds of up to \$291,500 for this work, which will greatly benefit not only the Kiama local area but New South Wales in general, as the Minnamurra rainforest attracts national and international visitors on a large scale. Minnamurra rainforest is one of the primary tourist attractions in the Illawarra region, with more than 140,000 visitors a year. It holds many awards for its contribution to the tourist industry at local, State and even national levels.

Its close proximity to Sydney has contributed to its success as an important educational resource and nature study centre. It currently attracts many schools and a growing number of inbound operators. The rainforest is a regional icon and would certainly rank in the State's top five nature-based attractions. It is sure to be high on the list of areas to be visited by tourists during the Olympic Games in Sydney in the year 2000. The road from the causeway across the Minnamurra River to the falls reserve entrance booth consists of 540 metres of public road and 260 metres of road within the national park.

The uneven, ageing bitumen road winds as it follows the river. It is approximately 5.6 metres wide. Drainage consists of a series of box and pipe culverts, some of which require remedial work and/or minor extension to provide appropriate roadway widths. Longitudinal drainage is non-existent other than earth catch drains, and in this

regard kerbing and guttering are proposed for those parts of the road that are deemed necessary. Vegetation has been trimmed back to provide height and width clearance for all vehicles, particularly coaches. The road has deteriorated to the point where it is becoming quite difficult for coaches to proceed safely. There is quite a considerable drop beside the road in a couple of places, and that would pose a threat should tourist coaches go off the road.

It is imperative that remedial work be carried out on this road. As I said, this is a tourist icon, not only of the Kiama and Illawarra regions but of the State of New South Wales. No doubt during the Olympic Games tourists who come to this country will be looking for places of interest where they can view pristine rainforest and waterfalls. I expect that this reserve will be high on the list. I am pleased the Minister for the Environment is in the House to respond to my statement. I know that money is scarce in these times but members of the Kiama council and the local community would appreciate it if this work could at least be commenced and progressively carried out over the next 12 months or two years—certainly before the Games—and the more dangerous parts attended to quickly.

Ms ALLAN (Blacktown—Minister for the Environment) [5.25 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Kiama for his interest in this issue. I am aware that the road requires substantial repairs, at an estimated cost of almost \$300,000. Kiama council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service have managed different sections of the road. The Minnamurra Rainforest Visitor Centre is a recognised tourist destination in the Illawarra and the south coast. It contributes significantly to the local community, with approximately 130,000 tourists visiting annually and contributing up to \$6.2 million to the local economy.

I have been advised that the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the council are working together to develop ways to obtain funding for this project. The most recent meeting was chaired by the Kiama Mayor, Councillor Joyce Wheatley, who suggested potential funding sources other than the normal operating budgets of council and the service, such as tourism and Roads and Traffic Authority special funding allocations. The Executive Director, Corporate Services, of the National Parks and Wildlife Service advised me this afternoon that this project has top priority status for National Parks and Wildlife Service southern region capital works programs for 1998-99.

Mr Fraser: It will probably be done in 2005.

Ms ALLAN: The coalition was in office for seven years and did not take the opportunity to do anything. Allocations for individual projects are currently being assessed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service executive, and I expect an announcement within six to eight weeks. Again, I thank the honourable member for Kiama for raising the issue. I believe the views he has expressed today will receive support from the budget of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

VEHICLE SMOKE EMISSION INFRINGEMENT NOTICES

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [5.27 p.m.]: I raise the issue of Environment Protection Authority officers and their policing of vehicle smoke emissions. I am sure every member of this House has had numerous complaints from constituents about what are believed to be officious acts by EPA officers on vehicle smoke emissions. I received a letter from Coffs Harbour City Council dated 4 June, which stated:

Council operates a plant fleet of more than 300 items of plant ranging from sedans to heavy earthmoving equipment. Over the past three to four years this fleet has been totally renewed by Council in an effort to modernise its equipment from both a work efficiency and environmental protection view.

Council was recently the recipient of an infringement notice for a visible smoke emission from one of its single axle trucks. The truck is a 1996 model, has done less than 30,000km, is regularly maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements and is operated by a driver who is considered to be one of Council's better operators. Following the infringement notice the truck was again examined by our mechanics and by mechanics from the supplier and was found to be within the manufacturer's recommended operating limits for all systems.

While Council understands the need for the State Government to penalise vehicle operators who blatantly contravene environmental requirements for smoke emissions, there is some concern that the policing of the emission limits is becoming over zealous. It is also of concern to Council that the information notice provided with the infringement uses thinly veiled threats of further action if the infringement is disputed. This use of threats would hardly be condoned in the private sector and appears to be designed as an economic disincentive to query the validity of the infringement notice.

Council requests that you take this issue up with a view to ensuring that the policing of smoke emissions is not just used as a revenue gathering exercise by the State Government and that there is some degree of common sense used when infringement notices are issued.

Even with modern diesel technology there are occasions where vehicles are under heavy load and smoke emissions could easily exceed 10 seconds. It appears unjust to penalise the owners of modern, well maintained vehicles for such occasional incidents.

It is of great concern to Council that, having gone to the expense of modernising its plant fleet and training its plant operators in the proper use of the equipment, the vehicle emission laws of this State are still unable to be complied with for normal use of the vehicles.

That is not the only incident about which I have concern. I quote two other incidents that have occurred in my electorate in the past 12 months. The first instance concerns a motor vehicle in Coffs Harbour that had been completely overhauled and taken to the motor registry office for a Roads and Traffic Authority inspection. On the way back from the motor registry office, after the vehicle had been issued with a certificate of compliance, the vehicle owner was issued with a notice from the Environment Protection Authority. Even though the vehicle had just been checked by the RTA, the infringement notice stood. In the second incident the operator of a small transport business had, a week before, put a brand-new motor into his truck and was travelling in the Bellingen area towards the base of Dorrigo Mountain. An EPA inspector claimed that the truck emitted smoke for more than 10 seconds. The vehicle owner was said to be in breach of the law. No matter how many complaints we lodged, the complaint was upheld—even though the truck had a brand-new motor.

I object to the way in which the EPA officers are acting. I support the concerns of the council. There is no need for overofficious and overzealous EPA officers to ping operators such as the city council. I am able to vouch for the fact that the Coffs Harbour City Council takes pride in its fleet, which is maintained regularly and well. EPA officers should make some allowance for fleets such as that of the city council. When a well-maintained vehicle emits diesel smoke on the odd occasion it is probably due to it being under a load. I realise that this is not a perfect world, but I believe that EPA officers on the north coast are adopting an overzealous attitude. I ask the Minister to take this matter on board.

Ms ALLAN (Blacktown—Minister for the Environment) [5.32 p.m.]: Excessive smoke from motor vehicles causes air pollution, affects public health and results in numerous complaints to the EPA—even in an idyllic coastal electorate such as Coffs Harbour. I am advised that in April this year an officer of the EPA observed a Coffs Harbour City Council vehicle allegedly emitting visible smoke for a period in excess of 10 seconds. The New South Wales clean air regulations state that an offence is committed when a motor vehicle emits any visible smoke for more than 10 seconds continuously. An infringement notice was issued. I understand that the council wrote to the infringement

processing bureau on 19 May to appeal the notice, indicating that mechanical checks showed that the vehicle was operating correctly, and put the view that its emissions were normal for a vehicle of its type.

The EPA's reply of 10 June provided the council with information on common causes of excessive smoke from diesel vehicles, such as overfuelling, the driver labouring the engine in too high a gear, or overloading or operating the engine at maximum revolutions per minute when the prevailing conditions require less. The letter indicated that the notice should stand. In light of concerns expressed today by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, however, I have asked the Director-General of the Environment Protection Agency to investigate the matter and have sought to ensure that further enforcement action is not imminent. I will come back to the honourable member for Coffs Harbour on this matter.

VETERINARY SURGEONS INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.33 p.m.]: This evening I draw to the attention of the House serious maladministration of the system dealing with the disciplining of veterinary surgeons. I refer to the quite bizarre and horrifying set of events that have befallen Bob May, a veterinarian in south-west Sydney. Dr May was the subject of two complaints that were heard by the Veterinary Surgeons Investigating Committee—VSIC—and later on a limited point by the veterinary surgeons disciplinary tribunal and, on a brief foray, in the Supreme Court. The dogs at the centre of the complaints survived without any permanent apparent ill-effect. Despite that, as a result of the proceedings Dr May faces an obligation to pay an extraordinarily large amount of money. To say that this seems disproportionate to the harm alleged would be putting it very mildly indeed.

It is worth noting that Dr May is a reputable and eminent veterinary surgeon. He was president of the New South Wales Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. As I understand it, he is the only veterinary surgeon to have held that position. There were substantial difficulties with the process involved. The first complaint arose from Dr May's treatment of a jack russell terrier in August and September 1995. The second complaint related to treatment of a crossbred chihuahua in December 1994. Both complaints were heard by the VSIC on 24 June 1996. The VSIC is constituted under the Veterinary Surgeons Act. Section 24 of that Act requires that one member of the committee be a

barrister or solicitor. As I understand the position, it is not disputed that when the VSIC dealt with Dr May's matters there was no current practising barrister or solicitor on the committee. There was one person who had indeed been admitted as a solicitor in 1957. He had not held a practising certificate and thus, in the commonsense use of the terms, had not been a solicitor since 30 June 1995.

Section 24(3)(a) also requires that the solicitor or barrister be the chairperson of the VSIC. Not only did the VSIC not have a legally qualified member, it did not have a proper chairperson. Now, of course, there are all sorts of legal quibbles about whether technically the Act has been breached. There is a plethora of conflicting silks' advice about this issue. The point I make, however, is that we should disregard the byzantine legalisms and look at the commonsense. There should have been a lawyer on the committee but there was not. This must make the committee appear to be a bit of a joke. Additionally, section 24(3)(e) provides in effect for the appointment of a consumer representative to the committee. No such person had been appointed to the committee as at the date of hearing of the complaints against Dr May. Once again we could find a plethora of legal opinion as to whether at law this invalidates the determinations of the VSIC.

My interest is somewhat broader. From a commonsense point of view, if a body is to be set up in a particular way but in fact is not so set up then one has to doubt its legitimacy. Frankly, one is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that this mickey mouse system needs to be brought up to a decent professional standard. The problems in this case go even deeper. When the VSIC made its final determination it was critical of Dr May's record keeping. Dr May rejects that criticism. Indeed, it is a criticism I have trouble with given the evidence I have seen. It is, however, a grossly hypocritical position for the VSIC to adopt. Dr May noticed, when attending the VSIC hearing, that there was no sound recorder or shorthand reporter, so there is no formal detailed record of what took place.

The situation gets worse. The VSIC criticised Dr May's record keeping, but it could do so only because the VSIC itself had managed to lose the original treatment card for one dog. Moreover, while the VSIC claims to have taken minutes of the hearings, no minutes have been kept and no-one has seen a copy of them. As I have already indicated, two separate complaints were lodged against Dr May. Prompted by objective evidence, such as the fact that both complainants subsequently went to the same veterinarian, Dr May had the two complaints examined by Dr Rod Gardiner from the department

of linguistics at the University of Sydney. I have seen a report from Dr Gardiner dealing with his investigation of the two separate complaints. Dr Gardiner, referring to the two separate letters of complaint states:

The question you have asked is whether the two letters are likely to have been authored by the same person . . . my conclusion is that there is a high likelihood that the two letters were authored (though not necessarily written) by the same person.

Dr Gardiner then went on in some detail to itemise the bases upon which he formed his conclusion. This would suggest that a quite appalling rort has been inflicted on Dr May, that two ostensibly independent complaints were in fact rendered by the same person. What is even more disturbing, however, is that the committee made no reference to that fact, either accepting or rejecting it, in the orders it finally determined. Committee members now cannot remember even having discussed that aspect of the matter. As I have said, there are no minutes to indicate whether that factor was taken into account by the committee.

Interestingly enough, two other witnesses and Dr May report clearly that the document from Dr Gardiner was given to the committee. It is worth noting that before the matter was appealed to the tribunal one tribunal member had indicated in writing that he had decided what was going to happen. He had clearly prejudged the issue. Dr May is reasonably well known. He is not a member of the Australian Veterinary Association, and has over a period of time had some run-ins with the AVA. The AVA appoints two members of the VSIC. One must start to question the bona fides of this entire operation as well as the VSIC's procedural inadequacies, lack of professionalism and failure to deal with substantial allegations.

BEER'S ABATTOIR CULCAIRN

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [5.38 p.m.]: This Monday I attended a meeting at Beer's abattoir at Culcairn called by a committee formed by the Culcairn Shire Council and the principals of the abattoir, David and Rod Beer. The abattoir has recently had to cease business, having run into financial problems, particularly in regard to available credit. This is a very sad matter. The abattoir was established by the Beer family in Culcairn approximately 28 years ago and has operated successfully since then. This week I have approached three Ministers on behalf of the abattoir—the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Treasurer and the Minister for Agriculture—to ask if some assistance can be given to the abattoir.

For example, government charges make it difficult for the abattoir to continue operating, and some assistance could be given in that regard. The committee that has been set up is looking for an equity partner to help get the business back into production. Every year the abattoir processes an average of about 70,000 cattle and 100,000 pigs. In recent times the abattoir installed, at a cost of a little more than \$500,000, some of the most up-to-date and high-standard pig processing equipment in New South Wales. The abattoir is considered to be amongst the five best cattle processing plants in the State. It kills stock and distributes meat for a radius of 250 kilometres around Culcairn. It also supplies processed meat to every capital city in Australia.

Those who run the abattoir have put a great deal of time and effort into training their staff, and they are to be commended for that. The abattoir is an important part of the local economy; it employed as many as 70 people. Payroll tax is one matter about which the abattoir is concerned. I have been encouraged by the responses I have received from the Ministers I have approached. They obviously want to try to help. A business that employed 70 people is an important part of any economy and that is particularly so of Culcairn, which has a population of 1,400.

Only a few years ago a company that processes animal skins established itself, using the abattoir as its source of skins. That company also employs a number of people. Its business is interdependent with that of the abattoir and it is concerned about the future of the abattoir. I am also concerned about its future. The Beers want to get into stage one production again and re-employ their former staff. Stage two would add a boning room to the abattoir and stage three would add other facilities such as a rendering plant so that the business could be expanded.

Although the abattoir is not in operation the Beer family is now paying staff to come in and maintain the equipment, so that production can recommence if the necessary money becomes available. Another problem for the Beers family is that people who owe them money have not paid their debts. The Beers were not inefficient and their financial problems are not of their own making. However, those problems have forced them out of business. Companies ran up debts with them and now they cannot pay those debts. Some companies have gone into liquidation and others have said they will pay eventually but cannot pay at the moment. I hope that an equity partner can be found or that the Ministers I have approached will give the Beer family some support. The abattoir is a great business. It has been viable in the past and its closure will have a severe impact on Culcairn. [*Time expired.*]

WORIMI SCHOOL ANNEXE

Ms HALL (Swansea) [5.43 p.m.]: A matter was brought to my attention today by Magistrate Warren Cook from Worimi Children's Court at Newcastle, and I now bring that matter to the attention of the Minister for Education and Training and other members of the House. Mr Cook has worked for a long time in the Children's Court and I have had the privilege of seeing him at work. He has a great understanding of the needs of young people and has always adopted an innovative approach to juvenile justice. He has a successful record and is committed to young people. He has also been active in the scouting movement. In fact his whole life has revolved around the interests of young people.

Mr Cook, who lives in the Swansea electorate, contacted the honourable member for Newcastle and myself. We both support the work performed at the Worimi annexe, which is an extension of the school that operates in Worimi Children's Court. The annexe operates out of the police youth club at Broadmeadow and looks after students who have been excluded from every other type of education. It is their last hope. Those children are not suitable even for the JASPER program, which the Minister for Education and Training supports and which operates from the Lake Macquarie police youth club.

Currently, the program operating at the Worimi annexe has nine students, who need the support. Those students, to use Magistrate Cook's words, could just go the wrong way and would certainly end up as criminals without the support they get through the program. Mr Cook says that it is essential that they be kept in the program as it keeps them honest, off the street and away from crime. The children have horrendous family backgrounds. Some have backgrounds that many people would not be able to understand. These children are educationally and socially disadvantaged. Magistrate Cook advised me that he believes that the Department of Education and Training will not continue to fund the school. Further inquiries indicate that the school may be funded from a variety of sources. The Minister has given me an undertaking that he will find out how it is funded and how the annexe can best be supported. I am confident that he will allow the school to continue functioning.

The Minister is aware that over the years the annexe has had the support of the department and, indeed, he is supportive of its work. The programs run by the annexe are basic skills, literacy and living skills. As I mentioned earlier most of these students

have poor literacy skills. They are taught that there are alternatives to what they have been used to. Mainstream education has failed those children. Magistrate Cook pointed out to me that Newcastle has had great success in juvenile justice programs. The Worimi annexe is overseen by a teacher named Rick Chandler, who also works in the Worimi school and for the Department of Juvenile Justice. Mr Chandler assesses the students and determines whether they are suited to mainstream education, JASPER or the annexe. I support the program and ask the Minister to investigate the continuation of its funding. [*Time expired.*]

KYOGLE TO MURWILLUMBAH ROAD UPGRADE

Mr RIXON (Lismore) [5.48 p.m.]: Before I became President of Kyogle Council in 1977 I lobbied to have the road between Kyogle and Murwillumbah, Main Road 141, sealed for its full length. That road is about 70 kilometres in total length. Back in those days 27 kilometres of the road had an unsealed surface, much of which, because of the nature of the terrain, was severely potholed. Today, because of grant funds and careful spending by the Kyogle and Tweed councils, only 9.5 kilometres remain to be sealed. These 9.5 kilometres are all in the Kyogle Council area, but it has an extremely difficult financial situation and does not have the funds to complete the work. The expected cost is \$1.3 million.

Over the years many politicians have looked at this road, including, on 24 February 1998, the Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member for The Entrance. I have received many letters supporting the completion of the sealing of the road. One letter, which was dated 19 May 1998, was from Brian Thompson, the retired principal of Kyogle High School, who wrote of the value of the work. Mr Thompson stated:

The reason to complete this task is not simply a selfish local one. This road leads through some of the most scenic parts of the Tweed and Richmond areas.

On the east, the magnificent Nightcap Ranges with the Lion's Head and Blue Knob. To the west is the remarkable scarp of the McPherson Range, providing scenery unrivalled in Australia.

It is truly the best tourist road for the happy wanderer who has time to bring a car through here.

A brief run up the side road to the Mount Burrell area gives people an informative view of how to live in this natural environment, while a drive into the Doon Doon Valley and the Midginbil area brings anyone who wishes, to excellent accommodation and picnic areas near the Clarrie Hall Dam.

This is quite apart from seeing Mount Warning from its best sides and having the opportunity to travel to Nimbin via Lillian Rock and Blue Knob.

Further over, the little village of Cawongla has a fine pottery business.

The road leads into Kyogle by the best view of Fawcetts Plain and a great view from the top of the Cawongla Range.

Thus this route has become a favourite of the slow travelling tourist, and would be a major route for those looking at the scenery if it was sealed all the way.

Even now, a lot of people travel this road and many tow caravans to miss the hectic and difficult Pacific Highway.

It avoids the Burringbah Range and many other busy areas near Byron Bay and Ballina.

The road is a way to Brisbane for locals. It is just 205 kilometres from Kyogle to the centre of Brisbane. It also gives travellers many options.

Those who turn off to Nimbin and Lismore have options of going west to the New England Highway along the Bruxner Highway to Tenterfield, or joining the Pacific Highway at Woodburn or Grafton.

If you travel to Kyogle it is possible to follow the excellent Summerland Way to Casino and Grafton or divert from Casino to Tenterfield, again by the Bruxner Highway.

Clearly, it could be an excellent alternative light traffic route for many cars.

This road would bring business into the centre of Murwillumbah as well as Kyogle and Casino.

All places must benefit.

Of course, Kyogle does not claim to be the gateway to the rainforest for nothing. It truly is just that. This road is the stepping off point for a visit to the beautiful Border Ranges and the fabulous scenery and walks found in them.

Kyogle is about 100 kilometres from the Coolangatta airport.

A day trip from the Gold Coast into the Border Ranges via Kyogle is a very pleasant expedition.

Sealing the last 9 kilometres of the road to Kyogle would open this opportunity up very much more. You do not need a 4 wheel drive to visit the Border Ranges.

In addition, a round trip to Kyogle and then up along the Lion's Road to Beaudesert and across to Nerang is a lovely day jaunt that should be enjoyed by many more people.

The options for scenery in Kyogle, Woodenbong, Mount Lindesay areas are many. We just need people to enjoy them.

They could also use the home stay accommodation that is growing up in the area and no doubt would increase with demand. Local farming people are always interested in doing more for their district.

Honourable members will agree that that letter clearly illustrates the attractions of the road. A short

section of this road, which is of great economic and social value, remains to be completed and it is within the power of the Minister for Road and the Treasurer to supply the needed funding. I again ask them for their support for this important project.

DEATH OF Mr PETER DALAMANGAS

Mr IEMMA (Hurstville) [5.53 p.m.]: I continue the remarks I commenced on 28 May concerning the death of Peter Dalamangas. I ask the House to compare and contrast the lack of action and lack of interest on the part of police in bringing to justice those responsible for Peter's death with the actions of police in relation to Peter's brother, James. James awoke eight hours after the incident and found himself in hospital with his parents at his side. The police arrived, and he was arrested and dragged from his hospital bed to the police station where he was charged. His parents objected and were warned not to obstruct or hinder police. James was charged with assaulting a security guard at the casino. Why was that action so immediate? Where was James going to go? He had just woken from a coma, his brother was dead, and his parents were by his side. He was hardly likely to skip the State or the country to avoid police in relation to a charge of assaulting a security guard.

I ask members to compare and contrast that with the lack of interest and lack of action by the police in bringing to justice those responsible for Peter's death. I am referring to the sorts of matters that hundreds of thousands of viewers have seen on *A Current Affair* during the past few months. Other questions need to be asked in light of the Coroner's decision to have the body of Peter Dalamangas exhumed. Who authorised the police officer on the morning of 31 January to present advice to the Coroner that Peter had died of a heart attack? What was the basis for that conclusion and what medical qualifications or forensic skills did the police officer responsible for that report have to enable him to determine that death was caused by a heart attack?

Why did the police fail to secure the crime scene, in contravention of standard police procedure? Why did the police fail to isolate witnesses, in contravention of standard police procedure? Why did police allow casino staff to order cleaners to clean away the crime scene and hence destroy potentially vital forensic evidence? Why did police wait until the appearance on *A Current Affair* of key witnesses to interview them even after they had been given their names on the morning of Peter's death? Where are video cassettes CCA299 and CC299? During the past four months the police have promised on at least five occasions that the family and their solicitor would be able to view those two video cassettes.

The family, relying on that undertaking, engaged an independent forensic medical expert from Victoria and flew him to Sydney to view the critical video tapes, only to have the police renege on previous agreements to allow the material to be viewed. The family needs its forensic expert to view that material so that he can prepare independent medical reports. The Coroner's decision to have Peter's body exhumed highlights the importance the expert viewing that material. As I have said, on at least five occasions the police have reneged. Earlier the police asserted that the tapes existed but have given various excuses as to why they could not be viewed.

The most recent advice, which was provided to the family on 21 May, is that the police assert that the tapes do not exist. The tapes were taken from a critical angle of the incident which resulted in Peter's death. This Keystone Cops situation has existed since Peter's death; it must stop and must be investigated by relevant authorities. I also ask whether all primary surveillance videotapes and enhancement photographs have been provided to the Director of Public Prosecutions as part of the police brief. The family alleges that they have not, and if that is so there are some serious questions to be answered about the conduct of the police officers involved. An article in the *Sun-Herald* stated that Superintendent Donald Graham, who is in charge of Central police station, is under investigation by internal affairs for having, among other things, received free show tickets from casino management.

Have any of his officers who attended on the morning of Peter's death received free show tickets? If so, are they being investigated by internal affairs? This whole sordid matter has resulted in the Coroner ordering the exhumation of the body of Peter Dalamangas because of the incompetent advice that has been provided by police from the beginning. This matter has caused enormous distress to the family. I ask the Police Integrity Commission and the Commissioner of Police to end the farce that has been called an investigation into the death of Peter Dalamangas, to intervene and get appropriate action under way. [*Time expired.*]

RAILWAY SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [5.58 p.m.]: A constituent of mine, Mrs Crowley, a Legacy widow aged 80 years and disabled, recently sought to make a rail journey. Her letter of 4 June stated:

I had contacted your office earlier to make sure I would receive assistance on that train. You in turn received assurance that I would from the Railway Dept. and that someone from

there would be in touch with me. A lady rang and spoke with me and also assured me that I would be taken care of.

Accordingly, on 21 April my constituent had her son drive her to Central railway station to put her on the train. She writes then of what happened to her. She asked where she should go, and she was told where to stand. As she walks with the assistance of a mobile walking unit she asked for assistance to get on the train. In her letter she said:

I said, please will you take my overnight bag, that I had a wheel walker and would need assistance on to the train, he shrugged and said come on and walked into the carriage. I then asked the cleaners, and they said they couldn't help me, by that time another steward came along, and I asked him for help [to get on the train] and was told that there were only 5 of them and they didn't have time to put people onto the trains. I told him that I had been assured by yourselves and also the station master that I would get help, and he said uh I don't feel too well of a morning until I have had coffee. Another older passenger by this time had my bag and he helped me on the train. The second steward stood aside, and I said to him, I am going to report this.

When the woman neared her destination she asked for assistance to get off the train. She then wrote:

... he would not answer me and kept me waiting until we were nearly at the station and he came along and said, come on up here, and he grabbed my bag. And I am struggling, and he then came back for my "walker" and I followed. He helped me off the train. I was so distressed and unsure of what would happen on a return journey I came back by plane on the 20th May 1998.

A disabled woman was refused assistance to get on the train at Central station, despite earlier arrangements made by my office with rail staff. She was then treated in that belittling fashion when she went to get off the train, the steward making her wait until the last minute before telling her whether he would assist her. The woman also wrote to me about a 78-year-old relative who, a couple of months ago, came from Melbourne on the express which was to arrive at midnight. That person, also a female, was not assisted by staff to get on the train, and a young male passenger had to help her and stow her baggage. As she approached her stop she asked the steward for assistance. Mrs Crowley wrote to me as follows:

He said no, I didn't put [the luggage] there and I am not obliged to get it down, and the train is not stopping at Henty you know. She said, I have to get off there and he said, uh, we might slow down and you will have to jump.

I repeat that a 78-year-old woman was treated in this way. It is of extreme concern that passengers on the rail system are treated in that way. It was because of the treatment of Mrs Crowley's relative that she sought the assistance of my office to ring the State

Rail Authority before she booked passage on the XPT for Tuesday, 21 April 1998. She then had the experience about which I have just told the House. This woman is a Legacy widow of 80 years and she is disabled. The treatment she was afforded is disgraceful. I have written to the Minister for Transport and asked him to investigate the matter. I have written to Mrs Crowley and told her that no right-thinking person could condone the treatment she received. I have assured her that I will pass on to her any explanation given by the Minister for Transport.

FIRST UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

Ms MEAGHER (Cabramatta) [6.03 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of honourable members an important event that is being commemorated on Friday around the world and at no less a place than the Parliamentary Theatre. Friday is the First United Nations International Day in Support of the Victims of Torture. Honourable members may be aware of an organisation commonly referred to as STARTTS, the Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. STARTTS, which is organising Friday's function in Parliament House, is based in Carramar and is famous for the vital service it provides to refugees who have settled in our country. It helps them to overcome the trauma and torture they have endured in their home countries. It has also assisted them in accessing education and the services they need to become productive members of Australian society.

Most of the work carried out by STARTTS generates little publicity and many people are not even aware of its existence. However, it has proven to be of immeasurable value to those whom it has helped. Many of its clients are children who have come to Australia with their families, trying to overcome the atrocities of war. The events of this Friday will recognise the suffering experienced by victims of torture and trauma throughout the world. The friends of STARTTS have organised speakers, including the Hon. Elizabeth Evatt, to highlight this day and remind us all about victims of torture and trauma as well as the role of the United Nations in treating them and addressing their plight.

Despite the United Nations convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment coming into force on 28 June 1987, torture continues on a worldwide basis. It is clear that a greatly enhanced effort by governments and organisations to maintain domestic laws and international human rights conventions is

needed. In December 1997 a proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly resolved to:

Call upon all Governments, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights and other United Nations bodies and agencies as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to commemorate on 26th June 1998—the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

As well as acknowledging the significance of this day to many Australians, particularly those who have migrated here as refugees and as victims of torture, this day acknowledges that conflict and injustice continue to create more victims. Recognition and remembrance are the most important steps to finding solutions to the problems that result from torture and conflict, as well as their causes. As Australians we have a proud tradition of recognising the sacrifice and suffering of our predecessors and those who have built our nation's character through their contribution in times of adversity.

By remembering and recognising its history and its sacrifices our nation has built upon those experiences and healed the wounds of the past whilst remembering the lessons history has taught us. Our recognition of the experience and suffering of our torture and trauma survivors is a vital step in their rehabilitation. We cannot hope to heal their physical and emotional wounds without first recognising this suffering and providing comfort and understanding.

The Cabramatta area has a high proportion of people from parts of the world currently suffering from or recovering from conflict. A proportion have arrived here as refugees and survivors of systematic or State-sponsored persecution. They came to settle in Cabramatta because the housing is more affordable and because they wanted to live amongst other new Australians from similar cultural or language backgrounds. STARTTS clients include people from the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East, South-east Asia, Africa, Afghanistan and Latin America. A large proportion of those clients, 36 per cent, are under 25 years of age.

They experience all the usual problems that young people experience whilst growing up. But their lives are complicated by traumatic experiences in their original environments, as well as the obvious problems and challenges posed by a new language and culture. The current success of STARTTS in my local community is testament to the hard work of the staff, many of whom are migrants themselves, and their commitment to their work. A recent client of STARTTS who came to Australia with his wife

and young daughter from a country of conflict described the service in the following way:

It was instrumental in gaining trust in humans once again and it is a lifeline for us and other refugees as we could access the services we needed even though we were still in the early stages of learning English.

I invite all members and staff to attend the forum this Friday at 2.00 p.m. in the Parliamentary Theatre and witness themselves one aspect of the work of STARTTS in assisting the victims of torture and trauma. I also invite them to join the United Nations efforts to gain recognition of the worldwide atrocities of torture and trauma.

SEPTIC TANK INSPECTION FEES

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes) [6.08 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the septic tank inspection fees that have been imposed on my constituents in Taree and in the areas administered by Great Lakes Council and Gloucester Shire Council. On Monday a meeting was held in the council chambers in my electorate to discuss the imposition of the fees. I understand that the fees resulted from a motion moved at a Shires Association meeting that called for the implementation of septic tank inspections. It was claimed that the fees resulted from the Wallis Lake oyster scare. I want to defend my electorate and make it clear that no substantive finding has been made that septic tanks caused the Wallis Lake oyster scare. As far as I am concerned, the oyster is still innocent. However, that matter will be determined in other places.

I take umbrage at people who continually claim that the inspection fees resulted from the Wallis Lake oyster scare. The fee has been imposed on those who can ill afford it and because of that it must be addressed. My colleague in the other place the Hon. Duncan Gay has called on the Minister to re-evaluate the matter. I make that request in this House. Any number of anomalies are associated with septic tanks. These toilets can be as simple as a pit-drop toilet on the top of a hill that a hobby farmer might use once or twice a month, a normal septic tank for residences, larger septic systems for caravan parks and Envirocycle systems. The latter system merely highlights the foolishness of this inspection charge, because under the maintenance agreement Envirocycle representatives must test the system four times a year and provide written certificates of inspection. Council inspectors will still have to test the system. I have copies of a number of newspaper clippings about the impact of this fee. Councillor Eric Richardson has been leading the

charge in Taree to have this matter rationalised. An article in the *Manning River Times* stated:

A War widow told Councillor Eric Richardson she could not afford the proposed septic tank charges—the money would have to come from her food bill.

In that same article Councillor Richardson is quoting as saying:

Someone told me 10 per cent of a pensioner's pension would go to this fee.

If ever there was a reason to reconsider the imposition of the fee, that is it. The Minister has many questions to answer about the introduction of this regulation in country New South Wales. With no disrespect to the Minister, I suspect that the electorate of Coogee would not have one septic tank. My electorate has at least 3,000 septic tanks. This charge is a heavy imposition on country people and, dare I say it, is yet another tax on the rural sector. The Minister should reconsider the introduction of the fee and consult with country people, country councils and people involved in the industry, such as representatives from Envirocycle, to establish a realistic level of testing the septic tank system. The environment must be protected, but the procedure to ensure that protection must be rationalised so that those on war pensions and similar incomes will not have to pay these inspection fees from money they have allocated to pay their food bills.

The town and country water sewerage scheme must again come to the fore. This Government has cut that scheme by 33 per cent. The coalition Government used that wonderful service extensively in country areas. The former Minister for Land and Water Conservation, the Hon. Kim Yeadon, was forever telling people in my electorate how wonderful it would be when he gave Nabiatic funding for the town and water sewerage scheme. The Government said it would accelerate the Nabiatic sewerage scheme as a result of the Wallis Lake matter. The last budget allocated \$500,000 for that purpose, but that will not be enough to even get the plans completed. The scheme will alleviate septic tank problems in many, but not all, parts of country New South Wales. The Government should consider solving sewerage problems in all rural areas rather than imposing fees on war widows who will have to meet the costs of septic tank inspection fees from money they have set aside to purchase food.

WOY WOY PENINSULA EMERGENCY

Ms ANDREWS (Peats) [6.13 p.m.]: Last Monday evening, 22 June, a major disaster was narrowly avoided on the Woy Woy peninsula when

approximately 3,000 litres of petrol escaped from a road tanker. The accident occurred at the corner of Ocean Beach Road and Rawson Road, Woy Woy, which is a busy intersection in the midst of an industrial and residential area. The quick response to the emergency 000 call helped to avoid a major catastrophe. The emergency call was received at 7.09 p.m. and the Woy Woy fire brigade, under the command of Captain Stuart Richter, arrived at the scene at 7.14 p.m.—a response time of a mere five minutes. Firefighters were faced with the daunting task of cleaning a petrol spillage that had already begun to enter the drainage system and was travelling towards Brisbane Water. Woy Woy firefighters immediately set about damming the area surrounding the escaped fuel and isolating valves on the petrol tanker to contain the spillage.

Further assistance was sought from surrounding central coast fire stations and quick responses came from Ettalong, which is under the captaincy of well-known local resident Vince Wiegold, as well as Saratoga and Wyong fire brigades. Specialist Fire Brigades Hazardous Material—HAZMAT—response teams from Newcastle and Sydney were promptly on the scene to render support. Those specialist firefighters used sophisticated measuring equipment to identify the more dangerous pockets of fuel so that correct strategies and tactics could be employed to prevent ignition and facilitate recovery of the fuel. Approximately 1,000 litres of fuel were recovered—an outstanding effort. It is worth mentioning that in cleaning up this spill New South Wales Fire Brigades used its recently developed incident control system—ICS—to manage what became a protracted incident extending across a wide area.

Operations were carried out in extreme weather conditions with heavy rainfalls and prevailing strong winds making things most difficult. To reduce the possibility of fire, booms were laid across drains and foam was applied to the main spillage. Three drainage outfalls were dammed to minimise the potential for fuel to enter the environmentally sensitive Brisbane Water. Had that operation not been carried out so swiftly, the spillage may have easily made its way into the nearby Brisbane Water, resulting in the destruction of numerous oyster leases and severely hindering recreational fishing and numerous water sport activities.

Overall operations were under the control of New South Wales Fire Brigades relieving central zone superintendent Jon Langshaw and the exercise was co-ordinated by training officer Alan Dixon.

Assisting in the operation were members of the Ambulance Service, police officers from Brisbane Water local area command, Environment Protection Authority officers and Gosford City Council employees. Particular mention must be made of the dedicated service rendered by Mr Wayne Reid of Woy Woy depot, other emergency services personnel and the petrol tanker driver. More than 40 firefighters attached to New South Wales Fire Brigades were involved in the mopping up exercise that continued all night and until 10.00 a.m. the following day. The area was declared safe at 9.00 a.m., but firefighters maintained a watching brief for several more hours.

Superintendent Jon Langshaw was forthcoming in his praise of local residents for their tremendous community spirit in offering their homes as staging points for firefighting crews throughout the night and for displaying good sense in keeping away from the scene, enabling those involved to get on with their jobs. On Tuesday, 23 June, Ken Thompson, regional commander of the north area and Assistant Commissioner of the New South Wales Fire Brigades contacted me to provide a report on the incident. That courtesy was very much appreciated. To everyone involved in this extensive exercise and who displayed great courage and deep devotion to duty, I extend my sincere thanks on behalf of the Peats electorate.

KURNELL TO LA PEROUSE FERRY SERVICE

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [6.18 p.m.]: I should like to raise two aspects about modern Australia's birthplace. The first relates to a sea link. Proposals are under way for a Kurnell to La Perouse ferry service. I have received a letter from the Sutherland Shire Tourism Association, which states:

We are seeking \$20,000 from you—

the Premier—

as member for Maroubra towards an engineering study for the re-establishment of wharves and ferry services between La Perouse and Kurnell.

The letter continued:

From the years of federation until 1974 a ferry operated between Kurnell and La Perouse. In 1974 the Kurnell wharf was destroyed by storms and the ferry disbanded.

In 1997 interest in the ferry service began to grow through Randwick City Council and other community groups. In 1998 a task force was established with representatives from Randwick City Council, Sutherland Shire Tourism Association, Sutherland Shire Council, Sutherland District

Chamber of Commerce and Industry, La Perouse Community Development Program. This task force is now pursuing the relevant studies for the construction of the wharves and associated infrastructure.

This task force has developed a consultancy brief for an initial engineering study. This study will investigate such issues as:

- Identification of several possible sites for wharves on both sides (La Perouse, Kurnell), suitable for recreational boating and ferry use.
- Development of drawings of several different styles of wharves taking into consideration the original styles and sizes, if appropriate. Provide drawings on disk where possible.
- Development of cost estimates of wharves allowing for a range of vessel requirements and wharf styles.
- Production of maps showing location of wharves and the different options.
- Review the environmental factors which need to be considered for the construction of both wharves.
- Review existing geotechnical information. Where additional information is required, following approval from relevant authorities, engage appropriately qualified specialists to provide extra detail.
- Identification of all relevant statutory organisations with relevant jurisdiction for the construction, planning or granting of permission for the wharves and any other bodies which should be involved.
- Development of a clear and achievable implementation strategy for the construction of the wharves. Identification of funding opportunities for construction of the wharves.
- Evaluation of economic benefits and tourism potential for Randwick and Sutherland Council areas.
- conduct community consultation.

They are worthwhile objectives. As I have said in the past, for too long the birthplace of modern Australia has been neglected. During the past two years the Federal member, Stephen Mutch, and I have been instrumental in assisting with the organisation of the Kurnell community festival. The other approach by road to Kurnell is over the appropriately named Captain Cook Bridge. As I have stated in this House on a number of occasions, when one has crossed the bridge one is confronted by a large median strip. The Roads and Traffic Authority was scheduled to provide funding so that the whole area could be landscaped. At the present time it remains an eyesore.

The council has been instrumental in drawing up plans for the landscaping but only a fraction of the necessary work has been done. Anyone passing that area would appreciate that a great deal remains to be done. A number of inquiries have been made

and I have written to the Roads and Traffic Authority seeking to have that area improved. I am seeking to regenerate interest in the birthplace of modern Australia by providing, first, a ferry service and, secondly, enhancement of the approaches to the Sutherland Shire. Both initiatives should be warmly welcomed.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

Mr McMANUS (Bulli) [6.23 p.m.]: As a former alderman I am reluctant to involve myself in the decision-making processes of local government. However, I do so for two reasons. The first is that a development application has been lodged with Sutherland Shire Council, No. DA9804-1, relating to a site at 971-985 and 995 Old Princes Highway, Engadine. The proposed development is for two-storey, three-storey and four-storey walk-up units, and a six-storey tower residential development containing 100 units. In my view that development is seriously out of character with previous developments in the Engadine-Heathcote region. The second reason I have become involved is the lack of intestinal fortitude of some of the Liberal councillors on Sutherland Shire Council to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Two of the councillors involved are Councillor White, the Deputy Mayor of the Shire, and Councillor Redmond, who both live in Engadine. A monumental blunder is about to happen if council permits this development to go ahead. I am concerned at the sleight-of-hand that is talking place in the shire even before the councillors have dealt with the application. Two major issues are involved. One is that some councillors in the Engadine region have been saying that the development is a Department of Housing project. I have asked the Minister for Housing to be present in the Chamber to refute those statements. The second major issue is that the councillors have to be responsible for their own actions.

For many years local government in this State has been calling for autonomy and the right for councils to make their own decisions in relation to development applications. Because the proposed development is unfavourable, the council is attempting to switch the play to make certain that the State Government gets the blame. I am reluctant to step in but I shall do so to ensure that the people of the Engadine-Heathcote region know exactly who is footing the bill. The situation in that regard is that the Sutherland Shire Council, so far as I am aware, has exercised its rights under the Local Government Act. However, as soon as the issue became

controversial they attempted to shift the responsibility to someone else.

Some years ago the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning became aware that Department of Housing land at Cooper Street, Engadine, had been rezoned under a former Liberal Government. The Minister stepped in quickly to ensure that unwanted development was not permitted in that environmentally sensitive area. It has been retained as Cooper Street park for the benefit of the residents of the Engadine area. The same councillors who demanded that the Minister take action in regard to Cooper Street a couple of years ago are now silent about the monumental blunder that is about to be perpetrated on my constituents. I am will not let it happen. I hope the Minister will be able to enlighten the House as to the current position and will ensure that the Government will watch carefully what the councillors of the Sutherland shire are up to. I am not prepared to stand idly by. I propose to inform the constituents of Engadine and Heathcote that if they are not careful the council will approve unwanted developments in the region.

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [6.27 p.m.]: The honourable member for Bulli should be congratulated on his efforts on behalf of his constituents. At the outset I confirm that the Department of Housing has absolutely no interest in this site and rumours being circulated should be ignored. With regard to the proposed development, it would be putting it mildly to suggest that Sutherland Shire Council is drawing somewhat of a long bow if it seeks to blame anyone but itself for the zoning that permits such a development on the site in question. The fact is that the local environmental plan is the council's plan, and the six-storey height limit is contained in council's development control plan. It is part of council's residential strategy, which it prepared allegedly in consultation with the community, to obtain the exemption which it has achieved under State Environmental Planning Policy No. 53.

Honourable members will recall that when I became Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning in May 1995 I repealed the previous Government's urban consolidation laws and asked all councils to prepare their own residential strategies. By and large Sutherland Shire Council, together with 53 other councils, managed to do that. Sutherland Shire Council certainly prepared a residential strategy and it developed its own rules. The site conforms with council's rules and the application to develop the site is being made apparently in conformity with council's rules. Instead of trying to blame someone

else, instead of trying to promote a scare campaign about who might be purchasing the site, council should look to its own levels of professionalism and determine whether it is doing anything more than passing the buck and deceiving members of its own community.

NATIONAL PARK POLICING

Mr O'DOHERTY (Ku-ring-gai) [6.29 p.m.]: I raise an issue on behalf of the residents of North Wahroonga, particularly Mr Ken Broadhead, who has written to me with considerable anger and concern about an incident that happened on the afternoon of Saturday 7 June. It was a long weekend and he was looking forward to a weekend at home. He took his dog for a walk in the same way as many residents of New South Wales. His dog is an 18-month-old desexed female whippet. He chose to take her for a walk on a lead—and I stress "on a lead"—on the Grosvenor track, which is at the boundary of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

Members will understand, as I do, that there is a clear rule which says one is not allowed to walk dogs in a national park. That is the basis of Mr Broadhead's concern. He says that because he was walking his dog in the national park, something many residents in North Wahroonga have done for generations, he was the subject of what he describes as a paramilitary sting operation by National Parks and Wildlife Service officers. As he was walking his dog on a lead down the track he was met by a woman coming the other way with two huge black dogs not on leads. She said, "Watch out, there are national parks officers down the road." Mr Broadhead turned around to leave the park and a National Parks and Wildlife Service vehicle cut them off at the pass as it were, and an interview ensued.

The interview was an interesting process. During the interview National Parks and Wildlife Service officers photographed my constituent without his consent. They asked him for identification, which he did not have. After all, he was walking his dog on a Saturday afternoon within metres of his home. They then told him he could be prosecuted and fined a significant amount of money. He is objecting to the operation, which he describes as paramilitary in its planning and operation. He objects to the fact that residents had no forewarning about this operation. As part of the interview process he was asked whether he had seen the sign that says dogs were not allowed in the park. Any resident living near the park would probably be aware there is a sign saying no dogs are allowed, no bikes are allowed, and so on. Unlike signs erected by local

government authorities, the sign does not specify that dogs are not allowed unless they are on leads. It simply says no dogs are allowed. My constituent claims that there ought to be a more clear definition of which dogs are not allowed and under which circumstances.

The main point I make, and the point I ask the Minister to note, is this: the residents who live directly opposite the national park, within metres of it, are this community's best way of policing the perimeter of the sensitive bushland. When protected areas, such as a national park, are directly opposite a residential area, with no other buffer zone, the residents are the best environmental officers any government is likely to employ to protect the environment. Therefore, National Parks and Wildlife Service officers ought to treat those people with respect.

If the National Parks and Wildlife Service has decided, for whatever reason, that the walking of dogs in the park is of particular concern, beyond the general concern that we all share about dogs in parks—and I make it plain that I share those concerns; neither dogs nor cats should be in national parks—why does the service not do what other agencies do? Why not circularise local residents or call a meeting? Why not do a letterbox drop to educate them as to the reasons why dogs should not be in the park? Why does the service not tell the residents that it has come to its attention that residents have been walking their dogs in the park, and if the practice continues beyond a specified date they will be prosecuted? Why make it an ambush, which many residents believe to be an exercise in revenue collection?

Mr Broadhead is a member of the Rotary Club of Wahroonga. With other members of the club, he contributed to cleaning up the Grosvenor track in the recent Australia Day clean-up. He is thinking twice about doing that again. By its actions, the service has turned a good citizen, one who wanted to care for the park and who had no particular understanding of the rules relating to dogs in the park, into an enemy. That is extremely regrettable. I ask the Minister for the Environment to take particular note of what I have said and I ask the service to change its practices. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [6.34 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai for his remarks on behalf of Mr Broadhead and others in relation to the Grosvenor track. I undertake to raise those matters with the Minister for the Environment. I will ask her

to respond directly to the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai. This incident seems to me to be what my colleague in the fourth estate who is now resident in New York, Mark Riley, would use as an example of the need to apply what he would call the reasonable man test. Mark Riley, reasonable man that he is, would acknowledge that sometimes these issues should be dealt with sensibly with regard being paid to local circumstances and to local community needs.

I am sure that Mark Riley, as he is walking around Central Park with his dog, no doubt on a leash, would seek to have the reasonable man test applied to himself if he were in the same circumstances as Mr Broadhead. I know that as he leaves Central Park and crosses the road to F. A. O. Schwartz—to buy a hat for my son, which he promised to do more than three months ago—he will keep his dog on the lead. Of course, as a reasonable man, he will deliver on the promise he made to me before departing for New York. He will know that I, as another reasonable man, have upheld my part of the bargain: I have recorded his name in *Hansard* forever more. As one reasonable man to another: Mark, I expect that hat to be delivered posthaste—at your earliest convenience.

AUBURN HOSPITAL

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [6.36 p.m.]: I raise a matter of great importance to my electorate. Some unscrupulous individuals have made statements to my constituents as well as to hospital staff at Auburn hospital that there is a plan, first, to close the accident and emergency department at the hospital and, ultimately, to close the hospital. That claim has caused great consternation amongst the medical and nursing staff as well as the ancillary staff of this fine hospital. In 1988, when I became the member for Auburn, there were three hospitals in my electorate: St Joseph's Hospital, which was run by the Sisters of Mercy; Lidcombe Hospital, a fine hospital that provided specialist treatment; and Auburn Hospital.

By 1992 Lidcombe Hospital and St Joseph's Hospital had disappeared, although St Joseph's is now a rehabilitation and palliative care centre. I commend the nuns for the great work they do for the elderly and for the good work they do in rehabilitation. St Joseph's is the hospital at which my mother died one morning at 4.00 a.m. when I had to turn off the life support system. It is the hospital that my father and brothers attended on numerous occasions when I was seriously injured in a car accident in 1954. So that hospital holds many strong memories for me.

Last night the honourable member for Sutherland, a new member of this House, and the honourable member for Georges River spoke about the lack of hospitals in their region. One thing the Labor Government and the Minister for Health have not done is close any local hospitals that provide acute care. For the benefit of Dr Peter Cone, the medical and nursing staff, and the unscrupulous people spreading these rumours, I will read to the House what the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health said about Auburn Hospital in a recent press release. The media release stated:

NO CHANGES TO AUBURN ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY

The Accident and Emergency Department at Auburn Hospital is remaining open.

"I want to reassure the staff of the hospital and the community that Auburn's Accident and Emergency Department will not be closed," said Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

"In no way would I consider any proposal that involved this measure."

"Auburn Hospital will continue to meet the local health needs of its community."

"It was the former Coalition Government that closed hospitals. The Carr [Labor] Government is committed to providing high quality local health care."

"The Accident and Emergency department at the hospital provides a valuable service for families in the surrounding area and that service will continue."

"I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleague, Member for Auburn, Peter Nagle."

"His on-going interest and support for the hospital and the people it serves is invaluable," said Dr Refshauge.

I remind honourable members that the Auburn electorate has almost 75,000 constituents. With redistribution of the boundaries, the electorate will have up to 80,000 constituents. In the Auburn municipality, of which the hospital is part, live people of 48 different nationalities, excluding those of English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish backgrounds. With a large ethnic population, the hospital daily faces the need to communicate with people who may not be able to speak English. People from some communities are recognised as being very volatile, particularly if they have difficulty in getting their message across. The hospital and its nursing staff—and I particularly praise the staff of the accident and emergency department—do a magnificent job.

The accident and emergency department last year took in 21,000 cases, of which half needed acute care in the hospital. Only 400 cases required going away for specialised treatment. That is a fine

record. The Auburn hospital should not close. Read my lips: the hospital will not close, the accident and emergency department will not close and there will not be a change of status. I commend the Minister for Health for his press release, which will put to rest once and for all the scurrilous rumours that have emanated from coalition members. The hospital will remain open.

Mr KNOWLES (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [6.41 p.m.]: I join the honourable member for Auburn in commending the Minister for Health for providing an assurance to Auburn constituents. It is a scurrilous and disgraceful act of a very desperate Opposition that it would spread such rumours in the Auburn community. There is no doubt that there will be no changes to the Auburn hospital accident and emergency department. Without doubt, that has come about because of this Government's recognition of the needs of western Sydney residents, particularly those in the Auburn electorate, and its determination to provide them with quality services. Of course, that is due in no small part to the efforts of the honourable member for Auburn, who has represented his community diligently and tenaciously in this Parliament for many years.

It is shameful for the honourable member for Auburn to be required to put the record straight in this Chamber, to counter the lies and deceit of those who seek to create fear amongst people in the community who are less well informed, less able to form opinions and rely on their members of Parliament for honest, straightforward and decent advice. It is about time that people in this State recognised that we need people such as the honourable member for Auburn, who delivers honest and genuine service to the community, as opposed to those who would tear down the fabric of a community simply to create dissension and disruption for their own base political gains. Nobody gets away with that these days. The honourable member for Auburn in raising this matter in the House continues the good work for which he is well known in standing up for the rights of constituents of the municipality and electorate of Auburn.

Private members' statements noted.

BILLS RETURNED

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Duties Amendment (Managed Investments) Bill
Police Integrity Commission Amendment Bill
Public Sector Management Amendment Bill

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 D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [6.44 p.m.]: I welcome this opportunity to participate in debate on the Carr Government's last budget before its defeat at the next election. The essence to this year's budget is a \$800 million increase in tax revenue, a \$500 million cut in capital works spending and an overly ambitious asset sales program. The \$800 million increased tax revenue will take, on average, \$363 extra out of the pockets of every New South Wales family this year. Far from putting families first, as the Treasurer claimed, this budget puts taxes first and families last. The budget makes New South Wales undisputedly the highest taxed State in Australia, with taxes having increased by a massive 33 per cent under the Carr Government. New South Wales taxes are now 11 per cent higher per person than they are in Victoria.

This year's budget forecasts a 5.7 per cent increase in tax revenue, including a \$103 million increase in gambling taxes. This State will have to do something about the amount of tax raised through gambling, for good social reasons. There will also be a \$24 million increase in driver's licence fees. As coalition spokesman on land and water conservation, I intend to make some comments about that part of the budget. Almost all clients of the Department of Land and Water Conservation live in regional New South Wales. The portfolio also includes the off-budget item of forestry. This is a disappointing budget for regional New South Wales in every respect. The Government's policies in forestry, water and native vegetation have all cost hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars in investment in regional New South Wales.

The Treasurer took great pride in announcing that the Carr Government has declared 49 new national parks and reserves in the past three years. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, the Government plans to declare another 52 national parks and wilderness areas before Christmas. That will make a total of 101 new national parks in New South Wales under this Government. Whilst at first glance that may seem to be a good thing for the environment, the Carr Government is wrong to think that its environmental credentials will be measured in the electorate by how many national parks and wilderness areas it has created. There is much more to good environmental resource management than burdening the National Parks and Wildlife Service with extra national parks when it cannot manage what it has now.

Whilst the Carr Government is busy declaring new national parks by locking up State forests and forcing country people onto the dole, it is cutting vital programs. For example, there has been a 33 per cent reduction in the past three years in country water and sewerage programs, blue-green algae and ricercare management funding has been halved from \$7.8 million to \$3.4 million in 1998-99, and 32 jobs in catchment and floodplain management have been lost. Control of noxious weeds and feral animals has gone on the backburner. Simply transferring parts of the existing Crown estate, State forests, into a different category of national parks and wilderness produces little, if any, environment benefit.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation comprehensive flora and fauna study in the Murwillumbah management area indicated that there is very little difference in biodiversity between logged and unlogged forests. Simply changing the name of a reserve from "State forest" to "national park" is not of huge environment benefit at the end of the day, although this Government would like us all to believe that is the case. The Government has much more pressing and challenging issues to deal with, such as air pollution in the city, population pressures in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Basin and fixing up water quality in the rivers. It should also increase funding on country water and sewerage schemes, rather than decreasing the funding, to stop pollution of the waterways.

Even the Minister for Land and Water Conservation on 7 May 1998 in this House when responding to a question about country water and sewerage funding admitted that, "based on progress over the last two years, it is expected the current rate of funding will result in the 'backlog' being cleared in about 12 years." The Minister has said that it will take 12 years to clear the backlog of country water and sewerage schemes. The central

point I make initially is that all the new national parks may appear to be impressive in an election brochure but they provide precious little benefit, especially when one takes into account environment challenges such as water quality, pollution and dealing with country water and sewerage matters.

Country town and water supply, and sewerage scheme funding has been reduced from \$75 million when Labor came to power 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's policy is not to fund new sewerage systems that need to be put in place to cope with population growth. This adversely impacts on coastal waterways in particular. I call on the Government to review that policy. Coastal towns experiencing rapid population growth have a higher need for better sewerage schemes and therefore should be considered in a more favourable light. They should not be penalised.

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. The Minister did not deny that in the estimates committee hearings—indeed, he confirmed the figures. Budgeted staff reductions in land and vegetation management of 37 in 1998-99 are not consistent with the promise of the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation to increase human resources to make the Native Vegetation Conservation Act more workable. In response to my questions, the Minister indicated that the jobs would be lost to the corporate sector. Time will tell, but it certainly does not sit well that land and vegetation management has lost 37 people in the current budget.

Soil conservation grants are down from \$20.9 million in 1997-98 to \$17.5 million in 1998-99. Staffing in the catchment, coastal and flood plain management has been reduced from 583 people in 1997-98 to 551 people in 1998-99, a drop of 32. The Carr 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. The budget papers reveal that staff responsible for the assessment and management of Crown land will be reduced from 575 in 1997-98 to 541 in 1998-99, a reduction of 34. Capital grants in Crown land management will be reduced from \$11.2 million to \$2.8 million—a huge reduction that

reflects a weak commitment on the part of the Government to the management of the Crown estate.

A couple of years ago at the country summit, the Premier made an important promise that he would transfer 241 jobs out of Sydney into regional areas within the Department of Land and Water Conservation. Yesterday, under questioning, the Minister for Land and Water Conservation indicated that only 35 of those 241 jobs had been filled. That is a pathetic response by Labor to the needs of regional New South Wales, particularly in the public sector. As a result of the policies of the Carr Government, particularly in relation to timber—which has suffered hundreds of job losses notwithstanding it has a structural adjustment package in place—more jobs have been lost than gained. The bottom line is that many jobs, probably 800 or 900, have been lost in regional areas as a result of the Carr Government's timber policy. Its water policies also create a lot of problems, job losses and lost investment opportunities.

Staff cuts in the Department of Education and Training and the abolition of regional offices have been absolutely no help whatsoever to regional New South Wales. For example, 70 people were taken from the Lismore regional office by the Carr Government when it came to power. As I indicated, I have no doubt that the net employment contribution of the Carr Labor Government to regional areas will be negative at the conclusion of its term in March 1999. People in regional New South Wales will reward the Government—if that is the right word—by kicking it out of office. Not only has the Government failed to deliver on public sector jobs in the bush, its water policies have reduced private sector income and jobs. For example, the Australian Bureau for Agriculture and Resource Economics—ABARE—indicated today in its latest report that the Government's water policy will result in a 10 per cent loss of cotton production in Australia in 1997-98.

The estimated cost in lost exports is in the vicinity of \$200 million to \$220 million. That income is sorely needed in regional New South Wales and will not be available as a direct result of the Government's water policies. There is very little in the budget for the electorate of Ballina particularly and the north coast generally. The budget is extremely disappointing. It fails to fund much-needed additional police not just in my electorate but across the north of New South Wales. The budget fails to provide any significant educational capital works funding. Perhaps one or two new schools will be funded on the entire north coast. Under the previous coalition Government I

opened five new schools in my electorate on behalf of the Minister.

I will contrast the amount of money going into the north coast under the coalition with what is going on at the moment under the Carr Government. No announcement was made about the opening of new schools in my electorate. I am aware of only one new school proposed on the north coast, and that is at Evans Head. Good luck Evans Head! The election budget is designed to win votes in Labor marginal seats, with most funding going to Newcastle, Wollongong and western Sydney. It is especially disappointing to see that only 100 new police will be employed statewide in a force of some 16,000. The Government is talking about 100 new police across the State. But many more are needed in Byron Bay and Ballina particularly, and across other parts of the north coast generally.

It is interesting to note that in the 10 years or so that I have been the local member for Ballina the number of police at Byron Bay has substantially increased. In 1988 Ballina had about 16 officers, and by the time the coalition left office in 1995 there were about 34. In three years of the Carr Government no additional allocation of resources has been made to either of those patrols, despite a population growth and an increase in the crime rate. It is difficult to say anything positive about the budget, but I am pleased to note that the Federal and State governments are continuing their 10-year commitment to upgrade the Pacific Highway, with all major projects between Bangalow and Yelgun receiving funding.

In addition, \$1 million has been allocated to the Ballina bypass, which will enable the continuation of the project through its planning phase. The Alstonville bypass has been allocated \$750,000, which will enable only the continuation of the planning and design aspects of the project. It is disappointing because the project has been in the design and development phase for a couple of years and the environmental impact statement has been completed. In this year's budget I was hoping to see a substantial allocation to enable construction of the project to commence. Approximately \$4 million or \$5 million is needed to get the project under way, but unfortunately that was missing from the budget.

The budget also allocated \$330,000 towards a much-needed living skills centre at Ballina. Previously people have had to go to Lismore, and in some cases John Hunter Hospital, to receive renal and dialysis treatment. A 66 kilowatt substation at Mullumbimby has been allocated \$500,000. Apart from those few items nothing is in the budget for

the Ballina electorate. Contrast that with the five new schools that were opened, two new hospitals that were redeveloped and every courthouse in the electorate that was upgraded and refurbished under the previous coalition Government. I am particularly disappointed that there has been no funding for much-needed and worthy projects to build halls at Ballina primary school and Lennox Head primary school.

It is time a government addressed the issue of older schools that do not have adequate halls for things such as school assemblies. A program should be developed to specifically target and remedy the problem. New schools are designed with halls, as they should be, but older schools were not designed with a multipurpose centre or school hall, and they have to line up at the end of a queue and compete with new schools and other priorities. Inevitably, because of the way the system works, those schools go to the bottom of the heap. A separate program should allocate a certain amount of the education capital works budget to deal with that problem. Ballina primary school has more than 550 students, yet they do not have anywhere to assemble on a wet day. I put in a special plea not just for Ballina primary school and Lennox Head primary school to have halls built—they must be funded—but for a complete program to be established to provide halls for older schools which, under the current arrangements, are unlikely to be funded in the future.

The budget is very disappointing for my electorate. No extra and much-needed resources have been provided for police. There are no education capital works. The Northern Rivers Area Health Service is to receive \$161 million and it needs about \$176 million to properly service the health needs of the area it serves, so it is underfunded by about \$15 million. As a result, in February surgery at Ballina District Hospital was cut. The Government announced that it will take away the operating theatre at Mullumbimby Hospital from 30 June, causing huge concern among residents of the Brunswick Valley. Last Thursday in the town of Mullumbimby, which has a population of a little over 2,000, 800 people marched and 5,870 people signed a petition, which I lodged earlier this week, in support of the retention of the operating theatre at Mullumbimby Hospital.

The people are concerned not just about the need to protect surgical services; they are concerned that this may be the thin end of the wedge. If there is no surgery certain types of obstetric work which are likely to require surgery may not be undertaken. Accident and emergency services could be affected.

People are concerned about the domino effect. I hope that the Government will provide the \$200,000 necessary to keep the operating theatre at Mullumbimby Hospital going. It is a disappointing budget overall, statewide and across portfolios. The Government is happy to declare national parks which cost a lot of jobs in country areas to try to impress people with its green credentials but when it really counts, in relation to river quality and country town water and sewerage supplies, Government members cannot be seen for dust. Money is cut back. In my electorate at a local level the budget is the fourth disappointing budget under the Carr Government.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [7.04 p.m.]: Treasurer Egan described his fourth budget in the terms, "The eagle has landed." There is no doubt that the eagle has landed on the central coast since the election of the Carr Government in March 1995. In the Government's first budget Treasurer Egan set the fiscal parameters of the Carr Labor Government: sound, responsible government with a commitment to Labor principles and ideals, with priority being given to health, education, police, community services, public transport and roads. And this has all been achieved in the context of funding the Sydney Olympics. Following the Carr Government inheriting the Olympics, the appointment of Michael Knight as Minister for the Olympics has proved to be a masterstroke of political judgment.

The Olympic project is on target. The construction of facilities is well in advance of the record of any other Olympics in modern history. Construction is on budget and all Olympic costs are being paid for now, up front. Not a cent will be left to pay in September 2000. This has been achieved against a background of increases in the traditional Labor priority areas. For example, this year expenditure for health and hospitals will total \$6,663 million, an increase over last year's allocation of \$426 million or 6.8 per cent. That is an increase of \$1,342 million or 25.4 per cent on the 1994 coalition budget.

Statewide, \$79 million will be invested to complete new facilities, with \$1.8 million for the construction of the Long Jetty community health centre. On 11 June the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health, Dr Andrew Refshauge, visited Long Jetty to unveil plans for the new community health centre. It is anticipated that construction will commence in September, with work scheduled to be completed by February-March 1999. Services to be delivered at Long Jetty include those involved with mental health, community nursing, speech therapy, child health, drug and alcohol victims, youth health,

podiatry, women's health, sexual health, needle exchange, child physiotherapy, nutrition and an after-hours general practitioner service developed in liaison with local practitioners.

The Long Jetty community health centre will be a centre of excellence that is easily accessible and, most importantly, tailored to meet the needs of the local community. Some \$320,000 was also allocated for improvements to the Long Jetty inpatient unit. The Long Jetty site has 40 years of rich history within the local community. Extension and provision of new services to the Long Jetty site was a commitment given by the Minister for Health prior to the last election and I am pleased that the commitment has now been honoured in full.

I acknowledge the support of the matron and manager of the Long Jetty centre, Margaret Curthoys; the members of the hospital auxiliary, so ably led by President Thelma Peck, who have contributed to the centre over decades; and Helen and Geoff Ambler of the Berkeley Vale and Chittaway progress association, who over 1993-94 gathered more than 15,000 signatures on a petition which was presented to the Parliament in support of the retention of the Long Jetty facility and the expansion of its services. All these people attended the unveiling ceremony by the Deputy Premier. I am delighted that they were there because it was an opportunity to publicly acknowledge their contribution to the facility.

Other good news in health on the central coast includes \$6 million to build new community health centres at Erina and Tuggerah and \$5.2 million for a new day-surgery unit at Wyong Hospital. I pay special tribute to the efforts of the honourable member for Wyong, Paul Crittenden, who has followed in the footsteps of his predecessor Harry Moore in his unflinching commitment to the constant addition of services at Wyong Hospital. The central coast stretches some 60 kilometres from Broken Bay to the southern shores of Lake Macquarie and it is essential that medical and health services are distributed in a mix that best services the local communities. The Carr Government is actively fulfilling this goal, as evidenced in this budget and the previous three budgets.

Another traditional Labor budget priority is education. Again the Carr Government continues to increase its commitment to education in its fourth budget. The total education budget is \$6.809 billion, an increase of \$338 million or 5.2 per cent on last year's budget, and an increase of \$1.2 billion or 21.4 per cent on the 1994 coalition budget. Again, new funding has been allocated for facilities, quality

resources and programs for students on the central coast.

In The Entrance electorate, \$1.12 million has been allocated to complete the new \$4.7 million Narara Public School at Newling Street, Narara. This school relocation is in response to significant student population growth and involves a move from a turn-of-the-century school site to a new state-of-the-art facility on a landscaped site in what can only be described as a magnificent location. The existing school is landlocked on a site on the old Pacific Highway with major access and related problems. The new school will be completed by the fourth term, with classes beginning in the first term of 1999.

Some \$1.3 million was allocated to begin work on a new hall, upgrading the existing school and consolidating the primary and infants departments onto one site at The Entrance Public School. This \$2.8 million project will provide a hall, new classrooms and toilets, and will upgrade administration and existing classrooms. The project is expected to be completed by the year 2000. The Entrance Public School is one of the few public schools on the central coast without a school hall. Co-location of the infants and primary departments has begun a process of construction of new classrooms, new facilities and, most important, a new school hall. These new works will provide a major improvement to the quality of resources at the school.

I should like to personally thank the Minister for Education and Training, John Aquilina, for his continued support for the provision of new education facilities on the central coast and in The Entrance electorate. The Entrance Public School has been a major issue for me in the time that I have been the local member. The Minister personally took an interest in the project and in the budget has honoured his commitment to me. He has always been available and is sympathetic to the needs of the area generated by the ongoing growth and the need for renewal of some of the turn-of-the-century public schools in my electorate.

Some \$4.39 million was allocated for the next stage of the joint TAFE-university precinct at Ourimbah. The project includes learning space for child studies, general classrooms, computing facilities, science laboratories and administration facilities. It also provides for part refurbishment of the second floor of the library building to provide additional space. The stage two programs have been identified as priority areas for the central coast. This is part of a \$12.51 million project, which is due for

completion in April 1999. This is a unique facility on the central coast and hopefully management of the site will receive pleasing reports in the not-too-distant future.

Some \$1.8 million has been allocated to continue stage two of Ourimbah Public School. The project involves the replacement of long-term demountables with permanent accommodation at a cost of \$3.13 million and is also due for completion in 1999. Ourimbah Public School is on a fascinating school site with its own environmental bush and habitat walks nestled into the forested hillside. The school dates back to the 1860s—the period of the American Civil War—and was originally known as Blue Gum Flat Public School. Like Tuggerah, Lisarow and Narara public schools, it has some of the oldest working buildings on the central coast.

The central coast school communities have also benefited from the back-to-school allowance, the additional 2,250 new teacher positions, allocation of \$65 million to literacy initiatives and \$68 million funding for the technology-in-schools program. The Minister for Education and Training has revitalised education on the central coast and is quickly catching up on the area's backlog of outstanding works. Through his actions he has demonstrated his understanding and commitment to meeting the needs of school communities on the central coast.

Budget funding for community aged and disability services, at \$1,355 million, has increased by \$364 million or almost 37 per cent since the last coalition budget. This year's increase is \$143 million or around 12 per cent. Programs include \$461.2 million for disability services, an increase of \$48 million; \$316 million for support and assistance to children, adolescents and families under stress or in crisis, an increase of \$30 million; and a \$15 million increase for the home and community care program. The Department of Community Services portfolio is a difficult and demanding area of government. I wish to record my support for the Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Faye Lo Po'. Her private accounts of the cases dealt with by her department have made me sick with disgust and seriously concerned about aspects of our society.

It is time the Opposition stopped trying to score political points in this portfolio and worked co-operatively in a spirit of bipartisanship to address these vital areas of our society. In particular, I should like the honest, hardworking members of the Department, who do heartbreaking work picking up the broken people of our society, to be given the public support and respect they deserve. That the

Department of Community Services exists reflects the failings of our society and the frailty of the human spirit. We as a community should be doing everything to assist those people who give of themselves to improve our society on our behalf. Another traditional Labor priority is roads. The total roads program in New South Wales is \$2,065 million.

Mr Fraser: How much of that is paid for by the Federal Government?

Mr McBRIDE: None of it.

Mr Fraser: You are having yourself on.

Mr McBRIDE: Not all the funds but the major part of all funds for State Government comes through taxation paid to the Federal Government which is then redistributed to State governments.

Mr Fraser: Tell me about the roads funding.

Mr McBRIDE: Sure, and I shall point out that the Coffs Harbour electorate has received allocations of up to \$200 million, to be spent over a two-year period.

Mr Fraser: It is \$52 million.

Mr McBRIDE: Some \$200 million has been spent annually on the north coast between Newcastle and the Queensland border and your community is getting a fair share.

Mr Fraser: It is a small amount compared to that which you just mentioned.

Mr McBRIDE: I heard the honourable member for Coffs Harbour speak in the House only last night pointing out the riches he had received from the State Labor Government for roadworks.

Mr Fraser: It was Federal Government funding.

Mr McBRIDE: Please do not distract me. The Carr Government continues to fund works in progress and new works on the central coast. The road improvements include pedestrian lights between Stella and Elsiemer streets on The Entrance Road, Long Jetty, \$70,000; road pavement rehabilitation on The Entrance Road at Forresters Beach, \$245,000; intersection improvements at Willoughby and The Entrance roads at Forresters Beach, \$315,000; traffic signals, a pedestrian crossing, a bus priority facility, road widening and parking for shoppers at Pitt Road

and The Entrance Road, Wamberal, \$1,425 million; intersection improvements at Serpentine Road and The Entrance Road, Erina, \$200,000; road construction at the Wingello Creek to Henry Parry Drive roundabout, Pacific Highway, Wyoming, \$2.4 million; and at the Renwick Street roundabout to Wingello Creek pedestrian crossing, drainage and roadworks, Pacific Highway, Wyoming, \$2.2 million.

Other road improvements are: intersection improvements at Lenna Street, Kent Road and the Pacific Highway, Narara, \$200,000; intersection improvements at Apanie Avenue and Pacific Highway, Narara, \$160,000; intersection improvements at Pierce Street and Pacific Highway, Niagara Park, \$200,000; intersection improvements at Parsons Road and the Pacific Highway, Lisarow, \$130,000; intersection reconstruction, traffic signals, pedestrian crossing, and bus priority lane at Chamberlain Road and Pacific Highway, Lisarow, \$475,000; bus bays on the Pacific Highway from Lisarow to Narara, \$80,000; and completion of the F3 missing link at Ourimbah, \$22 million.

Wyong Road was finally completed in March with the opening of section 7, Enterprise Drive to the Pacific Highway, Tuggerah, about 2.5 kilometres, at a cost of \$13.26 million. The total cost of the program, which began in 1989, is \$63.5 million. The completed works include two sets of traffic signals and 14 roundabouts. It is designed as a gateway arterial road from the F3 at Tuggerah to The Entrance Road at Shelly Beach. Landscaping and other incidental works are being carried out while the road is in service. The road improvements continue.

Notwithstanding the New South Wales Government's \$1.6 billion commitment to the Pacific Highway upgrade from Newcastle to Queensland and its ongoing commitment to country roads, it still manages to maintain funding for improvements on the central coast. For the first time the budget allocated \$12 million for a landmark sporting facility for the central coast to be built at Grahame Park at Gosford. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$29.8 million, with \$12 million to be contributed by the State Government, \$12 million by the Federal Government, and \$5.8 million by Gosford City Council, Central Coast Leagues Club, North Sydney Leagues Club Ltd and the private sector. The multipurpose sport stadium will be a home for the Bears as the major tenant. However, the stadium will provide first-class sporting facilities for soccer, rugby union, hockey, baseball and major community and cultural events.

The Grahame Park site has major existing infrastructure advantages over any other site on the coast, such as more than 2,000 car parking spaces at the Central Coast Leagues Club, the old Gosford station, and the new State Rail Authority station. Grahame Park is an easy 500-metre walk from the station, and is serviced by existing major arterial roads. In addition, ownership of the land is already vested in the Gosford City Council and the State Government. The cost of the provision of similar infrastructure anywhere else on the coast would have added tens of millions of dollars to the cost of the project, making its total price prohibitive.

There are also significant flow-on effects from the location of a national rugby league team on the central coast. Firstly, the project would not be feasible without a national rugby league team as a major tenant. Other specific benefits to the central coast local economy include relocation of a \$10 million business, that is the North Sydney rugby league football club headquarters, to Gosford; relocation to the central coast of 50 permanent jobs and 120 part-time jobs, including footballers; creation of 100 construction jobs in the project development; as well as benefits to service industries, restaurants, motels and suppliers. An example is the \$100,000 annual fuel bill for North Sydney rugby league club employees and footballers being totally relocated to a central coast supplier.

Other specific benefits to the central coast local economy are the tourist boost through national exposure and promotion on television, the attraction of new businesses, and the provision of impetus for development in Gosford and on the central coast. The relocation also provides social and cultural benefits for the community. The relocated team will provide focus for the community, and particularly for youth to be associated with a national sporting team. Another social and cultural benefit is the overwhelming community support for relocation of the Bears and a first-class sporting venue. I should point out that the venue will be available for major events and community projects on the central coast.

The central coast already is a nursery for North Sydney rugby league players. In fact, three current first grade players are former local junior players. David Fairleigh, the most famous of all, joined North Sydney in 1989. He was a State of Origin representative in 1991, 1993, 1995 and 1997, an Australian representative in 1994 and 1996, and a Rothmans medallist in 1994. David was raised in Wyoming, where he still lives today. Glenn Morrison, a local Terrigal boy, was central coast representative in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993. He joined North Sydney in 1998, and was Dally M

rookie of the year in 1996. Paul Stringer, who has now become a regular first grader, is a Berkeley Vale boy, having played with the Berkeley Vale juniors. He joined North Sydney as a junior in 1995, and was an Australian under-19 representative. The current first grade head coach, Peter Louis, is a resident of Woy Woy on the central coast. I am very proud to be part of the State Government, which provided the impetus for the provision of this major item of social infrastructure for the central coast.

I conclude by saying that the budget is fair, just and equitable. It is a budget that puts families first. It is a budget that honours the Labor principles and ideals that distinguish the Labor Party from other political parties in Australia. It is a budget that gives priority to the fundamentals of State government—health, education, police, community services, public transport and roads. It is a budget that manages the finances in this State in the best interests of the whole community. With some satisfaction, I can say that the budget delivers for the whole of the central coast community.

Mr SCHIPP (Wagga Wagga) [7.22 p.m.]: I just wish that I could speak about the 1998-99 budget in the glowing terms that were used by the honourable member for The Entrance. What went through my mind was what a busy man former member Bob Grahame will be when he returns to represent the people of The Entrance after next year's elections and unveils all the new plaques in that electorate. I wish him well in that duty. This is the twenty-second budget delivered while I have been a member of this House. It involves a certain degree of nostalgia as it will be the last budget I will see delivered as a member of this place. It will be the swan song for Bob Carr. That is beyond doubt because country people cannot wait to show what they think of the Carr Government. For those who might think that I say that for totally political reasons, I point out that wherever I go I hear people say they are fed up to the back teeth with the Carr Government, and hence the Hanson phenomenon.

The arrogance of this Government was underlined by the Premier's venture into the country within days of being elected in 1995. But what has he done since to benefit the country? I am speaking now about the west of the State, because I do not know what he has done up and down the coast. Bob Carr drew attention to his arrogance on the day that the country summit was held in Wagga Wagga. He appeared there, did his spruiking, answered a few questions, then left the hall without waiting to hear what was to be said by the Leader of the Opposition or take part in the conference from that point on. I know he was still in town some 2½ hours later, because I saw him at the airport.

This budget would go down as the worst of the 22 budgets delivered while I have been in this House. That is not just my opinion. I have not heard one honourable member in any way suggest that this is a budget of note as far as country electorates are concerned. Generally, members representing country electorates—all electorates for that matter—will skate about how well their electorate did compared with the electorates of others. I have not heard that on this occasion. Members representing bush electorates across the board have not been enamoured with this budget because it will not do for the country what it should do. It does nothing to solve the real problems in the bush and discriminates against country people.

I give the Treasurer credit for one thing—conning the country media. The Premier recently read to the House some headlines appearing in the country newspapers. Indeed the Wagga Wagga *Daily Advertiser* carried the headline "State Budget funds flow Riverina's way", reporting that \$114 million was to be spent in the Riverina. The journalist who wrote the article, Jason Bartlett, must be pretty new to his job. If he had analysed that figure, he would have appreciated that it was derived from bundling together the funding of trading enterprises, Commonwealth road funding, and the whole box and dice of user-pays and self-funding operations in the irrigation area, including normal maintenance funding for electricity undertakings.

All of those types of funds were included in the figure used in that article. Certainly the subeditor who wrote the headline had been well and truly conned. That was not the case with the city media. Ross Gittins referred to the so-called budget surplus as the rabbit pulled from the hat, the Treasurer's claims as hollow or lacking in credibility, and of a budget that is likely to collapse. The editorial of the *Daily Telegraph* of Wednesday, 3 June, said:

Treasurer Michael Egan's Budget yesterday shows NSW pays scant attention to the philosophy that smaller governments lead to smaller taxes.

He should have said that the New South Wales Government pays scant attention to that philosophy. He went on to say:

The Budget shows insufficient attention is given to making existing funds work better.

There is a continued reliance on cash—our cash—to solve problems.

Even when allowances are made for the big Olympic Games bill, it is clear Mr Egan and Premier Bob Carr have taken the easy option.

They have chosen to drain a bit more from wage and salary earners, employers, builders and entrepreneurs.

That is said against a background of country businesses and communities whose resources and resolve are stretched to the limit. So the budget has been described in terms of pulling rabbits from hats and this being the last throw of the dice. The Treasurer slipped out from under by conning the country media. Generally, honourable members will focus on capital spending in their electorates while making general comments on the budget. I too will deal generally with the budget as well as mention a number of specific matters.

One problem with this budget is that it does not address the imbalance in spending between country centres and the cities. In fact, the budget worsens that imbalance in the face of the deep plight of country towns and communities. No attempt is made to address job losses in rural centres brought on by the closure of regional offices—the Wagga Wagga education office staff numbers reduced from 130 to 25, and housing department staff from 42 to 17. Those once great regional offices are now shells. The local Department of Agriculture office has lost its profile, with most of its services having been relocated to other parts of the Riverina and the veterinary laboratory being closed. Wherever one goes one finds that government jobs have been stripped from the country.

The Government said it will produce rural community impact statements that will be available for public review. But that has not happened. Where are they? Are they secret? A report stated that integrated government service delivery plans will be created. But where are they? The Government is good at confidence tricks, but its promises never see the light of day. There is no way of testing whether \$17 million was saved on the centralisation of the educational regional office to Sydney. Further, the Auditor-General has complained that he does not have access to the documents which would allow him to make an accurate assessment. There has been public backlash about the Government saying one thing and doing another. The people have woken up to this Government and without doubt the Hanson factor is running through the political cycle because of this.

From a country perspective the Government seems to be obsessed with the Olympics. We are told that the Olympic Games are being fully funded, but that funding has been taken from the capital works programs of electorates that have missed out in this budget. There is no promise of redress in the budget or any statement made by the Government

that after the Olympics there will be a catch-up fund. The coalition announced that it will do something to redress the imbalance caused by the draining of funds and shifting of resources for the Olympics. For Wagga Wagga there is not one meaningful new program or project mentioned in the inner budget. The real test of a government is what is in its inner budget, not in its outer budget which deals with trading enterprises, Commonwealth road funds, et cetera.

Wagga Wagga was allocated money to complete the Gobba Bridge, which is great and wonderful. The bridge will be completed in time to join up with the Olympic Way some time later in the year. Money has been allocated for the refurbishment of the TAFE college. A batch washer, bought some time ago for the hospital laundry, is included in the budget. That is great and wonderful. But what do we have in the way of a rolling program? One of the big budgetary problems is that there is no rolling program in any of the Carr Government's four budgets. Anyone who knows anything about capital programming knows that to put a project of any meaningful size into a capital works list takes four or five years. In the country electorates there are no major projects in the rolling programs. That means that rural areas will suffer a dearth of spending on capital items from the inner budget for up to five years after the Olympics. I am talking about well into the new millennium before any meaningful amount of money is allocated to those electorates.

It is to the Government's disgrace that I have not yet seen my electorate information package, which was always available on the day after the budget was announced. The package gave a breakdown of what was included in the various smaller programs that did not appear in the main documents. This year there has been no sign of those packages and the Government should be embarrassed that they have not been made available. An analysis of the inner budget for country electorates shows there will be only 11 new projects west of the divide, spread over five ministries. That is economic drought of worrying proportions. In a capital budget of \$200 million, only \$12 million is allocated for 11 new projects in country electorates, which means that only 5.5 per cent of the budget will be spent on about 25 per cent of the seats in this State. That is an absolute disgrace.

Members on both sides of this House should give a cast iron assurance that the money taken out of the country programs and projects for the Olympic Games will be returned in full after the Olympics. No-one is knocking the Olympic Games.

I was one of the Ministers who sat around the table when the Olympics were agreed to. We were promised not a bells-and-whistles Olympics but an affordable Olympics that would go back to taws. It is nonsense for the Government to claim that the Olympics have been fully funded; that does not address the question where the money is coming from. It will come out of the programs that would have been spent on country projects. The budget contains major allocation shortcomings for Wagga Wagga electorate.

The Wagga Wagga Base Hospital is one of the major regional hospitals in this State. The hospital has opened 30 more beds but nevertheless often works beyond its capacity, operating full time 93 per cent of the year. The hospital is part finished, to the credit of the Leader of the Opposition, who approved the first stage development. The second stage is part funded only and the Minister for Health has provided funds for what has been called stage 2A, but it needs to be brought to a functional stage. To do that the older parts of the hospital will have to be rebuilt and modernised and linked up with the newer building. The local police station, which is a disgrace, has been visited by every Minister for Police except the current one, because he will not go there. However, the Premier has been there. The budget provides nothing for updating this archaic building.

Today I advised the Minister of a building that is available for purchase and he has agreed that the police properties office will investigate whether it is a worthwhile acquisition. It is a great building in a great location and could be purchased at a reasonable price. The police have taken up leased space in the government offices housing my office, at the southern end of the main street. They are still waiting for approval for a shopfront to open because the main police station is at the northern end where there is much less population and activity. The courthouse, which is interlinked with the police station through adjoining sites, is in a disgraceful condition. The Family Court cannot sit there because of lack of space and now sits at Albury. The Residential Tenancies Tribunal is forced to meet in the offices of the Department of Fair Trading, a situation previously unheard of. Other courts are held in the Riverine Club, at the back of the police station. The area needs two district courts, two local courts and one registry—a real problem.

The Minister for Gaming and Racing tried to assist as best he could to complete the work on the harness raceway at the showground. When it was developed little consideration was given to patron needs and the viewing areas. The problem is that

after the front line of spectators arrive the people behind them cannot see the track. A project costing \$150,000 will be funded if approved by the harness racing club fund after the TAB privatisation. I thank the Minister and his staff for trying to get the project going. The Minister has visited the area, has seen the problems, and has done his best to have them corrected.

I refer now to health matters. The Minister for Health has worked closely with me to get a Wagga Wagga radiotherapy service. That issue is now with the Federal Government but nevertheless if we can push it through the State health bureaucracy hopefully we will get the green light in the near future for a state-of-the-art radiation oncology clinic at Wagga Wagga. I sympathise with staff in the Department of Health and the Greater Murray Area Health Service, who are wrongly under attack. It is mean spirited to attack staff when the Government's funding shortfalls are the major problem. The system needs to be restructured so that funds are redistributed according to demand. I have been understanding about this matter.

Recently the Minister for Housing tried to savage me. I have been savaged by better operators than the Minister for Housing; I have been confronted by Neville Wran and others, so the Minister did not faze me much. It saddens me to see the Department of Housing adopting a Housing Commission approach based on a 1950s model. It is only in the past six months that the Minister has realised that he is the Minister for Housing and that housing involves more than welfare or social housing. Recently the Minister announced a package of \$10 million to fund affordable housing for middle-income and low-income earners. The number of people who pay more than 30 per cent of their income in rent has increased by 40 per cent over the past few years.

However, the Government has addressed that issue by announcing that it would provide a paltry \$10 million in seed money to develop cheaper housing. A similar project was tried in San Diego and it failed miserably. Indeed, when I was Minister for Housing the then Government introduced the green street program, the small allotment program and the medium-density housing program. Such programs will not solve the housing problem. The amount of \$10 million is a pittance compared to the funding required to address the housing crisis caused by the Government's neglect of low-income and middle-income earners. As one person said to me, providing \$10 million is like sending a flea to attack an elephant.

The Minister should not dismiss the recent report from the University of Sydney. One of the people involved in preparing the report was condemned, unfairly, by the Minister for Housing because he used to work for me. Jon Hall is one of the brighter lights I have met in bureaucratic terms. His input is valuable and the Minister should not have targeted him for criticism. The Government must live with its failures. When the people in country areas go to the polls they will judge the Carr Government harshly. I know that from meetings I have held with my constituents, my gut feeling, and the straw polls conducted by members of Parliament. I have seen governments come and go. I knew that the Greiner Government would be elected in 1988 and I knew that the Fahey Government was on the skids in 1995. I now see another government that has sagged. This Government is on the nose as far as country people are concerned. This budget does not redress the image of the Carr Government in bush politics, and members opposite will be punished at the next election.

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [7.42 p.m.]: Unlike the honourable member for Wagga Wagga, I know that many people in the Hunter region, including the rural areas of the Hunter, are determined to give the Labor Government a second term of office at the next election. There are good reasons for Labor members of Parliament to applaud the Carr Labor Government's 1998-99 budget, and there are many good reasons for Labor voters in my electorate of Wallsend and the people of the Hunter to welcome this budget. Our people in the Hunter recognise that the Labor Government they elected in 1995 is looking after its heartland as they expected. The Hunter will benefit from its fair share of big recurrent funding increases in vital areas of State responsibility to help families in their everyday lives.

Funding for health, which covers public hospitals and community health services, has been increased by 6.9 per cent to \$6,633 million. Funding for education, which covers public schools, the Government's support to private schools and the equity programs, literacy programs and computers in schools program, has increased by 5.1 per cent to \$6,551 million. Funding for community services, which includes looking after children, family support, and providing services to aged and disabled people, has increased by 11.8 per cent to \$1,355 million. That increase in community services funding is surely the jewel in the budget of a Labor government that is committed to social justice and to providing extra resources in a tight economic

framework. That is an example of why Labor seeks government: to be able to do a bit extra for people in need, the less privileged. An extra 100 police will be funded this year. Labor has fulfilled its 1995 election promise to increase police strength by 500 in the first term of the Carr Labor Government to a total of more than 13,400 police officers. Recurrent funding has increased by 6.7 per cent to \$1,306 million in the police portfolio.

Hunter families will also benefit directly from two significant taxation reductions announced in the budget. The \$43 levy that every family now pays on motor vehicle registration to fund old scheme injury claims will be abolished. From Friday, 1 July 1998, it will be abolished for the 600,000 families that receive family allowance payments. It will be abolished for the 350,000 seniors card holders in New South Wales. It will be abolished for farmers and primary producers. The levy will then be abolished from 1 July next year for all other private individuals, and from 1 July 2000 for business vehicles. The second significant taxation reduction that will benefit families in the Hunter is the discount in stamp duty on the purchase of a home, to be discounted by 50 per cent from the day after the budget this year for families buying their first home.

That will mean a saving of \$880 on a home valued at \$170,000. That concession gives effect to Labor's policy of putting families first. To expand the number of families eligible for the scheme, both income and property value limits have been increased. In the case of couples the income limit has increased from \$48,000 to \$57,000 and in the case of single people the income limit has increased from \$33,000 to \$39,000. The property value limits have increased to \$150,000 in regional and rural New South Wales, and \$170,000 in Sydney. These increases will ensure eligibility for the stamp duty discount scheme for first home buyers is expanded to 80 per cent of households.

The presentation of a balanced budget is good news for the State for several reasons and is a source of pride for the Carr Government. The cash basis surplus is \$45 million. The Treasurer, Mr Egan, has done some very adroit work in reaching this outcome; he has had to jump many hurdles. In the first instance we are paying for the Olympics as we go. The Treasurer has been commendably honest in the Budget Speech in admitting that the impact of the Olympics on the State budget is most pronounced this year. In the absence of the Olympics the 1998-99 result would have been a cash surplus of \$522 million. The Sydney Olympics,

unlike others, will not leave behind a big debt for the next generation to wear.

The coalition parties are being dishonest to the people of New South Wales in railing against this budget in overblown language without acknowledging the cost of the Olympics to the State and their impact on the budget. After all, it was a coalition government with bipartisan Labor support that won the Olympics bid for Sydney. That is the kind of dishonesty that is adverse to good government. It leaves voters disillusioned and encourages them to look for populist and simplistic alternatives to the major parties. Labor has fulfilled the Premier's election promise to reduce debt. Total net liabilities are down by \$3.5 billion, that is more than \$1,600 per family, during the Carr Government's first term.

We have increased the State's public sector assets by \$4 billion, which is more than \$1,800 per family during the Carr Government's first term. Consequently, we have maintained the State's AAA rating, which is better than Victoria and the Commonwealth. That means hundreds of millions of dollars in interest charges will be saved on the residual debt. Another hurdle the Treasurer must overcome is the inequitable, unfair and unjust treatment of New South Wales in Commonwealth financial grants to the States. As the nation approaches an important tax reform debate it is imperative that the reform of Commonwealth-State financial relations is put on the agenda.

Two significant problems must be fixed. One is the vertical fiscal imbalance, which is worsening. The States spend about 42 per cent of all tax revenue but raise only 16 per cent of that revenue. The worst State taxes, particularly financial ones, must be abolished and access should be provided to the personal income tax base without increasing the overall burden of income tax. The other problem is the horizontal fiscal equalisation process. It is under that process that New South Wales suffers injustice. The Commonwealth returns some of the tax it collects to the States through financial assistance grants. I refer honourable members to pages 5-16 to 5-24 of Budget Paper No. 2 for details.

Financial assistance grants are calculated according to a formula that was developed about 50 years ago. The economically strong States of New South Wales and Victoria subsidise the other States. That formula no longer has any equity or justice. The 1998-99 financial assistance grants per capita are as follows: New South Wales \$747, Victoria \$759, Queensland \$919, Western Australia \$878,

South Australia \$1,127, Tasmania \$1,564, Northern Territory \$5,343, and Australian Capital Territory \$909, with the average being \$895. Queensland, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory at least are economically stronger and should be on equal footing with New South Wales and Victoria. New South Wales receives no justice for its \$1,383 million subsidy to the other States in the coming budget year.

That means that every man, woman and child in New South Wales pays a subsidy to the other States of \$217 a year. Some States take advantage of this forced generosity by setting up businesses and financial incentive schemes that disadvantage businesses based in New South Wales. Of course, those States also have lower taxation regimes. Again, the overblown critical rhetoric of the shadow treasurer about this State's budget and the level of taxation revenue raised in New South Wales is dishonest without acknowledging the impact of the unjust and unfair horizontal fiscal equalisation scheme. I plead with the coalition to work with the Federal Government to fix up this mess and to improve Commonwealth-State financial relations for the benefit of New South Wales.

The shadow treasurer, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, was highly critical of what he called this Government's error in not having already privatised the electricity industry. That criticism is an error and reveals the narrow metropolitan city-based elite from which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition draws his support, known as the Treasury lobby. I represent a regional electorate in the Hunter where all but a minority of people tell me that the electricity industry should remain in public hands. I am sure the same view is held by the majority through regional and rural New South Wales. We have not yet heard arguments to convince us to change our minds. That position has been adopted across all shades of political opinion.

It is on record that the 1997 Australian Labor Party annual conference, representing trade unions and branch members from across the State, voted to retain Labor's present policy of public ownership. One Nation did not think of that first. Not everyone in the Liberal Party or the National Party—perhaps not many at all—agrees with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Debate on the privatisation of the electricity industry will continue. Meanwhile the coalition continues to criticise the Government on that issue but does not have the courage to give a firm commitment of the position it will adopt in 1999. In late March the Hunter Valley Research Foundation held its regular Sydney luncheon for sponsors. The guest speaker this year was Professor

Fred Hilmer. During his address to the sponsors of the foundation I took notes.

His comments make interesting reading in light of my comments about the general view of the ownership of the electricity industry. I do not profess to have recorded his exact words, but he said, in effect, that all of the reforms involved in microeconomic reform were supposed to have produced abundant employment and increased prosperity. He said that so far all of the focus had been on improving efficiency and productivity per worker. He said it was time to focus on employment opportunities, which meant economic growth. To quote his exact words, he said, "You can't be poor and green; you can't be poor and cultured." The comments of the arch priest of competition policy are that we need to focus on employment opportunities and economic growth. It is time that this House and many people in Australia, particularly those in Treasury, at State and national level, took note of Professor Hilmer. I shall now comment on the work of the Health Care Complaints Commission. I am the chairman of the joint committee that oversees the commission's work. Details of the 1998-99 budget for the commission can be found in the budget papers. Page 4-157 of Budget Paper No. 2 states:

The Commission is undertaking an organisational restructure based on both internal and external reviews conducted over the past four years. The restructure . . . should place the Commission in a position where it can respond to changing demands whilst maintaining an appropriate standard for complaint handling and containing the delay in investigations.

Total estimated expenses for the coming budget year for the commission will increase slightly to \$5 million mainly due to the full implementation of the patient support officer program that facilitates the outreach and resolution focus of the commission. Patient support officers are at seven locations in the Sydney and Hunter regions. Over the last year the joint committee urged the Minister to consider placing a patient support officer in all State health areas, particularly in light of the perceived success of this initiative. I congratulate the commissioner, Marilyn Walton, and all commission staff on their good work. I thank also the many health practitioners and registration boards for their assistance to the commission and to the people of New South Wales.

I refer now to some capital works programs in the Wallsend electorate and nearby areas of the Hunter region. I thank firstly the Ministers in the Carr Labor Government for enabling us to honour the significant commitments we made in 1995 to the people of the Wallsend electorate either by

completion of works or through the commencement of projects for the coming year. The major road works development program for the electorate will receive \$1.5 million, of which \$1 million has been allocated for the detailed design and widening, and perhaps commencement, of the dual carriageway, including particularly the subway under the great northern railway line at Cardiff to the crossroads at Glendale, west of Cardiff, on Main Road 527.

Of that allocation \$500,000 has been targeted for improvements to Main Road 217 from two lanes to four lanes between the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie boundary to Croudace Road at Elmore Vale. The distance involved is approximately one kilometre and the funds will be used in the detailed design of those roadworks. Each project underwent planning work in the past year at a cost of \$220,000. The infrastructure maintenance program will enable pavement rehabilitation on Main Road 527 east of the Cardiff subway from a total allocation of \$432,000. The road safety and traffic management program will receive a total of \$65,000 for the traffic route lighting subsidy to Newcastle council, \$100,000 for a planning study of minor improvements to Lookout Road, \$100,000 for cycleways, \$13,000 for road safety, and approximately \$135,000 for traffic management works.

Lake Macquarie City Council and Newcastle City Council will receive \$3.4 million and \$5.7 million respectively for road maintenance in the 1998-99 budget. A number of projects relating to roads have been undertaken in the past year or are due for completion at the changeover in budget years. They include \$248,000 for road resurfacing at the intersection of Blaxland Road and Macquarie Road at Cardiff South. Road safety is an important criterion on a very busy road that carries 18,000 vehicles each day. The result will be a smoother road surface and a reduction in future maintenance costs.

In the current financial year, the State Government will fund a road safety officer position on Lake Macquarie City Council and the council will match the Government's contribution. Some very good work is being done particularly in relation to driver fatigue, drink driving and young driver campaigns under that scheme. Two crossing supervisors have been appointed for Elmore Vale Public School; \$354,000 will be spent on the intersection of Newcastle Road and Croudace Street at Lambton, which is on the boundary of Wallsend and Waratah electorates. That will alleviate congestion and improve road safety in the area. Existing timber power and light poles will be

replaced by metal poles and heavy power lines will be placed underground.

A highlight of the budget funding is \$1.25 million for stage two of the Wallsend Public School consolidation and upgrading work. Stage two will provide for a canteen, a covered area, a hall, regeneration of the playground area, upgrading of B and C blocks, a hard ball court and an off-street car park for the teachers. That is a most welcome initiative in a congested area. I congratulate the school committee on the work it has done, together with the Government, to get this project up and running. It will reach completion in the coming year. An amount of \$7.2 million will be expended in the Hunter region on capital works in education. In housing, \$932,000 is allocated on new housing projects in Glendale and Lambton, \$1.3 million on completion of existing projects in Glendale and Lambton, and \$200,000 on two units of housing under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing scheme in New Lambton.

The Hunter Water Corporation will spend \$4.1 million to build a new reservoir at South Wallsend to cater for the North Lakes urban release area expansion that will take place during the next 10 to 15 years. The Cardiff waste water pumping station will be augmented at a cost of \$1.05 million; pipeline and construction, \$0.7 million; and carrier main augmentation in Cardiff, \$0.3 million. The Hunter area asset strategy will involve improvement in capital works in the health system in the Hunter region. I am particularly pleased that construction will commence on the Wallsend in-patient unit. For the first time since the former coalition Government closed Wallsend Hospital in 1991, in-patient beds will be back on the Wallsend Hospital campus. In that regard \$1 million will be expended this year and the total cost of the project will be \$4.4 million. Work on a new emergency and intensive care unit at the John Hunter Hospital will also commence in the coming financial year. That unit is urgently needed to enable the hospital to be accredited regularly. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr SMITH (Bega) [8.02 p.m.]: I would describe the 1998-99 Carr Government budget as a deceitful budget. I would like to put on record some of the general feelings of country people about the budget. This is the third Labor budget that has claimed a surplus. The Government claimed a surplus in respect of its previous two budgets but finished up with a deficit amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars. I believe the budget is unrealistic in the present climate, in that it does not take into account the extremely active real estate market particularly in the Sydney area, stamp duty receipts,

and the imposition of the land tax and the bed tax. A total of 13 new taxes have been introduced by the Government, and the New South Wales economy is at the stage at which it will feel the effects of the Asian crisis and the general downturn in the sale of commodities.

The Federal budget took into account an expected growth rate of 3 per cent. The pundits now believe the true figure could be anywhere from 0.25 to 0.5 per cent less. The New South Wales State budget envisages a 5 per cent growth rate from the boom period we are presently enjoying. That is undoubtedly why the Treasurer has included a budget surplus. This being an election year budget, the Treasurer has tried to present it in the best possible light. Unfortunately, most people have been able to see through the budget. Moody's, and the other agencies that assess a government's ability to manage its budget, have intimated that if it had not been for the indication that the Government was considering selling the electricity industry, New South Wales would have lost its AAA rating.

I called it a deceptive budget when I commenced my contribution to the debate. I say that for a number of reasons. The budget papers detail a number of projects that will be undertaken on the south coast. One that springs to mind is in the Wollongong area. The Government indicated in a press release issued by the Treasurer or by the Minister for Health that \$62 million would be allocated for the hospital there. The inference was that the hospital would immediately receive \$62 million for a massive upgrade. However, when the budget papers were more closely scrutinised it became obvious that only \$1 million had been allocated and not \$62 million. Of course, that resulted in extremely unflattering newspaper headlines in the Illawarra region.

My own electorate is a prime example of the Government's deceit. The 1997-98 budget included a capital works allocation of \$1.2 million for the Bega justice centre and courthouse complex upgrading. There was never any attempt to undertake that work. The Government indicated it had run out of money. That project has been listed again in the current budget. In my view, the electors are absolutely sick and tired of politicians continually lying and trying to deceive them. I do not give the Treasurer any credit for a balanced budget. The budget is false and the Treasurer is attempting to deceive the people of New South Wales. Even worse is the bias contained in the budget so far as city and country regions are concerned. This has been going on ever since the Carr Government came to office. The Labor Party has very few seats in rural New South Wales; it has

obviously decided it has no hope of winning additional seats and will be lucky to retain the seats it presently holds. The Government has decided it will not worry about country New South Wales.

I assure honourable members that the situation in country areas is not the same as it is in the city. There has been no real estate boom or boom in business generally. It is very much the case in country areas that most industries, if not all, are under tremendous pressure. Unemployment is at an all-time high. In Eurobodalla the youth unemployment rate is amongst the highest in the State. I would like to give a brief description of my electorate and the industries in it. My electorate extends to half of the south coast, between the Victorian border and Sydney. A considerable portion of the south coast is included in the electorate of Bega.

Most industries are carried on in my electorate: fisheries, tourism, dairy, farming and timber. Most of those industries are struggling and are in desperate need of government assistance. This budget does not help them at all. Recently a meeting was held in my electorate with the shadow minister for fisheries, the honourable member for Myall Lakes. I have never seen such angry fishermen in my life. They are annoyed with the restrictions on and general interference with their daily productive lives, and they sheet home the blame to this Government. The Minister for Fisheries does not understand what commercial fishing is all about. He should realise those people are entitled to a living like anybody else. They do not want to be swamped with restrictions and have to go through different processes to get endorsements; they want to get on with the job of fishing and feeding their families.

The beef cattle prices are extremely depressed. The industry has suffered from a severe drought. Good rains are now falling, but they did not fall when they were needed for full growth. However, I emphasise to honourable members that it does not rain dollars. These people will take many years to recover from that severe drought, and they will not recover under their current terms of trade. In the past few days the dairy industry has had a 3.3¢ a litre reduction in the sale price of whole milk, mainly because one of the major supermarkets has broken ranks and gone to Victoria to get cheaper milk. The average farm will earn between \$30,000 and \$40,000 less income a year. Those people are in desperate straits. They are conducting meetings to try to resolve the problem so they can run their businesses viably and survive. This situation has just arisen, so we have not seen the last of it.

The number of tourists visiting my electorate has increased this year, but it is still not like it once was. Most tourists to my electorate, particularly to the southern part of my electorate, come from Victoria. Victoria has started to manage its economy properly. It is recovering from the Kirner days when there were massive budget debts, and banks and building societies were collapsing. Tourists are starting to flow to my electorate again. However, it is still not what it should be. The timber industry has been under tremendous pressure from this Government. The industry has lost hundreds of jobs, and workers in that industry will be coming to Parliament again tomorrow to lobby the Government and the Opposition to try to get some stability for those left in the industry. These people are in desperate straits. Very little of the timber industry is left. I appeal to the Government to think of these people's jobs.

A new wilderness area, the Brogo Wilderness Area, has been proposed. Even when the coalition was in office I stated that the people in my electorate did not want wilderness areas. They want access to our national parks, to be able to ride their horses and to use the recreation areas. They should not be simply for the use of people who are extremely fit and who can walk in and use these places as their own recreation areas. This new extension was nominated again by the Colong Foundation in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. A massive rally will be conducted on 4 July and I invite the Minister for the Environment to come down and witness the angst in the community in relation to that issue.

At one stage the police in Batemans Bay were going to take industrial action and go on strike. A press release was issued by the Minister for Police or the Minister for Corrective Services that a corrective services centre was to be built in Batemans Bay, with two cells and 14 staff. I was speaking with my patrol commander only a few days ago and he knew nothing about it. I would like to know whether that was just another press release from the Government to get itself out of trouble or whether it intends to employ 14 corrective services people and to build that two-cell structure, so the police can get on with their policing duties rather than transporting inmates to different gaols throughout the State.

Health and hospitals are important issues in my electorate. These have been ongoing problems since the Carr Government came to office. They started with the unceremonious sacking of the people on the area health board. Many of those people were not my supporters but they received no

letter of thanks, and they were sacked without any explanation. The southern health service areas were increased to a size that is totally uncontrollable. Areas that should be receiving funding are not getting it. The Government has no plans to fund the growth areas on the coast. The Government should have a plan to ensure the funding goes to where the demographics say it should, and that is where the growth areas and the older people are, along the coast.

A number of rallies have been held to protest what the Government has tried to do. The Government tried to close the obstetrics and operating theatres in the Pambula and Batemans Bay hospitals. In Merimbula, which is the responsibility of Pambula hospital, some 3,000 people rallied in the street demanding that those services be kept open. In Batemans Bay the same type of rally was held with about 3,000 people attending. Eventually the Government backed down. I agree with what the honourable member for Wagga Wagga said. It is not the problem of the southern health service employees, it is the Government's problem because it is not funding these health services sufficiently to enable them to provide a reasonable service.

The Government is cutting back almost everywhere in my electorate. Rather than increase specialist services, almost daily some other health service is cut back. There has been trouble with obstetrics. Batemans Bay still does not have obstetric services. Recently they were reinstated in the Bega and southern areas. There have been problems with anaesthetists and urologists, and recently the laundry at the Bega hospital was closed with the loss of 12 jobs. The laundry services were never put out to tender. When the coalition Government was in office those services were put out to tender twice and the people carrying out the service won the tender each time. That work has now gone to Illawarra and there have been nothing but complaints ever since.

One lady in my electorate has been waiting up to 10 months for payment under the isolated patients travel accommodation assistance scheme, IPTAAS—and many other people have been waiting eight or nine months. No money has been provided to IPTAAS to assist people who are isolated and who have to travel to Canberra for specialist treatment. These people travel to Canberra expecting to receive the IPTAAS payment, but they go on the waiting list and the Minister says they will be paid when the money is available. That is not good enough. It appears our hospitals are moving towards chilled food and closing the kitchens. A pilot program is being conducted at Moruya, and I assume that in the

not too distant future patients will not get the very good local cooking that they have had but will have to go to chilled food. They will not be very pleased with that, and more jobs will be lost because of it.

This budget contains no major capital works expenditure for the Princes Highway in my electorate. Certainly it contains maintenance funding for rehabilitation of the highway, but there is no major capital works funding. In all the time the Carr Government has been in office there has not been one capital works program for the Princes Highway in my electorate. The last project undertaken was at Clouds Hill, work on which took place in the final year of the Fahey Government. It is about time there was a fair share of roads moneys. As the honourable member for Wagga Wagga said, if the Government does not start to spend some of the capital works money in country areas, there will be a tremendous backlash against the Olympic Games. I hope that does not happen; I support the Olympics. However, it is important that some moneys go to country areas to support regional economies. If there are no capital works or roadworks in the regions then there will be no work for subcontractors and other staff employed with the assistance of government grants.

The budget contains provisions for which I would like to thank various Ministers. Most of the funding for my electorate was for education. I thank the Minister for Education and Training for giving the go-ahead in the budget for the Ulladulla school. The local community has fought for that school for several years but in previous budgets it has missed out. Given the size of the allocation for that school, I imagine that it will not be too long before tenders are called. I appreciate the ongoing funding for the new school at Bodalla, which was also funded in last year's budget. I bring to the attention of the Minister for Education and Training the fact that planning for the Bega High School is coming to a close and in the near future an upgrade of that school will be sought.

There is an increasing demand for new and upgraded educational facilities in my area because growth rates are very high. The Bega High School has suffered from extreme overcrowding for some time. I repeat that there will be a backlash if funding is not directed to the country areas. Country people realise that they have made sacrifices, in very difficult circumstances, to fund the Olympic Games and make sure that there is sufficient capital money for the Games. They do expect a payback, however. That payback will have to come in future budgets. The equalisation of country and city areas has to begin. At present there is a massive difference in living standards and prosperity between those who

live in the city and those who live in the country. Almost every traditional country industry is in trouble and struggling. When the industries are struggling, all small businesses and towns are suffering as well. An injection of funding is needed, and much of that must come from capital works, roads funding and so on in order that subcontractors and others may gain employment.

Mrs BEAMER (Badgerys Creek) [8.22 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak this evening on this, the fourth Carr-Egan budget. This is a budget that is generous and economically responsible. The budget is generous to the regions of New South Wales and to the less fortunate of the State. The underlying result of this budget and the cumulative effects of the past three budgets mean that net general debt is down by \$1.9 billion from three years ago, total public sector debt is down by \$1 billion and total net liabilities are down by more than \$3.5 billion. As well, this budget is in surplus. The effect of the figures is obvious. The budget advances measures that support families. As the Treasurer said in his speech, that is done with "fairness, decency and confidence".

For the people of my electorate and all of this State the goals are achieved in many ways through the 1998-99 State budget. The initiatives for families are many. The abolition of the \$43 levy for motor vehicle registration and the 50 per cent discount of stamp duty on first home purchases will be of benefit to many of my constituents and to future home owners in my electorate, one of the fastest-growing electorates in New South Wales. Overall increases in health and education spending will be felt across the State. The fulfilment of the Labor Party election promise to provide 500 extra police in New South Wales in this Government's first term will add to the security of citizens. All of those spending priorities, along with the emphasis on regional New South Wales, will secure the future for the State with fairness and equity.

For the first time the budget was accompanied by a statement that focuses on western Sydney and the delivery of goals to that important region. The Western Sydney Budget Statement gives an overview of expenditure of funds in the region and the Government's priorities for this economic powerhouse. Western Sydney produces about 24 per cent of the State's gross domestic product and houses 43 per cent of Sydney's population. Some 1.5 million people call that area home. I pay tribute to the Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney for the preparation of the Western Sydney Budget Statement and the outline it gives of the key priorities and initiatives for my region.

Western Sydney has its share of problems. There are pockets of high unemployment, transport inadequacies and some of the worst air quality in the State. Those problems are unacceptable to the people of my electorate and to the Government. In recognition of the importance of the region, the Government will spend more than \$800 million on new capital projects alone. Some of the capital works in this year's budget will take place in my electorate of Badgerys Creek or will have a major impact on the people of my electorate. One such project is the Warragamba Dam upgrade, which has been through an extensive process of public consultation. The total cost of an auxiliary spillway for the dam will be in the vicinity of \$115 million. An allocation of \$8.9 million in this year's budget will mean that construction will be able to commence.

The upgrade of the dam is an issue that has plagued our area since it was revealed that the dam did not meet international dam safety criteria. The building of an auxiliary spillway will ensure two fundamental things for Sydney: that a probable maximum flood will not compromise the wall, and that Sydney's water supply will be assured. Much publicity has surrounded the option to raise the dam wall as a downstream flood mitigation program. That option is being pursued by the local Federal member and by Liberal members of the Penrith City Council. I remind the House that following the revelations about the dam safety problem years ago the coalition Government did nothing concrete to solve the problem, and the incredibly expensive option it pursued was not funded. The people of my electorate now have funding for a solution to the dam safety problem and money committed to its upgrade.

Also on the capital works program for my electorate is an extension of the Archives Authority of New South Wales in Kingswood which will inject some \$3.1 million into the local economy. An issue I mentioned earlier in my contribution is the unacceptable air quality of western Sydney. It is just not good enough. The topography of the area and climatic conditions mean that western Sydney is a sink for Sydney's polluted air. The appalling level of air quality that is experienced by the people of western Sydney makes any proposal to build an airport at Badgerys Creek pure madness. The people of western Sydney need positive solutions to this problem; not actions such as the building of an airport which would only diminish air quality.

That is why I was pleased that in 1998-99 the air quality monitoring program will be provided, with more than \$1 million in capital funding and

\$440,000 in recurrent funding, to find strategies for air pollution control for the next 25 years. Fine particle pollution and photochemical smog will be targeted for reduction. The budget provides \$360,000 for an air toxic study to be conducted across Sydney and in major regional centres, of which 40 per cent will be spent in western Sydney. An air quality management plan will be developed in conjunction with the greater western Sydney public transport plan. That plan will improve the frequency and efficiency of public transport as well as give the people of western Sydney greater access to public transport. People who get out of their cars and onto public transport will go a long way to improving the air quality of western Sydney.

The 20-kilometre Liverpool-Parramatta transitway will receive its first stage of funding to begin the process. Of course people must feel safe when they use public transport if they are to be attracted to it, and the Government's commitment to rail safety has been unparalleled. All night trains will have security guards. In particular, women and the elderly can travel close to the guard compartment and know that if they are in distress someone will be close by to help them. The Government is committed to getting people to use public transport. The single most effective way to reduce pollution in western Sydney is to attract people onto public transport. Western Sydney has given a priority to air quality and the environment, and rightly so.

The Government will spend significant amounts of money on regional parks in my area. The Western Sydney Regional Park at Horsley Park in my electorate is the biggest recreational park in New South Wales. This year that park will get \$1.8 million for the establishment of facilities such as picnic areas, children's playgrounds, pedestrian and cycle tracks, walking tracks and horse-riding trails. I have already referred to the 1.5 million people who live in western Sydney. I congratulate the Minister for Health, the Hon. Dr A. J. Refshauge, on making a commitment to provide the growing population of western Sydney with world-class health facilities.

A number of capital works will be carried out in western Sydney at a cost of \$400 million, of which \$110 million will be expended in this budget alone. Many of those projects will benefit the people of my electorate. They include the Governor Philip Nursing Home at Penrith, at a cost of \$7.4 million; and the completion of stage one of Nepean Hospital and the continuation of stage two, for which \$27 million has been allocated in 1998-99, the total cost being \$61.2 million. The stage two redevelopment will include a much-needed women's and children's

health building. I look forward to the birth of my niece, Isabella, there tomorrow.

For the fourth budget in a row, the Carr Government has shown that providing quality health care to the people of western Sydney is at the top of its priorities. The Government has not only been able to protect patients from constant attacks on health funding by the Howard Government, but it has been able to increase its overall health spending by more than \$1 billion in its first three years. There can be no doubt that the Government is clearly delivering the goods. Education is of concern to many people in my electorate. The mums and dads of western Sydney and of my electorate demand that their children get the best possible educational opportunities, and they have every right to do so.

The budget clearly demonstrates that the Government is committed to providing our children with only the highest educational opportunities. In 1998-99 a record \$6.809 million will be spent on education. The Government will continue to implement its computers in schools policy and the budget will ensure that the Government will reach its commitment to provide 90,000 computers to schools across the State. As a local member representing a growing electorate I have had the pleasure of seeing first-hand how technology has been integrated into new school designs.

One of the real problems of new schools is that their libraries have not had the benefit of accumulating books over many years. New libraries are on-line from day one, which has given students access to incredible amounts of information. The ability of students to use that type of technology can be seen by the home pages of some schools in my electorate. Students develop skills that will be needed for their future job and education opportunities. The back-to-school allowance will once again be distributed to assist families to send their children to school.

The budget allocates funds for a program to improve the reading and writing levels of children. An amount of \$19.2 million will be spent on literacy programs in schools throughout western Sydney. A vital component is the reading recovery program which provides one-on-one instruction to children who have difficulties with reading and writing in their first years at school. It is a great comfort to many parents to know that if their children have problems at school suitable programs exist to ensure that they will not be left behind.

Once again the budget provides a substantial amount of money for roads in the Badgerys Creek

electorate. This year the completion of the widening of the M4 between Parramatta and Penrith will take place. The construction has caused traffic delays. The people who use the road on a daily basis have to be commended for their patience. Once the construction is complete the journey time between Parramatta and Penrith will be substantially reduced and western Sydney residents look forward to that day. A resident has said to me, "Where it is complete, it is sensational to drive on."

Some \$8.4 million will be spent on roads in my electorate. The Mulgoa Road and The Northern Road will be rehabilitated. More than \$900,000 will be spent upgrading Cowpasture Road from Elizabeth Drive to the proposed orbital. That road has been progressively reconstructed during the Government's term in office. That road was once aptly described as a goat track—it is no longer a hazard. I am pleased that funding has been made available for a roundabout on the corner of Explorers Way and Bennett Road—a black spot in my electorate which has caused many minor traffic accidents.

In line with the budget being focused on families, the Government can boast a huge 40 per cent increase in funding for the Department of Community Services during its first term of office. That is a real show of the heart of our Government. The Carr Labor Government will be remembered for its commitment to social justice for less fortunate people in the State. The Government will never turn its back on that commitment. That philosophy highlights the fundamental difference between the New South Wales Labor Government and the present coalition Federal Government.

The Howard Government has presided over a slash-and-burn approach to services for people in need. For example, it has cut funding to health, a measure deplored by State coalition health Ministers. It has reduced funding for child care, which has cut into the incomes of many households in my electorate. In addition, it has reduced funding for education, in particular funding for universities. The Federal Government is not just interested in the bottom line; it is obsessed with it. The Federal Government shows a blatant disregard for workers and for New South Wales.

This year New South Wales will be taxed by \$1.383 billion, money that will be spent on other States. New South Wales is short-changed by the Commonwealth Government, and the New South Wales Opposition never raises a murmur about it. But worse than that, the Federal Government is a government of division, with no clear goals and without vision. It is not a government for all

Australians. It abandons those who do not fit into its desire for a neat demographic picture, such as the poor, the needy, the migrant community, the blue collar workers, the sick, the unemployed and the elderly. The Federal Government has made people increasingly fearful, uncertain and divided. It has allowed a scapegoat mentality to exist. A parish priest in my electorate recently said to me, "The Government is trying to undermine the soul of the country. I never thought I would see a government try to divide a country so much." I totally agree with him. All of this can be contrasted with the New South Wales Labor Party; we are economically responsible, caring, considerate and visionary. The Government wants people to have a secure future through the 40 per cent increase in welfare spending and the massive increases in health spending that we have presided over for the past three years.

The Government will do this through job generation, not only in western Sydney but throughout the regions so that people can experience and contrast that security with the appalling record of the Federal Government in dealing with security. We will do this with sound fiscal management, a surplus budget and a decreased debt. This is the framework of the Carr-Egan budget. The Government's fourth budget delivers the aim of the Labor Party. People deserve to feel better than they do when they watch the antics of the Federal Government. Through all of the measures outlined in the Treasurer's speech it can be seen that this is a budget which delivers not only for the people of western Sydney, as outlined in the Western Sydney Budget Statement, but also delivers to regional New South Wales those things which will secure its future.

When people look back over this and the previous three budgets they will find that the Government hosted the Olympics without burdening the people throughout regional New South Wales, as members of the National Party continually say. The Government is doing that by paying the bills and delivering services. Through the policies of delivering education to the State and allowing liabilities to decrease, we have delivered the basis on which New South Wales will have a secure future. The Government has delivered with fairness, decency and confidence. The issues which face the battlers of western Sydney will be dealt with equitably. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [8.42 p.m.]: It is difficult to reconcile the contribution of the honourable member for Badgerys Creek with the budget papers. Her speech was strong on rhetoric but did not match the substance of the budget. The

Treasurer referred to his budget as "the eagle has landed", which is the title of a novel by Jack Higgins about a plot to kill Churchill. As has been said many times in this House it must be an early Christmas because the only eagle that has landed was a turkey in every regard. This is the fourth and last Carr budget.

Mr O'Farrell: What about the Cronulla Workers Club?

Mr KERR: I will get to the Cronulla Workers Club. During his term as Treasurer the Hon. Michael Egan has been consistently wrong when he has referred to a budget surplus. The surplus, like the Cronulla Workers Club, has turned into a deficit, as it does every year. As the Leader of the Opposition said, the Treasurer's first budget was the closest he ever came to his forecast, but he was only \$373 million out! He promised a \$238 million deficit and delivered a \$611 million deficit. That was the budget he said would set things right.

The following year he promised a modest \$5 million surplus but delivered a \$452 million deficit. No wonder the honourable member for Badgerys Creek did not remain in the Chamber; she hurried out before I mentioned the deficit. If one considers the economies of Asia and New South Wales, a deficit is definitely on the way. What is the basis for the theoretical surplus in this budget? It is the sale of assets. How many times have we heard Government members saying, as does One Nation, that they must defend public ownership? I say that \$700 million in asset sales is what finances the mirage of a budget surplus.

It is fundamental economics that if one sells assets to meet expenditure one will go the way of the Cronulla Workers Club. The Government should be raising revenue to meet expenditure. If one runs a business and flogs off its assets in order to meet debts, one would not stay in business long. It is just as well New South Wales is not a motel because all it would have would be a Treasurer and a bed. He would have flogged off the building. I do not need to tell the honourable member for Newcastle about the fate of public ownership of electricity if the Treasurer had his way.

Mr Tripodi: It would be the same thing you want.

Mr KERR: The Opposition would not simply flog off electricity without regard to jobs or the viability of Australian ownership. All of those things are being considered by the Opposition, and we are talking to the unions.

Mr Tripodi: Just like Jeff Kennett did?

Mr KERR: The Treasurer and the Premier want to emulate Jeff Kennett. As the Leader of the Opposition said, they are—

Mr Smith: Pretty poor copies.

Mr KERR: Yes, Cisco and Pancho. They want to go south of the border and raid Victoria, and bring all those industries back to New South Wales. We did not hear anything about that in the Budget Speech. The person who quoted the Victorian experience to Labor Party conferences is the Treasurer. It seems to me that there is a great gap between the leadership and the rank and file on the other side in this regard. Leaving aside the major budget document, I refer now to my electorate. My electorate will receive only \$19,365,000 from this budget. Part of that allocation will be used by Caringbah High School to upgrade its library. It is a tribute to the parents and citizens association and the school community that the Government has finally provided funding for that project. I recommend that honourable members visit Caringbah High School; indeed, they should do so in the near future as the school buildings have considerable sediment cracks. New South Wales can be proud of Caringbah High School, which is a selective high school. I have led many delegations from Caringbah High School to meet the Minister for Education and Training. The school needs more funding for the school library.

The budget provides a capital works allocation for Cronulla sewage treatment plant. In the 1995 election campaign Labor promised to provide \$130 million for tertiary treatment at that plant. However, on the eve of the next election the Government has allocated a paltry amount for that project. That means that in March next year the trucks will start rumbling at the plant and a small amount of work will be done on the project, and the Labor candidate who draws the short straw for the Cronulla seat will say that the Labor Government is keeping its promise. However, no work has commenced at the plant during this Government's four years in office.

The budget does not meet Labor's promises on tollways. However, it continues the poker machine tax and land tax. No wonder the Treasurer wants to talk about a plot to kill Churchill. This Churchillian budget taxes people in the streets, in their homes and in clubs. Ironically, the Treasurer said that this budget puts families first. Time and time again Opposition members have said that the budget taxes families first. The honourable member for Badgerys Creek referred to Jeff Kennett. One must be fair to the New South Wales Treasurer. People are always

saying that Jeff Kennett is stealing things from Sydney for Melbourne. This budget delivers—it takes something from Jeff Kennett!

Mr O'Farrell: A record.

Mr KERR: The honourable member rightly says that this budget takes a record from Jeff Kennett. As Alan Wood of the *Australian* said, the Premier and Treasurer Michael Egan have turned New South Wales into the highest taxed State in Australia. They have snatched that dubious honour from Victoria. I was probably wrong and unfair to Cisco and Pancho; they went south of the border and raided Victoria. What did they bring back with them? They were the grand finalists in the competition to have the highest taxed State in Australia, and they have done it; they brought back the title of the highest taxed State in the Commonwealth. That is terrific. Those highest taxes are a matter of Government choice.

Mr Tripodi: So are the highest services.

Mr KERR: The honourable member says, "highest services". I invite the honourable member to visit Cronulla police station. The coalition Government planned and set aside funding for a new police station in Cronulla.

Mr Tripodi: You never did.

Mr KERR: The coalition Government budgeted for that project, but Labor abandoned that project when it was elected in 1995. I invite the honourable member to inspect conditions at Cronulla police station. The honourable member referred to services. Next stop on his itinerary is an inspection of the floor at Sutherland hospital that has been upgraded, including painting the bathrooms, with funds raised by the local community. The honourable member should talk to the honourable member for Sutherland, who was instrumental in raising funds for that hospital. Next stop for the honourable member for Fairfield is an inspection of the railway stations in my electorate. There is a lack of staff on Woollooware and Caringbah railway stations, and more staff are to go.

Mr Tripodi: Do you remember the great nightrider bus?

Mr KERR: I remember the great nightrider bus. The honourable member for Northcott and I remember that the introduction of the nightrider bus resulted in increased patronage of public transport after midnight as it was safe, reliable and clean.

Mr Tripodi: Unlike the trains at the time; is that what you are saying?

Mr KERR: The honourable member should ask people in the community what form of transport they prefer to use after midnight.

Mr O'Farrell: They voted with their feet.

Mr KERR: The honourable member for Northcott rightly says that they voted with their feet. The nightrider bus was an enormous success.

Mr Tripodi: It's a long walk to Caringbah from the city.

Mr KERR: It is a long haul from the city to Caringbah, and people preferred to travel on the nightrider bus because they felt a lot safer.

Mr O'Farrell: Tell us about Cronulla Workers Club.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry): Order! The honourable member for Northcott will refrain from coaching the honourable member for Cronulla.

Mr KERR: Cronulla Workers Club was the microcosm of economic management of New South Wales. When the Treasurer was elected president of the club he promised great profits.

Mr O'Farrell: Did he promise increased services?

Mr KERR: The honourable member asks about increased services. The Treasurer's election manifesto read like a State budget. The shareholders did not receive any dividends. I do not know whether the club had a TAB but the dividends floated away. Many mums and dads who invested heavily in Cronulla Workers Club ended up out of pocket.

Mr Tripodi: How can mums and dads invest in a club?

Mr KERR: They took out debentures in the club. The penny drops. Many people lost a lot of money on their investments. That was an early warning.

Mr O'Farrell: Can you still go to Cronulla Workers Club?

Mr KERR: No. I can advise honourable members who are thinking of visiting Cronulla

Workers Club after the House rises tonight that it no longer exists. A high-rise building has been constructed on the site.

Mr Tripodi: Do the debenture holders own the building?

Mr KERR: This takes me down memory lane. At one time they had a nightclub named after the Cabinet—it was called Jokers, and it was the only place to make a profit. The people of my electorate have happy memories about Cronulla Workers Club. I remind the Treasurer that a prophet is not without honour in his home town but his home town is without a profit at its club. He did not include that in his application for the position of Treasurer. In conclusion, this budget promises a great deal. As with previous Labor budgets, it will be in the red but it will not deliver services. The Social Justice Budget Statement should be examined, as the Treasurer's previous social justice budget statements have been examined. The previous speaker spoke about gains for western Sydney. Does anyone in western Sydney believe they are better off now than they were in 1995? Roads are still congested, schools have not improved and the public transport system that was being upgraded by Bruce Baird has stalled. Western Sydney has suffered a reversal of progress. This budget is the final budget of the Carr Government. The budget papers constitute the longest suicide note of any government in the State's history. Next year's budget will be the post mortem.

Mr O'Farrell: The first Phillips' budget.

Mr KERR: Yes, the first Phillips' budget. However, I wish Treasurer Phillips all the best as he will be faced with a huge deficit.

Mr Tripodi: He will need all the help he can get.

Mr KERR: He certainly will. The Carr Government has made it very difficult for him. The people of the Cronulla electorate have learnt to expect little by way of road services from this Government. It is a pity that this Government did not keep its promises to fight pollution on our beaches, which are an asset of all the citizens of Australia, not just the residents of Cronulla. On the eve of an election electorates receive token funding to attempt to clean up beach pollution. It will be interesting to see how much work has been undertaken on 27 March 1999.

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [9.02 p.m.]: I congratulate the Carr Government on its best budget yet. It has been well received by the people of New

South Wales and reported in a positive light by the media. This will not be the last Carr budget; there are many more to come. In April 1998 New South Wales employment increased by 20,100, which meant the unemployment rate fell to 7.2 per cent, the lowest in New South Wales since 1990—0.7 per cent lower than the national average. This result was achieved because of a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the Government's sound management and sensible decision to implement the national competition policy, much of which has been forced upon us by the Federal Government. A further reason was the New South Wales economy. This State is fortunate to have the most diversified and advanced economy of any State in Australia, and that has enabled us to ride out the shock of the current Asian crisis.

New South Wales will also weather the impact of the Pauline Hanson factor despite the inability of the Federal Government to cope with it. The economies of New South Wales and Australia are suffering because of their open nature and their reliance on trade. Tourist numbers from Asia have decreased and the number of foreign students taking up positions in educational institutions has fallen significantly, all of which is having an impact on our current account deficit and revenue flow to the State's education institutions. The Carr Government is the first New South Wales Government to reduce net financial liabilities. The honourable member for Cronulla made mention of the State's level of debt.

I merely repeat that this is the first Government to reduce the State's net financial liabilities, which amounted to \$1.9 billion in 1995. Total net public sector debt is down \$1 billion and total net liabilities are down \$3.5 billion, which represents a saving of \$1,600 per family. The Government has increased family services, police numbers and education services, and has provided improved health services at the same time as it has reduced the level of family indebtedness. The total net worth of the New South Wales public sector is \$68 billion, which is approximately three times that of Victoria's net worth of \$20 billion, despite New South Wales population not being three times that of Victoria. This Government has provided a model for State management.

I now refer to some of Labor's priorities that are addressed in the budget. The most important among them being health, upon which \$6.6 billion will be spent this year, an increase of \$426 million over funding allocated last year and an increase of \$1.34 billion over that made available by the coalition in 1994. These increases have been

achieved despite the Federal Government avoiding its responsibilities to meet additional costs resulting from declining private health insurance membership, an ageing population, and increased costs primarily attributable to the adoption and implementation of new hospital technologies in this State.

The Federal Government has abrogated its responsibilities. Despite demographic pressures, the high expense of new health technology and reduced private health insurance coverage, the Carr Government has increased health expenditure. I am proud that this year health expenditure has had a regional focus. The Government has acknowledged the significance of regional and rural development and its policies reflect that priority. The massive capital works program of the Government will foster economic growth, job creation, income security, and investment growth in rural and regional New South Wales.

Some of the budget initiatives include the new Lithgow District Hospital at a cost of \$26 million; the Long Jetty Community Health Centre, \$1.8 million; stage one of the Maitland Hospital redevelopment program, \$28 million; stage one of the Nepean Hospital redevelopment, \$99 million; the new clinical service block at Wollongong Hospital, \$51 million; and a new hospital at Coffs Harbour, \$54 million. The budget will provide an estimated \$86 million to redevelop Campbelltown and Camden hospitals and local community health centres.

Hickman House at Wollongong Hospital will be replaced at a cost of \$62.5 million. New community health centres at Erina and Tuggerah and a new day surgery facility at Wollongong Hospital will be built at a cost of \$11.6 million. In Newcastle the emergency department and intensive care unit at John Hunter Hospital will be rebuilt, and a cancer research unit will be developed at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital at an estimated cost of \$13.6 million. In addition, a new \$4.3 million in-patient facility will be built at Wallsend District Hospital. The budget will contribute capital works projects, investment, jobs and income security to regional areas of New South Wales. That is in addition to the benefits and spending priorities for the metropolitan area of Sydney. In the Fairfield electorate Liverpool Hospital has been upgraded to the standard of a teaching hospital. That hospital is but one example of the Government delivering on the priority of shifting health services closer to where people live, thereby reducing the stress, anguish and suffering of families who need to be close to their loved ones when they are receiving medical attention in hospital.

The way the community has embraced the development and upgrade of Liverpool Hospital demonstrates once again the Government's commitment to the provision of health services. As I have said, in addition to that the Government has incorporated into the budget a strategy of trying to achieve a double benefit for rural areas by generating employment and income security and, at the same time, implementing health services, thereby reversing the funding cuts that occurred in the seven years of the Greiner and Fahey governments. Let me compare the capital works programs to which I have referred with the contribution made by the Fahey and Greiner governments. Honourable members will remember the Port Macquarie Hospital, the great privatisation experiment that the Auditor-General described as a complete disaster. We actually paid for that hospital 2½ times over. That was the coalition's contribution to Port Macquarie, which might be regarded as part of the Liberal heartland: the privatisation of a hospital that cost as much as 2½ hospitals and was a complete disaster. At the end of the day that translated into reduced services.

Honourable members will be aware of how badly that decision was received by the residents of Port Macquarie. They will remember the number of resident action groups, medical practitioner action groups and others opposed to the privatisation of the hospital. That is merely one example of what the coalition has done to the health system. Honourable members will recall what happened in Victoria when the Government was involved in the biggest downscaling of the public health system in the history of this country. We all remember the protests that occurred right across that State as hospital after hospital was closed and services were cut.

Mr Beck: On a point of order. There is no Minister at the table and it is 9.13 p.m.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry): Order! No point of order is involved.

Mr TRIPODI: Honourable members recall the nightmare slash-and-burn treatment that the public health system in Victoria received from the Kennett Government. Hospital closure followed hospital closure. One might ask the reason for that. At the end of the day it was to fund a mate and his casino. What a financial disaster that was! All that slashing and burning and closing of public hospitals and schools and cutbacks in services and at the end of the day it translated into funding their mates in a venture with a major casino owner. I move to the budget allocation for education. The Government has made a \$7 billion commitment to the future of our children. All the academic literature makes it plain

that education must feature in any sensible economic development strategy. The upgrading, the advancement and the diversity of human capital needs to be encouraged. The literature indicates that investment in education must be an absolute priority for a dynamic, evolving and organic economy. It is that investment in human capital, which those opposite probably consider a waste of money, that is actually an investment in the future of this State. The Government is very proud of that achievement.

In the medium term New South Wales and its economy will benefit enormously while the unfortunate citizens of Victoria have had their children's education slashed to pieces. In the medium term and in the long term the Victorian economy will suffer because the numerous literacy problems and generally lower standard of education will mean that the State becomes less attractive to development and investment in tertiary industry, the service industries and the information technology industries. Those sunrise industries are largely the major employers and will increasingly become the employers of the future. Those investment decisions will favour a State where the level of education and innovation, knowledge, and technology embodied in New South Wales residents will stand out by a country mile and New South Wales will be the preferred State in which to invest.

The expenditure of \$7 billion on education is an increase of \$318 million over last year's funding. Since 1994-95 funding has increased by \$1.2 billion. The previous speaker claimed that there has been no increase in services. Here are the facts. An extra \$1.34 billion will be allocated to health, and an extra \$1.2 billion to education. Those two allocations clearly identify why the Government makes no apology for the fact that it taxes homes worth more than \$1 million. The Government makes no apology for the gamut of taxes it has been forced to introduce, because at the end of the day people understand the basic fact that those who get more will obviously have to pay more. That is a basic fact and Labor governments are not shy about it. They believe in sensible moderate levels of taxation to fund sensible moderate levels of spending. That level of spending is important to the State and to the future of the citizens of the State. People do not have difficulty understanding the logic in what the Government is doing.

In addition, 2,250 additional teaching positions have been created and the Government is proud of that. It means that the teacher-student ratio is decreasing. There are fewer students per teacher. Every student is getting more attention. The Government stands by that decision, even though it

will cost more money. The Government believes it is an important priority for the State and is fundamentally reversing all the Metherell funding cuts. Contrasting New South Wales with Victoria, that State has reduced the number of teachers by 9,000, while New South Wales increased the number of teachers by 2,250. It is fairly clear where the money is being spent. It is not being squandered. Young children are receiving the benefit of that education and that is a sensible, logical investment in the future of this State.

An amount of \$65 million dollars will be spent on literary initiatives, which are important, and \$901 million will be spent on rural education programs. In my electorate teaching people the basics of the English language and maths and upgrading the standard of education they receive is extremely important. The people in my area are trying to cope with the cuts that have been made to AMES, the Adult Migrant English Service. Unfortunately that service was discontinued in Fairfield, which has the highest concentration of immigrants in this State. Members on the Opposition benches have always preached about the significance of standing on one's own two feet and the significance of helping oneself and taking pride in one's achievements.

When an immigrant arrives in this country one basic tool is needed to be able to do that, and it is something to which every immigrant is entitled, that is, an education in English and an ability to speak the English language. The Federal Government has quashed that. It has told immigrants that when they get here it does not want them to learn English; it will not fund their education in English. But at the same time members opposite talk about introducing a private member's bill to make English the formal and recognised language of this State. Their hypocrisy never ends. It would be more sensible if members opposite rang their Federal colleagues and asked them to bring back the program that allowed immigrants to learn English so they can fulfil the dream they have when they come to this country.

The budget provides \$68 million to be spent on the technology in schools program. New South Wales has a higher rate of access to the Internet than the United States. It is important to teach young people the significance of information technology and they have a global connection to the world through the education program in high schools. They are being taught to cope with globalisation. Unlike the National Party and One Nation, who want to stop the process of globalisation, Labor is teaching young people to keep up with change rather than put their heads in the sand. [*Time expired.*]

Mr SMALL (Murray) [9.22 p.m.]: This will be the last opportunity I have to speak to the budget bills in this House. I have seen 14 budgets introduced into this Parliament, and there have been good and bad from both sides of politics. However, for the people in my electorate and for country people generally this budget is one of the meanest. It is certainly the toughest and tightest for the people in my electorate. In correspondence to me the Treasurer identified a list of asset acquisition projects within my electorate for the 1998-99 financial year that amount to \$45,721,000. That may sound like a great deal of money but during the time the coalition Government was in office the electorate never received anything less than \$100 million. It is not hard to see there has been a substantial cutback in funding to my electorate.

I have been a great supporter of the Olympic Games. I regard the success of the Olympic bid as a wonderful feat for Australia and for Sydney. I worked hard to promote the Olympic Games in 1993. Unfortunately, people in my electorate are suffering because of the lack of capital works and improvements in sporting facilities. I will endeavour to ensure that after the Olympic structures have been built rural New South Wales receives its equitable share of funding for infrastructure and sporting facilities from whoever is in government—and I believe that will be the coalition.

Health and education are always high priorities in any budget. The only funding for capital works in the Murray electorate is \$262,000 for replacement facilities at the Balranald District Hospital and \$97,000 for Finley Hospital, although \$54,000 will be spent on health services in the Aboriginal settlement of Cummergunja. Jerilderie, a town of 1,000 people, has been fighting desperately to secure a multipurpose service facility. The people of Jerilderie have a good hospital, an ambulance station, community services and facilities that have been extended in recent years. It is not much to ask for a multipurpose service, given that that town has enjoyed good health services in the past. Last year Jerilderie lost its doctor and the Greater Murray Health Service took away doctor visiting rights. That was a most unsatisfactory move for Jerilderie and the people of that town have every right to be annoyed.

The doctor who is there at the moment, Dr John, is an excellent doctor and his wife is working with him. Together they provide excellent health services. They have visiting rights to the Jerilderie hospital in emergency circumstances only. They have visiting rights at a hospital 40 kilometres away,

but that is not satisfactory, and the people of Jerilderie, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Tim Fischer, and I have been working to ensure that Jerilderie is on the list for an MPS. That would cost very little money, as most of the buildings are already there and are in good condition.

It upsets me that the budget contains no provision for an MPS for Jerilderie even though it has been requested. Recurrent aged-care funding requires Federal Government approval but the Greater Murray Health Service either has not prioritised Jerilderie in the top 10 for the next 12 months or the Minister for Health or someone in the department has not acknowledged the urgent need for an MPS in Jerilderie. Deniliquin Hospital was also to receive approximately \$14 million in the budget to bring the main part of the hospital up to date so that necessary surgical procedures can be carried out.

Perhaps some six years ago former Minister for Health Ron Phillips approved the construction of a new ambulance station at Deniliquin to the value of \$500,000. It was hoped that the station would be built within two years, but it was certainly to have been completed over a four-year budget arrangement. The Labor Government has not effected construction of the new ambulance station. Nothing has come of earlier plans and the ambulance station at Deniliquin is an absolute disgrace. I recommend that a new ambulance station be built on the same site as the hospital, where there would be room, particularly given the redevelopment taking place. A new multipurpose service, MPS, was to be built at Wentworth. However, the local hostel committee for aged care was not able to arrange a board of management agreement to work in with the MPS. It is my hope that the opportunity for an MPS has not been lost forever, because it is essential that Wentworth has an MPS.

Certainly Wentworth has excellent hostel facilities, but there is a need for aged-care beds. The \$2.1 million that was to go to Wentworth should at least have been identified to go to Jerilderie, where it is urgently needed. All of the health services in my region need to be strengthened. The Hay Hospital has been run extremely well but services have been cut substantially. The people of Hay are very concerned that their obstetric services be retained. Most mothers have been going to Griffith or Deniliquin for obstetric services. I know that the services are still provided at Hay and I would be extremely disappointed if they were cut back further and lost. It is necessary that the town of Hay retains its health services.

New boards of management are essential for each hospital, as was the case before smaller regional hospital boards were amalgamated into greater area health services. The Greater Murray Area Health Service covers 27 or 28 hospitals and 250,000 people. I am sorry to say that it is not working at all in the way that it should, the way that it was meant to. I am sure that a new government will change the system dramatically and replace large hospital boards, particularly in smaller regional areas. Doctors' visiting rights is another issue of great importance. At small hospitals such as the Jerilderie District Hospital doctors are being denied visiting rights. That only puts a nail in the coffin and stops a hospital from operating successfully.

Tocumwal has a wonderful hostel, built some six years ago. At present the local Lions Club is building a 20-bed aged-care hostel. The Lions Club has shown the initiative to raise funds for and build the hostel. However, approval for the hostel has still not been obtained. This is a Federal issue. It is vital that approval for recurrent funding be forthcoming in order to look after aged people who require accommodation in a hostel. All 12 hospitals in my area are in need of vast improvements. We have had excellent staff, but staff levels have been cut and many staff members have become very despondent under present management practices. It saddens not only me but most of my constituents to see what is happening in health. I do not believe that the health system is short of money; frankly, I believe that it is all to do with management. Present circumstances reflect a lack of good management.

Many schools in my area are in need of funding. The school at Finley has many old buildings. There was approval for the rebuilding of school classrooms at Finley, but that has not occurred. Approval was granted about two years ago and agreement was reached but funding has not been forthcoming. I wonder whether the Olympic Games may have had an impact on that funding. I certainly hope not, but I can think of no other reason for the lack of progress. The Hay war memorial high school is the only war memorial high school in New South Wales. This magnificent school was built after the First World War as a memorial to those who lost their lives. The school is in desperate need of a multipurpose school assembly hall.

The Barham high school and the north Deniliquin public school also require assembly halls. Those are the three schools out of the 67 in my electorate that do not have a multipurpose assembly facility. I am very sad about the lack of those assembly halls, and they are on my wish list for the

future. Previously roads funding for my area amounted to approximately \$30 million to \$32 million, including allocations for the Sturt, Cobb, Newell and Riverina highways. Funding is still being allocated to those roads. The main roads project in my electorate is on the Cobb Highway. An area north of Hay between Booligal and Ivanhoe has a dirt track across heavy grey-black country.

When the coalition took office in 1988 Matt Singleton visited the area and, because it was a very wet period, witnessed the very difficult conditions that prevailed. Even today there are some 53 days each year when vehicles cannot traverse the track. Rainfall stops the movement of wool, stock and commodities needed by the farming industry. I am pleased that the coalition Government and the present Government have recognised that stretch of road as a priority. Only 12 kilometres remain unsealed. The provision of \$1.75 million for the road in this budget is welcome. That allocation will not quite complete the sealing of the road; perhaps about four or five kilometres will remain unsealed. We would like to think that sealing of the road could be completed this year, but there is a certain guarantee that it will be completed in 1999. I thank the Government for the funds for the road.

The road project to which I have referred has been a special undertaking of past and present transport and roads Ministers. The Roads and Traffic Authority has worked extremely well. The Cobb Highway Action Group, and its secretary, Helen Rogers, and chairman, Clive Linton, have done an excellent job. I praise all who have been involved. This budget provides an allocation of \$10,000 for environmental vegetation enhancement along the highway near Jerilderie. A sum of \$2.62 million is allocated for electricity at Balranald and Wentworth, where a new transformer and new transmission lines are necessary. I point out that this funding was gazetted the year before last, in the 1997-98 budget, but the work has not been undertaken. I sincerely hope that this year the money will be utilised and the project completed. This is a project that very much involves Australian Inland Energy.

Only \$513,000 has been provided for new housing at Balranald. That is the entire housing budget for my electorate. How pathetic! Housing is required in Corowa, Deniliquin, Hay and Moama and all other towns that receive nothing. The funding I have referred to is virtually all that is identified in the budget for my electorate. For irrigation there is not \$1 mentioned within the capital works, yet in the Murray and southern districts about \$11 million is normally spent on drainage each year. Funding for drainage may well

be found within the allocation to the Department of Agriculture for land and water management plans that have already been approved. I look forward to such an acknowledgment. Agriculturally based drainage work is a main driving economic force within the Murray electorate. The economic benefit that flows from good farm management assisted by backup support and funding cannot be denied.

I am sorry to say that my electorate will be cut up into four parts to be distributed between Albury, Murrumbidgee, Wagga Wagga and Broken Hill electorates. Griffith is to retain its electoral office, but Deniliquin, a main regional centre, should also be allowed to keep its electoral office. Government facilities funding will therefore be necessary to cover offices at those two major centres. I value highly the outstanding work done by the excellent secretaries working in those offices. I am particularly appreciative of the efforts of Ms Faye Falahey and Ms Merilyn Hussey, who are now working in the electoral office for the Murray electorate.

I will retire at the conclusion of this parliamentary session in March next year. It has been a pleasure to serve my constituents during four parliamentary terms, with seven years in opposition and seven years in government—a balance in my parliamentary life that I have thoroughly enjoyed. I also give thanks and appreciation to my wife, Judy, and my family for their wonderful work in helping me. I have been deeply honoured to have been able to represent the people of the Murray electorate. The Murray electorate was first established in 1859 and now is about to face its demise. I wish all the very best for the future to the candidates who will become newly elected members representing the four adjacent electorates. The honour of serving in the Parliament will be theirs.

Ms ALLAN (Blacktown—Minister for the Environment) [9.42 p.m.]: It is too early for accolades for the honourable member for Murray but he and I were elected on the same day to the Chamber. I have very much enjoyed the time that we have spent here since 1988. As he said, we have shared Opposition and Government. Over the years I have appreciated his extreme dedication to his constituents in the Murray electorate.

I want to talk about the significance of the budget for local residents in Blacktown and western Sydney. The Carr Government, with a budget that has put families first, has once again secured major funding for the construction of services and creation of jobs in Blacktown and western Sydney. The Government's commitment to western Sydney is

manifest in the introduction for the first time of the specific Western Sydney Budget Statement. It is a wonderful read for all honourable members concerned about investing in the future of western Sydney. The budget represents an important part of our major infrastructure and services program for the Blacktown electorate. Health, housing, roads, transport, police and the environment have received major funding which will secure greater services and infrastructure for Blacktown city.

More than \$40 million has been allocated to build the new world-class Blacktown Hospital and to upgrade lifesaving hospital equipment. Blacktown and Seven Hills police will receive vital communications equipment upgrades which will improve services to the local community. More than \$3.8 million worth of major improvements to visitor facilities and roads will also be completed in our three regional parks, in western Sydney, Rouse Hill and Parramatta. An amount of \$200,000 has been provided for repairs and restoration works to the historic Rouse Hill House Museum.

Western Sydney will also participate in a \$1 million air quality study due to be completed in 2000. Nearly \$22 million has been allocated for road and railway maintenance works and major improvement works have been approved to provide safer driving and commuter conditions for local residents. An amount of \$8.7 million will be spent on security initiatives for Blacktown railway station, train stabling yards and infrastructure for operations and station improvements before the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. An amount of \$13 million will be spent on the Richmond line amplification project to provide greater efficiency and service for passengers.

These works further enhance the security and passenger improvement initiatives that the Carr Labor Government has delivered to the Blacktown electorate. An amount of \$12 million will be spent on noise attenuation and widening of the M4 motorway from Parramatta to Penrith. The Olympic Co-ordination Authority will spend \$5.2 million on the construction of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games softball centre at Blacktown and \$20 million on the construction of the Olympic equestrian centre at Horsley Park. The Department of Housing will spend more than \$4 million on minor works and will provide housing in Blacktown, Seven Hills and Toongabbie.

The Carr Government has once again delivered vital and necessary services and infrastructure to the Blacktown electorate that I am proud to represent. Although the previous coalition government gutted

services and stopped necessary works in western Sydney the Government has not shirked reinstatement of vital community programs, commencement of vital infrastructure works and implementation of policies to keep Blacktown and Parramatta among the nation's top business centres and community-focused regions.

In the best Labor traditions of commonsense economic policy the budget is fiscally responsible overall. In an Asian environment of fiscal turmoil and banking crisis, New South Wales can stand secure, our financial house in order. New South Wales has the best health system in Australia. The Carr Labor Government has worked to deliver accessible and quality services of the highest standard. The budget alone increases the health budget by \$426 million since the last financial year. The health budget is now \$1.3 billion greater than in 1994—a significant and responsible increase.

I particularly note the \$461 million commitment to the disability services program, a very important \$43 million increase over last year's allocation. The Cumberland-Prospect disability forum and other organisations have played a laudable role in speaking on behalf of people with disabilities. That money will deliver new respite beds to the Cumberland region before Christmas. I congratulate the Minister for Community Services on her successful effort to secure extra funding for some of the most deserving and too often overlooked people in our community. The people of Penrith are fortunate to have such a formidable and caring representative in the Chamber.

The budget again builds on the Carr Government's ongoing commitment to preserve and protect our natural environment. A total of \$395 million will be allocated to the environment portfolio for annual expenses—more than double the allocation in 1994-95. During the last three years the Government has declared 49 new parks and reserves at a total cost of almost \$50 million. In 1998-99 the Government will spend \$15 million on the establishment of new national parks and regional parks, and an additional \$14.2 million on Jervis Bay National Park.

The Government continues its commitment to waste minimisation. In 1998-99 the Government will provide \$25.1 million for the Waste Planning and Management Fund to support regional waste board programs and operations and other waste management initiatives. The Government will provide \$50 million under the country town water supply and sewerage scheme for backlog water supply and sewerage projects in rural areas. To

assist local government and public land managers in improving storm water management, the Government will provide \$15.2 million in 1998-99 as part of a total \$60 million package.

The total recurrent appropriation for the Environment Protection Authority in the coming financial year has been increased by 28.6 per cent—up from \$89.4 million last financial year to \$115 million. The increase in recurrent expenditure has been channelled into programs to improve air quality, waste and water quality across the State, with specific initiatives for these areas totalling \$41.65 million in 1998-99. Improving water quality across New South Wales will continue to be a major focus for the EPA in the next 12 months. The Government has allocated \$15.2 million for the next phase of the stormwater trust three-year program to halt the devastating effects of stormwater on our waterways.

Funding allocated to the Environment Protection Authority in 1998-99 includes a recurrent budget allocation of \$114.9 million, which represents an increase of nearly 29 per cent over the past financial year. In real terms funding for the EPA over the past four State budgets has increased by more than 40 per cent. In 1998-99 the total expenditure on the EPA's waste program has increased by more than 50 per cent from the previous year to \$33.2 million. The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the waste reform package by confirming approval for more than \$25 million for the Waste Planning and Management Fund. It will be interesting to see whether the coalition will make a commitment to maintain that type and extent of expenditure on the Waste Planning and Management Fund in the lead-up to the next election. Of course, this amount completes the Government's commitment to the original \$60 million pledged to its five-year reform package.

The waste fund provides financial support for programs to help minimise the overall volume of waste being produced by society and to promote effective programs for reusing, recycling or reprocessing waste. Honourable members have heard a lot from the coalition about the need to hypothecate waste levies into waste minimisation and the community generally. However, we have not heard a specific commitment from the coalition that it will ensure the continuation of that fund after the next financial year. To improve the health and sustainability of New South Wales rivers and waterways, expenditure for water and catchments has increased by more than 57 per cent to \$36.5 million in 1998-99 as compared with 1997-98

figures. This includes a grant of \$15.2 million to the stormwater trust.

In the 1998-99 budget the allocation for the National Parks and Wildlife Service is more than double the funding provided by the Fahey coalition Government in its last year of office. Over the past three years the Government has declared nearly 50 new parks and reserves and will spend \$15 million on establishing new national parks and regional parks in the next financial year. Apart from this achievement the Carr Government has also created a marine park at Solitary Islands and one at Jervis Bay, conserving 93,000 hectares of sensitive marine ecosystems. My colleague the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries has joined me in the Chamber tonight. He shares with me joint management responsibilities for those marine parks.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been given \$6 million to fulfil its obligations under the Threatened Species Conservation Act introduced by the Government two years ago. The NPWS capital works allocation has been boosted by \$23 million in the 1998-99 financial year. This increase is more than the total capital works budget that the coalition was prepared to give to that agency only six years ago. In 1992-93 all it gave to the NPWS was a woeful \$20.7 million. In 1993-94 the service received only \$25 million. The Government has not simply made idle commitments, it has provided the money to enable the obligations of the NPWS to be met. The capital works budget the Government has made available to the service in 1998-99 is almost \$60 million.

That is about three times the amount made available by the former Government in 1993-94. The capital works program provides \$46.1 million for the continuation of major works commenced in prior years and nearly \$14 million for minor works including \$9.7 million for the reconstruction of the Alpine Way, \$2.7 million for ongoing roadworks in the Kościuszko National Park, \$1.6 million for fire management and pest species management capital works initiatives, and \$7.4 million for land acquisitions. The provision of these additional resources by the Government has enabled funding to be directed to key priority areas such as upgrading fire trails, firefighting and pest species control.

The capital program also provides \$2.3 million for the development of a new visitors centre and roadworks at Parramatta Park. Western Sydney is home to more than 1.5 million people, or 43 per cent of Sydney's population. The region is one of Australia's economic powerhouses, producing goods

and services worth more than \$35 billion per annum or 24 per cent of the State's domestic product. Western Sydney has a predominantly younger and more multicultural work force. It has some of the State's most urbanised areas next to natural jewels such as the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury-Nepean rivers system. The establishment of regional parks in western Sydney is a major environmental initiative—further proof of the Carr Government's environmental credentials.

These regional parks provide passive recreation areas and help to maintain biodiversity. They include the Rouse Hill Regional Park, the Leacock Regional Park, the Parramatta Regional Park and the Western Sydney Regional Park, which, when fully established, will occupy 1,000 hectares and provide habitat for native flora and fauna as well as picnic areas, children's playgrounds, pedestrian and cycle tracks, tracks for long-distance walkers, horse-riding trails and ponds. It is not only in the area of the Environment Protection Authority and the National Parks and Wildlife Service that this budget has delivered. I emphasise that for two other major agencies within my portfolio, the Zoological Parks Board and the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, this budget represents good news.

The budget provides \$3.5 million for the redevelopment of facilities at Taronga Zoo, which includes the Asiatic elephant facility, the seal enclosures, the Kodiak bear facility and the monkey pits. This funding will see naturalistic environments built for these animals and ensure that Taronga remains a world-class zoological institution. It is important that the Government has highlighted Taronga Zoo in the lead-up to the Olympics because that zoo will attract hundreds of thousands of visitors before and during the Olympic Games. This Government is one that the elephants at the zoo will never forget.

As far as the Royal Botanic Gardens are concerned I congratulate the new director, Mr Frank Howarth, for putting together appropriate strategies in the past 12 months to ensure that the gardens have benefited from the budget. The Government has allocated nearly \$2 million in the 1998-99 budget to improve the maintenance of the historic Farm Cove seawall prior to the Sydney Olympics. The opening Olympic event, the triathlon, will be staged in and around this showpiece precinct during the 2000 Games. The budget has been successful not only for the people of western Sydney but also for individuals and groups who remain concerned and committed to a strong environmental agenda from the Government. Unfortunately, the performance of the Government on these types of issues, particularly

in relation to expenditure of the environmental dollar, contrasts starkly with the performance of not only the Federal Government but some State governments which are currently controlled by coalition parties.

In Victoria there has been a major underresourcing of key environmental agencies such as the equivalent of the parks agencies and the Environment Protection Authority. We have also seen a decreasing commitment in South Australia and Western Australia to comparable agencies at a time when the New South Wales Government is trebling its expenditure in the environment area. Some other State environment protection agencies are starved for resources. Members of this Chamber and the Legislative Council know of the enormous criticism levelled at politicians by the community at present. Some criticism is thoroughly deserved but other criticism is highly simplistic. It is important that the Government continues to deliver in all vital areas. Members of Parliament should not be intimidated by the contempt in which we are generally held as a genre, as a group of politicians, and continue to ensure that we invest in the future for ourselves and our children.

Two weeks ago, when I was in New Zealand for a ministerial convention, I was made aware of general community concerns about a whole range of public sector cutbacks that were occurring in emergency services, including firefighting, police and ambulance services. That is not a feature of this State and is certainly not a feature of this budget. This budget has not only maintained a financial commitment to a range of education, environment, health, transport and law and order services, but it has dramatically increased those allocations compared with the allocations of previous coalition governments. I look forward to the next seven or eight months, when the Government will focus more acutely on its achievements and its continued investment in the people of New South Wales. I look forward to working with my Labor colleagues to reiterate the message that the Government has not only protected the public sector—

Dr Macdonald: Frantic pork-barrelling.

Ms ALLAN: The honourable member's allegation is interesting. Unfortunately, he just entered the Chamber so he missed most of my speech. As he purports to be interested in the environment, I am sure he will take the opportunity to read my speech in *Hansard*. The Government's investment in a range of environment areas is not pork-barrelling; it is compensating for the years of neglect by coalition governments in New South

Wales. There is a distinct lack of pork-barrelling in the budget.

The budget contains many allocations for projects in western Sydney. I assure honourable members that that is compensation for moneys not spent in the past. Recently the honourable member for Manly asked an idiotic question about how people can get to the northern beaches. At the time the Minister for Transport was answering important questions about public transport in western Sydney. The honourable member for Manly and others should hop on a government-sponsored bus to the northern beaches. Obviously, the honourable member and his constituents take for granted services that have been provided since time immemorial. Unfortunately, such services simply do not exist west of Ryde, where most of Sydney's population lives.

People living west of Ryde do not take public bus services for granted as they do not exist. At this stage the Government is not investing in a massive public bus program. However, it is working with private networks not only to improve the existing public train service but also to ensure that good, reliable, safe and regular services are provided for the people of western Sydney, who do not take such services for granted. People living in western Sydney simply want existing services to be improved. There is a distinct lack of pork-barrelling in this budget.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Rixon.

BILLS RETURNED

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

Police Legislation Amendment (Protective Security Group) Bill

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council with amendments:

Energy Services Corporations Amendment (TransGrid Corporatisation) Bill
Mines Inspection Amendment Bill
Traffic Amendment (Penalties and Disqualifications) Bill.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE UPON SMALL BUSINESS

Motion, by leave, by Mr Martin agreed to:

- (1) That the terms of reference for the Joint Standing Committee upon Small Business be amended by inserting the following:

- (7) That should either House stand adjourned and the Committee agree to any report before the Houses resume sitting:

- (a) the Committee have leave to send any such report, minutes and evidence taken before it to the Clerk of the House;
- (b) the documents shall be printed and published and the Clerk shall forthwith take such action as is necessary to give effect to the order of the House; and
- (c) the documents shall be laid upon the table of the House at its next sitting.

- (2) That a message be sent to the Legislative Council acquainting it of this resolution and requesting the Council pass a similar resolution.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Dr MACDONALD (Manly) [10.05 p.m.]: I shall comment briefly on the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which contains a package of minor amendments to about 20 Acts. The message from the Government is that we should trust that the amendments are non-controversial. I shall refer to only one or two amendments and an amendment that I believe should be included to correct a drafting error in the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. This bill contains about 40 extremely complex amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Before the bill passes through the upper House I seek an assurance from the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries or the Premier, who has carriage of this legislation, that the various advocacy groups currently examining the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, and the other groups consulted about this bill, have given it a tick as many of the amendments relate to integrated development assessment provisions.

I draw the attention of honourable members to the amendment to the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. Currently, the Act applies to land acquired under section 15 of the Forestry Act 1916 for the purposes of a State forest if the land was also acquired for the purpose of a timber plantation. The explanatory note on page 19 states that the amendment will remove an anomaly and make it clear that all land that is State forest, or that is acquired for the purposes of a State forest, is excluded from the operation of an Act. I understand that the Opposition will address concerns about this

amendment by seeking to amend the legislation in the upper House.

Basically, this legislation provides that land with important vegetation which is acquired ultimately for the purposes of a plantation can be cleared without any reference to requirements under the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. That is a ridiculous exemption and, therefore, in Committee I will move an amendment to the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. I am concerned that the Act contains a drafting error, which was pointed out by the Environmental Defender's Office, which could potentially confuse proceedings. My office staff have consulted the Minister for Land and Water Conservation and other Ministers about this matter. I believe there is tacit acceptance that the Act contains a drafting error, but the Government is not prepared to accept my proposed amendment because, apparently, the Native Vegetation Conservation Act is so sensitive that it cannot be amended.

Parliamentary Counsel agrees that the Act contains a drafting error. If the error is not corrected by this bill, it will not be corrected until legislation is introduced later in the year. In the meantime prospective litigants will be even more confused. The drafting error appeared in part 5.2 of schedule 5 to the Native Vegetation Conservation Act, which amended the Land and Environment Court Act 1979. Clause 2 of part 5.2 inserted a new section 20(1)(de) into the Land and Environment Court Act as follows:

(de) proceedings under section 45 or 64 of the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*.

Section 20(1) of the Land and Environment Court Act is the section which sets out the class 4 jurisdiction of the Land and Environment Court, that is, the civil enforcement jurisdiction. One would expect therefore that the provisions referred to in section 20(1)(de) to relate to civil action under the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. However, section 64 of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act deals with proceedings for offences, and this falls under the class 5 jurisdiction of the court. Clause 2 of schedule 5 should have referred to section 63, rather than section 64, of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act, which deals with the restraint of breaches under that Act.

The section reference was simply a drafting error. Two consequences flow from this error. The first is that the failure to include a reference to section 63 of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act in section 20(1)(de) of the Land and Environment Court Act casts doubt over the ability

of the public to bring civil action to enforce the provisions of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. Second, the inclusion of a reference to section 64 of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act, the mistaken reference, has the absurd result that proceedings for criminal offences under the Native Vegetation Conservation Act are included in the civil jurisdiction of the court, presumably with civil rules of court procedure applying. What a nonsense!

A drafting error was made and the opportunity has been provided to correct it. Parliamentary Counsel has confirmed that the section reference is merely a drafting error. He has advised that if nothing is done to rectify the error in this session, he will rectify it in the next statute law revision bill as an amending schedule to the bill. It will be most unfortunate if, in the event that this drafting error is not corrected, the public is prevented from bringing an action to enforce the Native Vegetation Conservation Act before November simply because of that drafting error. In essence the bill attracts no fundamental objections other than on the complexity of the amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The upper House will deal with the problem of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. I seek the support of this House in the Committee stage to support an amendment that merely corrects a drafting error.

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries) [10.12 p.m.], in reply: This legislation has generated much interest and complaints have been made about the proposed amendments to the Subordinate Legislation Act. First and foremost are the minor and petty statements about the failure to honour the undertaking to consult where practicable with the Regulation Review Committee before amendments are made to the Subordinate Legislation Act. It is acknowledged that the committee received prior notification except in relation to the Dangerous Goods Regulation and regulations to be repealed by the Marine Safety Bill. They were late proposals brought about by certain circumstances.

Every effort was made to effect a remaking of the Dangerous Goods Regulation before the due date. However, additional consultation time is required to ensure that industry and the public have appropriate input to the replacement regulation. The Marine Safety Regulations are scheduled to be repealed pursuant to the Marine Safety Bill. The extension of these regulations is purely a precautionary measure in case the enactment and commencement of the bill are delayed. The Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will enable the continuation of outdated regulations that should have been reviewed before this time.

In each case a comprehensive legislative review is almost complete. The Marine Safety Bill has been introduced and the proposed amendment to preserve the regulations that the bill repeals is a precautionary measure only. The Clean Waters Regulations are dealt with under the new Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 to which Parliament has agreed to preserve the regulation. Again, the proposed amendment is a precautionary measure in case the Protection of the Environment Operations Act is not commenced before 1 September. A new regulation to replace the Dangerous Goods Regulation is in the final stages of preparation. Additional time is needed for consultation before the revised regulation can be promulgated.

Lastly, without extension of regulations under the Traffic Act a regulatory vacuum will remain. Remaking current regulations was not an acceptable option when the review of these regulations progressed in the context of national road transport reform. The business of this House is to propose minor adjustments to legislation on which both sides agree. The request by the honourable member for Manly that advocacy groups be consulted under the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is before the upper House. Therefore, the Government agrees to draw that matter to the attention of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. The object of the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill is to tidy up minor adjustments, with the goodwill of both sides of the House. I assure this House that the amendments are proposed with the good intention of both sides. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Extension of Sitting

Motion by Mr Martin agreed to:

That the sitting be extended beyond 10.30 p.m.

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL

In Committee

Schedule 1

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries) [10.20 p.m.]: I move:

Page 19, schedule 1.13, lines 13-33. Omit all words on those lines.

The amendment seeks to withdraw the proposed amendment to section 9 of the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. The section deals with land excluded from the operation of the Act. Several members of the upper House have raised concerns regarding the proposed amendment. To make it clear that on all occasions the Government's intentions are honourable, it seeks to withdraw the amendment from the bill.

Dr MACDONALD (Manly) [10.22 p.m.]: The Government has apparently now agreed to remove a particular section which I addressed in my contribution to the second reading debate, that is, the amendment to the Native Vegetation Conservation Act under which a State forest would be exempt if it was proposed that it would ultimately become a plantation. It was a dangerous amendment and could have permitted extensive clearing of important vegetation. I am, therefore, pleased to support the amendment moved by the Minister. In view of the fact that the Government has dealt with this amendment by removing it from the miscellaneous provisions, I am surprised that it declined to support the minor amendment that I proposed and that I will speak to shortly.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule as amended agreed to.

Schedule 2

Dr MACDONALD [10.23 p.m.]: I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Page 39, schedule 2. Insert after line 21:

2.21 Land and Environment Court Act 1979 No 204

Section 20 Class 4—environmental planning and protection and development contract civil enforcement

Omit "64" from section 20(1)(de). Insert instead "63"

I dealt with this matter in my contribution to the second reading debate. By mistake "64" was inserted instead of "63". That would have caused confusion and civil action amongst litigants. I merely ask that it be corrected now. It is not a sensitive or controversial issue. I seek the support of the Committee.

Mr MARTIN (Port Stephens—Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries) [10.24 p.m.]: I note the honourable member's

comments in relation to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The honourable member has requested that the advocacy groups be consulted before the bill goes before the upper House. I assure honourable members of this House and the other House that the Government will agree to bring this matter to the attention of the Minister for Planning. That will be done in an appropriate way that reflects the Government's intention, that is, good laws for this State. As I said earlier, the Government's intentions are honourable.

I ask honourable members to support the passage of the legislation. The Government does not agree with the wording of the amendment, but agrees to draw it to the attention of the Minister for Planning. I would point out that the provisions of the Land and Environment Court Act and the Native Vegetation Conservation Act provide for appeals to the Land and Environment Court by third parties. The Native Vegetation Conservation Act has been the subject of some controversy during the past six months. The Government wants to ensure that any amendments to the Act are reviewed comprehensively and not rushed through at late notice.

The Native Vegetation Conservation Act provides for better management of native vegetation, and for a whole range of reasons, including soil conservation, salinity, habitat management, clean water and the need for continuing agricultural land management. This important legislation should not be compromised and that is why the Government is opposed to the amendment. In all fairness, we are trying to resolve what was State environmental planning policy 46 and is now the Native Vegetation Conservation Act. It is important that we get it right.

The Government has tried to do the right thing and any attempt to delay this legislation will really be to the detriment of the good management of this State.

Dr MACDONALD [10.27 p.m.]: I have to say that the Minister is talking a lot of nonsense. We have taken advice from the Parliamentary Counsel, who agrees that the mistake resulted from a drafting error. If nothing is done to rectify the error tonight or in the upper House, the Parliamentary Counsel will rectify it in the statute law revision legislation that is due in November. This is not about ambushing or white-anting the Native Vegetation Conservation Act; it is about correcting a drafting error. I do not know what advice the Minister is getting from his staff, but it is certainly a lot of nonsense.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

Division called for. Standing Order 191 applied.

Ayes, 2

Dr Macdonald
Ms Moore

Question so resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported from Committee with an amendment and report adopted.

House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.
