



**NEW SOUTH WALES**



*Legislative Assembly*

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
THIRD SESSION**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD**

**Tuesday, 8 September 1998**

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 8 September 1998

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

**Mr Speaker** offered the Prayer.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Order of Business

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [2.17 p.m.], by leave: I move:

(1) That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow:

- (a) the routine of business to be interrupted at this sitting to permit members of the Legislative Council to attend in the Legislative Assembly Chamber to hear an address, at 3.30 p.m., from Her Excellency Mary McAleese, President of Ireland; and
- (b) private members' statements to be taken at 7.30 p.m.

(2) That the following message be sent to the Legislative Council:

MADAM PRESIDENT

The Legislative Assembly invites the members and officers of the Legislative Council to be present in the Legislative Assembly Chamber at 3.25 p.m. this day to hear, at 3.30 p.m., an address by Her Excellency Mary McAleese, President of Ireland.

Legislative Assembly  
8 September 1998

JOHN MURRAY  
Speaker

**Mr COLLINS** (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [2.18 p.m.]: The Opposition does not oppose the motion. Like other members of this Parliament, the members of the Opposition look forward to hearing from President McAleese. However, they are embarrassed that she has been forced to boil her drinking water during her stay in Sydney, the home of the 2000 Olympic Games.

[*Interruption*]

Members on the Government side of the House laugh about the situation. The media throughout the world, including the Irish press, know about the problems with Sydney's drinking water, yet Government members laugh about it. They are laughing because the people of Sydney must boil their drinking water. With every day that

passes families in this city are further inconvenienced by this crisis. After six weeks Sydneysiders still cannot get safe drinking water from their taps. Now the Premier has let it slip that this situation may continue for six months.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is entitled to reply to the motion moved by the Leader of the House. It is a serious motion and one that is rarely moved in this House. The Leader of the Opposition should respond to the motion in the manner in which it was presented. I urge Government members to remain silent.

**Mr COLLINS:** I have said already that the Opposition does not oppose the motion; it looks forward to hearing from President McAleese. However, Her Excellency is just one of hundreds of thousands of international visitors who have witnessed this great city being brought to its knees by a laughing, arrogant Government that sneers at the discomfort and inconvenience of the people of Sydney, who are being forced to buy bottled drinking water. The Government has no idea what to do; it is attempting to delay today's proceedings to hide its embarrassment. The Government does not know what to do, but the Opposition does. Its proposed Safe Water Drinking Bill—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is moving outside the ambit of the motion.

**Mr COLLINS:** Above all, the people of Sydney and the people of New South Wales want this Parliament to debate fully what has happened to our water supply, and why it is not providing safe drinking water for the three million people of Sydney. The people of this State have been wanting answers to those questions for the past six weeks, but the Government does not have any answers. Debate on this matter should kick off this session. Sydneysiders are angry because they are boiling their water; they are boiling about what this Government has done to them. In all fairness to the people of this State, Parliament should be given the opportunity to debate this matter, and members should be able to probe this issue in question time, as early as possible this afternoon.

The Government is deliberately playing with the parliamentary program, trying to hide its embarrassment, trying to push this back as late in the day as it can. I am surprised that the Premier did not attempt to start this session next Friday afternoon at about 5 o'clock. The Government and the Premier have humiliated and embarrassed the people of Sydney. They have put our reputation in danger. Through their negligence they have destroyed the image of the city. The matter should be debated and probed, beginning this very hour with question time. This diversionary tactic of the Leader of the House is typical of the arrogance, conceit and indifference of the Carr Government to the people of the State.

**Motion agreed to.**

### ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills of the previous session reported:

Road Improvement (Special Funding) Amendment Bill  
 Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill  
 Drug Misuse and Trafficking Amendment (Ongoing Dealing) 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  
 Environmental Trust Bill  
 Legal Profession Amendment (Costs Assessment) Bill  
 Parliamentary Remuneration Amendment Bill  
 Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill  
 Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Bill  
 Companion Animals Bill

### SENATE VACANCY

#### Resignation of Senator Belinda Jane Neal

**Mr SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of a message from the Lieutenant Governor transmitting a copy of a dispatch from the President of the Senate of the Commonwealth of 4 September 1988 notifying that a vacancy had happened in the representation of the State of New South Wales in the Senate through the resignation of Belinda Jane Neal on 3 September 1998.

### ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF BURRINJUCK

#### Resignation of Albert John Schultz

**Mr SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of a letter from Albert John Schultz resigning his seat as member for the electoral district of Burrinjuck.

### ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF SWANSEA

#### Resignation of Jill Griffiths Hall

**Mr SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of a letter from Jill Griffiths Hall resigning her seat as member for the electoral district of Swansea.

### OPPOSITION WHIP

**Mr COLLINS:** I inform the House of the election of Russell Harold Lester Smith as Opposition Whip as from 19 August 1998.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I put on the public record that the honourable member for Cronulla discharged his responsibilities as Opposition Whip in this House courteously and diligently. On behalf of all members I wish him all the very best in his new position as secretary to the shadow cabinet.

### AUDIT OFFICE OF NEW SOUTH WALES

#### Reports

**The Clerk** announced, pursuant to the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, receipt of the following performance audit reports:

Office of State Revenue—The Levying and Collection of Land Tax  
 Management of Sickness Absence New South Wales Public Sector—Volume 1: Executive Briefing  
 Management of Sickness Absence New South Wales Public Sector—Volume 2: The Survey—Detailed Findings

### COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

#### Discussion Paper

**The Clerk** announced receipt of the discussion paper entitled "Unregistered Health Practitioners: The Adequacy and Appropriateness of Current Mechanisms for Resolving Complaints", dated July 1998.

### COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

#### Reports

**The Clerk** announced receipt of the following reports:

Second General Meeting with the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, dated August 1998  
 Third General Meeting with the Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission, dated August 1998  
 Seventh General Meeting with the New South Wales Ombudsman, dated August 1998

Report on Matters Arising from the 7th General Meeting with the Ombudsman, the 3rd General Meeting with the Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission, the 2nd General Meeting with the PIC Inspector, and Talks with the Heads of Agencies.

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

### Discussion Papers

**The Clerk** announced receipt of the following discussion papers:

Security of Payment in the New South Wales Building Industry, dated August 1998  
Security of Payment—Deemed Trusts: The Full Debate, dated August 1998

## INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

### Report

**Mr Speaker**, pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, announced receipt of a report entitled "Investigation into the Conduct of a Senior Inspector with the Department of Gaming and Racing", dated September 1998.

## POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

### Report

**Mr Speaker**, pursuant to the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, announced receipt of the report of the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission for the year ended 30 June 1998.

## PETITIONS

### Governor of New South Wales

Petitions praying that the office of Governor of New South Wales not be downgraded, received from **Mr Blackmore**, **Mr Brogden**, **Mrs Chikarovski**, **Mr Collins**, **Mr Cruickshank**, **Mr Debnam**, **Mr Ellis**, **Ms Ficarra**, **Mr Glachan**, **Mr Hartcher**, **Mr Hazzard**, **Dr Kernohan**, **Mr Kerr**, **Mr Kinross**, **Mr MacCarthy**, **Mr Merton**, **Mr O'Doherty**, **Mr O'Farrell**, **Mr Phillips**, **Mr Photios**, **Mr Richardson**, **Mr Rozzoli**, **Mr Schipp**, **Ms Seaton**, **Mrs Skinner**, **Mr Smith**, **Mrs Stone** and **Mr Tink**.

### Eden Community Health Centre

Petition expressing concern about delay in rebuilding the Eden Community Health Centre, received from **Mr Cochran**.

### Surgical Visiting Medical Officer Dr James

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

### Ryde Hospital

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

### Land Tax

Petitions praying that land tax on the family home be abolished, received from **Mr Blackmore**, **Mr Brogden**, **Mrs Chikarovski**, **Mr Collins**, **Mr Debnam**, **Mr Ellis**, **Ms Ficarra**, **Mr Glachan**, **Mr Hartcher**, **Mr Hazzard**, **Dr Kernohan**, **Mr Kerr**, **Mr MacCarthy**, **Mr Merton**, **Mr O'Farrell**, **Mr Phillips**, **Mr Richardson**, **Mr Rozzoli**, **Ms Seaton**, **Mrs Skinner**, **Mrs Stone** and **Mr Tink**.

### Land Tax

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

### Riverwood Police Station

Petition praying that Riverwood police station not be closed or downgraded, received from **Ms Ficarra**.

### Sale of Knives and Extended Police Powers

Petition 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**.

### Kings Cross and Woolloomooloo Policing

Petition praying for increased police strength at Kings Cross local area command and police foot patrols in Woolloomooloo, received from **Ms Moore**.

### Surry Hills Policing

Petition praying for increased police presence in the Surry Hills area, received from **Ms Moore**.

**East Sydney and Darlinghurst Policing**

Petition praying for increased police presence in East Sydney and Darlinghurst, received from **Ms Moore**.

**Water Catchment Protection**

Petition praying for protection of the catchments of the Mataganah River and Myrtle and Jones creeks, received from **Mr Cochran**.

**Northside Storage Tunnel**

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

**Kincumber Jetty**

Petitions praying for approval for a jetty at Nautical Village, Empire Bay Drive, Kincumber, received from **Mr McBride**.

**Public Housing Tenants**

Petition praying for assistance for public housing tenants, received from **Ms Moore**.

**Northside Storage Tunnel Ventilation Exhaust**

Petitions praying that a permanent ventilation exhaust not be located in Tunks Park valley or the car park adjoining Long Bay, received from **Mr Collins**, **Mr Debnam**, **Mr O'Doherty** and **Mr Phillips**.

**Manly Wharf Bus Services**

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

**Coffs Harbour Jetty**

Petition praying for construction of a safety ramp on Coffs Harbour jetty, received from **Mr Fraser**.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Placing or Disposal of Business**

**Business taking the place of matters of public importance Notice of Motion No. 1 postponed on motion by Mr Hartcher.**

**CHILD PROTECTION (PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT) BILL**

**Withdrawal**

**Order of the day for the second reading discharged.**

**Bill ordered to be withdrawn.**

**JOINT ESTIMATES COMMITTEES**

**Withdrawal of Consideration of Message**

**Order of the day for consideration of Legislative Council message of 2 June discharged.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION**

**Mr COLLINS:** My question is to the Premier. Did the Chairman of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, Tom Parry, in this year's mid-term review of Sydney Water warn that capital spending cuts by Sydney Water may lead to poorer service quality. Now that service quality has deteriorated to the point where Sydney residents will not be able to drink the water for up to six months, will the Premier stop his \$278 million dividend raid and plough the money into fixing our crippled water system?

**Mr CARR:** I am happy to speak at length about the dividend flow from Sydney Water to State budgets and to talk about the 1998-99 projected dividend from Sydney Water, which came directly as a result of the review of the cash holdings of Sydney Water by Coopers and Lybrand which was commissioned by the board under former chairman—and the coalition appointed him—John McMurtrie.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the Leader of the National Party on three calls to order.

**Mr CARR:** I am advised that Coopers and Lybrand assessed that Sydney Water had the capacity to pay a dividend in the range of \$200 million to \$300 million as at 30 June 1998. The Coopers and Lybrand analysis is a comprehensive and proper business analysis of the capacity of Sydney Water to make dividend payments to the Government. I am advised that in 1997-98 taxpayers received a 1.8 per cent return on the money that they as taxpayers invested in Sydney Water over the

years. That is forecast to fall to 0.8 per cent in 1998-99. That compares with the latest available figures of a 25 per cent dividend paid by Melbourne Water, 13 per cent by City West Water Ltd in Victoria, 2.6 per cent paid by the West Australian Corporation and 2 per cent by the South Australian Water Corporation.

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

**Mr CARR:** The Auditor-General, who is no lackey of the Government, said, when asked about this matter on 31 July after the first alert, that the Government's approach was completely legitimate. He said he thought Sydney Water was providing the Government with a return of "around 2 per cent on its assets when you would think that we should be getting something like three times that per annum".

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

**Mr CARR:** That is the Auditor-General's view on the appropriateness of the dividend flow to the Government.

#### SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION

**Mr LYNCH:** My question is to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. Will he update the House on the contamination of Sydney's water supply by giardia and cryptosporidium?

**Mr CARR:** As soon as the Government identified the problem with Sydney water we told the public about it.

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

**Mr CARR:** In all its dealings with the public the Government has been honest and accountable.

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

**Mr CARR:** The House will have an opportunity to compare and contrast how respective governments have dealt with these problems. The Government immediately set up the McClellan inquiry, which has swiftly produced two reports.

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

**Mr CARR:** The Government has accepted the recommendations. In the meantime New South Wales Health and Sydney Water are working around the clock with some of the world's best water filtration experts and microbiologists. It should be emphasised that the only reason the current levels of contamination were found was tough new testing introduced in 1996. Prior to 1996 there was no regular testing for either of the contaminants. It is worth asking this question: is the occurrence of cryptosporidium and giardia a latter-day development, as the Leader of the Opposition maintains, or has it occurred before? Is it true, as the Leader of the Opposition said on 3 August, only one month ago, that "cryptosporidium was to the best of my knowledge not around then"? He told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that "it has been acknowledged by experts that these parasites have only been around for the last few years".

[Interruption]

There will be no undermining of Peter from this side of the House!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the honourable member for Ermington on two calls to order. The Leader of the Opposition will remain silent.

**Mr CARR:** One advantage of being in government is that one has access to files. I can reveal what those files contain. I can inform the House that both substances were in fact around in the days the Leader of the Opposition was talking about, but the previous Government in which he was a Minister took a different approach to the publication of information that became available.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai on three calls to order.

**Mr CARR:** I can reveal to the House and to the public that the then Government detected high levels of cryptosporidium in Sydney's water supply in 1992, 1993 and 1994. A report by Dr Primrose Hutton on environmental pathogens in October 1992 revealed that cryptosporidium was present in all water storages examined, sometimes at levels well above those associated with disease. The readings included—and I would like to share them with the House—Warragamba Dam, 600 parts cryptosporidium per 100 litres, and Upper Avon, 610 parts per 100 litres. Those readings are higher than some of those recorded in the current contamination, but the public was not informed. The story gets worse, much worse. In December 1993—note the date well—the situation seriously worsened but still the public was not told.

I can reveal that in December 1993, eight months after the Milwaukee epidemic, the former Government was informed of what were described as dangerously high readings of cryptosporidium at the Orchard Hills water system. Samples of 58,660 cryptosporidium per 100 litres were recorded. That is almost five times higher than the highest levels most recently recorded. The public was not told. In June 1994 6,700 cryptosporidium per 100 litres were detected at the North Richmond water system. The public was not told; there was no boil-water alert. I cannot tell the House whether there was associated illness arising from those levels of contamination, because I am advised by New South Wales Health that cryptosporidium-related illness was not required to be reported until 1996. That was then and this is now. The Government now has a different approach: first, it swiftly notifies the public; second, it does not suppress its findings.

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

**Mr CARR:** Third, the Government seeks solutions to the problems that have been uncovered.

### HOME INVASION

**Mr McMANUS:** My question without notice is to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. What is the Government's response to community concerns about people having the right to defend themselves against home invaders?

**Mr CARR:** There is growing concern and confusion about home invasion and the rights of people to defend themselves. The Hon. J. S. Tingle has introduced the Home Invasion (Occupants Protection) Bill in another place. Today I announce the Government's position—

**Mr Hartcher:** What about the Home-Owners Defence Bill that was introduced two years ago? Two years ago I introduced that bill and you did nothing about it! For two years it has been on the business paper.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the honourable member for Gosford. I warn other members who seem to be seeking to win Academy Awards that they risk being removed from the Chamber for a week.

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

**Mr CARR:** Today I announce the Government's intention to make the law of self-defence in the home clear and simple. As Premier I want it known that the law is there to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. Until now the law of self-defence has been part of the common law. It is not written down anywhere but rests in precedents hidden within dusty law books; it is judge-made law. Currently, anyone seeking assurance about his or her rights would have to trawl through hundreds of case transcripts and try to understand what individual judges may decide. That is not good enough.

The Government will introduce amendments to the bill, with the support of the Hon. J. S. Tingle, who has been negotiating with the Attorney General, that will result in a simple test of self-defence being applied in these cases. If the test is satisfied, there can be no finding of criminality on the part of a victim of home invasion. Put simply, a victim of home invasion who reasonably believes he is in danger can defend himself. The bill guarantees that. The law will support parents and families who defend themselves and their loved ones. People must have every right to protect themselves in their own homes. Let me be very clear on this point: the Government is not giving people the right to act as vigilantes. The Government's amendments locate the law of self-defence firmly in the home and define the actions clearly.

The amendments shall, first, set up a simple test that no finding at law will be possible against a person who reasonably believes in the circumstances that he or his family is in danger, provided the level of force used is not excessive; second, for the first time the law will be contained in statute so that legislation will clarify the existing precedents; third, the bill prevents a person who is protecting himself, his family or his home from a home invader from being sued if the perpetrator is injured. Finally, the bill will confirm the right of an individual to defend himself in his own home. The Government's actions will make people's rights simple to understand. This is law not made by judges but made by the community for the community. This is another stage of the Government's push to give more power to the victims of crime and to make the legal system a justice system.

### SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION

**Mr ARMSTRONG:** My question is to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. Did the Minister tell Parliament in October 1996, "Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a

cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery"? Given that the 1996 Annual Environment Report of Sydney Water cited cryptosporidium as an emerging issue, why has the Minister turned a blind eye to this problem for two years?

**Mr KNOWLES:** It is fairly obvious why the honourable member for Gosford got himself marched out of here. He can smell a dying Leader of the Opposition and does not want to be any part of this whatsoever. The honourable member for Gosford is organising the power dressers of the Parliament, the people who are trying to steal a march on the Leader of the Opposition, while he is in here labouring under a lot of problems that he created as far back as 1991. As recently as a few weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition said that he did not know anything about cryptosporidium and giardia. He said:

It has been acknowledged by experts that these parasites have only been around for the last few years. Our ability to detect them is relatively new.

He further said, when he signed off as the shareholder of Sydney Water when it was corporatised:

Cryptosporidium, to the best of my knowledge, was not around.

This comes down to questions of the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition and his dishonesty when in government. The Premier has already outlined the fact that the Leader of the Opposition and his lot covered up at least three cryptosporidium outbreaks of levels of 58,000 oocysts at Orchard Hills, and he has no explanation other than the fact that he decided to deceive the public.

**Mr Photios:** On a point of order. The question clearly related to the Minister's allegation that any canvassing of this disease was scaremongering. The question did not ask what Opposition members said about the issue, but what the Minister said.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Ermington has made his position very clear. However, no point of order is involved.

**Mr KNOWLES:** As I have said in the past few weeks, when the McClellan report finely sifts the issues we will be taken back to the early days when establishing water quality and water treatment plants were first thought of. I will give the House a preview to demonstrate why Ministers such as I made those claims. For example, another Minister for Planning, the Hon. Robert Webster, was asked

by the Hon. Ann Symonds this question by way of interjection, which is recorded in *Hansard* of 23 September 1992:

Will the treatment eradicate cryptosporidium from the water?

The Hon. Robert Webster stated:

The director said yes. That is the advantage of having the head of the Water Board in the gallery.

In response to a question that I put to the Hon. Robert Webster during a parliamentary inquiry in 1993 about the treatment of cryptosporidium and giardia, he said:

I can state that the plants have been specifically designed to meet current and historical water quality criteria, with some flexibility in design to anticipate future quality needs. The current design will remove 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium and giardia, as proven by overseas studies.

*[Pursuant to resolution, questions without notice interrupted.]*

#### JOINT MEETING TO HEAR AN ADDRESS BY HER EXCELLENCY MARY McALEESE, THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I report receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council having had under consideration the Legislative Assembly's Message dated 8 September 1998, regarding a joint meeting to hear an address by Her Excellency, Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it accepts the invitation of the Legislative Assembly to attend the Legislative Assembly Chamber at 3.25 p.m. today to hear, at 3.30 p.m., an address from Her Excellency.

Legislative Council  
8 September 1998

VIRGINIA CHADWICK  
President

*[Mr Speaker left the chair at 3.03 p.m. The House resumed at 5.11 p.m.]*

#### ELECTORATE PROFILES

**Mr SPEAKER:** I wish to inform members about a new digital collection of electorate profiles. The library has created an electorate profile for each of the 93 New South Wales electorates. Each profile includes a digitised map of the electorate, a boundary description prepared by the electoral districts commissioners, a copy of Antony Green's electoral analysis of voting patterns for the electorate, and a selection of census data taken from the 1996 census. That data has been realigned for the New South Wales Parliamentary Library to the



new electorate boundaries by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and includes tables on age, religion, ethnicity, household income and employment status. This information is available as part of the library's digital collection, which also includes newspaper clippings, and is available on the library's intranet page 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Order of Business

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [5.12 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the consideration forthwith of the notice of motion given this day for tomorrow by the Leader of the Opposition of no confidence in the Government.

The Government acknowledges the importance of this motion. The first two questions have related to this subject. Standing orders provide that all honourable members may speak on this motion. That will allow ample time for honourable members to put their views.

**Mr HARTCHER** (Gosford) [5.13 p.m.]: The Government is afraid of question time; that is what this motion is all about. The Leader of the House gave a specious answer about the Auditor-General and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning gave his specious answer, but at the end of the day one still cannot drink a glass of water in Sydney. The Premier can say what he likes about cryptosporidium readings in 1993 and 1994, but he cannot deny the fact that under the coalition Government the people of Sydney drank their water, and they will drink it when the coalition is returned to government in 1999. The Minister for Energy has given up already.

This is an attempt to shield an incompetent Minister who should have resigned three weeks ago. David Hill and Chris Pollett had the decency to do so, but the Minister does not. He does not have the guts to face the people of Sydney. He will not even attend a press conference. The Minister for Health has to face the press conferences because the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning does not have the confidence or the courage to tell the people of Sydney that he messed up and that as long as he is Minister they will not be able to drink the water without boiling it. After three years under a Labor Government one cannot drink a glass of water. Now,

on the first day back after a lengthy break, the Government wants to stop question time.

*[Interruption]*

I have been invited to have a drink of water. I would not dare to drink this water, and anybody who does so is an idiot. When the people of Sydney go home tonight they will turn on their electric jugs for one full minute because they cannot drink a glass of water under this Government.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members on my right will cease provoking the honourable member for Gosford.

**Mr HARTCHER:** On 27 March 1999 the people of New South Wales will decide whether they want a government that is so incompetent it cannot provide clean drinking water or a government that for seven years supplied clean drinking water to the people of Sydney. That is the choice they will make. The Government has done nothing about it, and is now afraid to face question time.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 47**

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

**Noes, 45**

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

**Pairs**

Mr Iemma	Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Rumble	Mr Cruickshank

**Question so resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT****Motion of No Confidence**

**Mr COLLINS** (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [5.25 p.m.]: I move:

That, in view of its mismanagement of Sydney's water crisis, this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House.

Six weeks ago the first signs began to appear. As the cowards vacate the Chamber—as they run from the issue—they run away from the responsibility they have not met in 3½ years and will never meet. There is only one way to overcome the problem with Sydney's water. That is to have a new government in this State, a new government prepared to put a plan to the people and make sure that this sort of disgraceful breakdown of the most basic service never happens again in this State. Six weeks ago an article appeared in a newspaper warning a few thousand residents in a small pocket of eastern Sydney to boil their water. The reason for

that was that a full two days earlier traces of cryptosporidium and giardia had been identified in their water supply. In the following six weeks the whole of Sydney has been engulfed in an on-again, off-again crisis.

This man-made disaster has hit the headlines across the world, from Cable News Network to the British Broadcasting Corporation and from the *New York Times* to the *Bangkok Post*. From Jerusalem to Johannesburg, Sydney has hit the news, not as the green Olympic city eagerly waiting to host the world two years from now but as the only developed city in the world whose residents cannot drink their water. Sydney is ranked alongside towns in Uganda, Burma and Bolivia, where the water is not safe to drink. The bulk of my speech today will focus on my positive solutions to fix the crisis—the coalition's Safe Drinking Water Bill and its 10-point plan to solve the problem. It is patently clear that the Government has no answers. By contrast, the coalition does have answers in the run-up to the State election six or seven months away. To reach the answers we first need to know what went wrong and who is responsible for what went wrong. Let us talk about the Government's failure to prevent this crisis.

Among the Government's manifold failings perhaps the worst is its failure to prevent the problem from arising in the first place. This problem was described as an emerging issue in the 1996 Sydney Water report. Back in March 1996—in the very same year that Sydney Water's annual report identified cryptosporidium as an emerging issue—Sydney Water threatened to sue water expert John Archer, who questioned the quality of Sydney's drinking water. We were told that Sydney's water was "amongst the best and safest in the world". The Department of Health stepped in and said that "Sydney's water is safe and amongst the world's cleanest." The Government is not listening now and it has listened to no-one for 3½ years—its conduct does not change. What the Government is doing now treats the Sydney water crisis as a joke. For 3½ years the Government has treated its responsibilities as a joke.

The Premier, the Minister for Health, and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning sit opposite chortling and exchanging jokes amongst themselves, but the joke is on the State of New South Wales and on the city of Sydney. The Government has allowed this crisis to emerge during the last 3½ years. In July 1996, the shadow health minister, alarmed at the risk, asked her Government counterpart in an estimates committee hearing whether testing should be undertaken. The Minister scoffed and replied,

"Routine monitoring for cryptosporidium is not appropriate." Three months later the honourable member for Liverpool asked his colleague the Minister responsible for Sydney water the following question, one of the many dorothy dixers heard with monotonous regularity during question time under the Carr Government:

What is the Government's reaction to a report today of a dangerous bug in Sydney's water supply?

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, who is now present in the Chamber, said in reply:

Sydney's residents are supplied with the cleanest drinking water in the world.

The next words in his answer should drive the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, above all others in the Government, from this Chamber. He said:

Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

He further commented:

. . . I would have thought Opposition members would have appreciated an assurance from the Government that our water supply was clean . . .

That Dorothy Dixier was asked of the Minister two years ago, after the Opposition expressed its concerns about the emergence of the parasite identified in the Sydney Water annual report that year. The Minister's response was an outright and arrogant dismissal of Opposition concerns. He said that it was mere scaremongering by the Opposition. In other words, the Minister said to the people of Sydney, "Trust me," and for a while they did. But now the people of Sydney cannot drink water from their own taps. They have a right to be angry at the Government's appalling clumsiness in notifying residents of the boiled water alert.

The Minister was not answering a question on the run, but was replying to a planned question. If he had been asked a question without notice by the Opposition, without any hint or warning, he might be allowed a margin for error in that in his answer he was shooting from the hip without having all the facts. However, the Minister is on the record of this Parliament as having been asked a dorothy dixer by his own side, following concerns about cryptosporidium raised by the shadow minister in an estimates committee hearing in October 1996. If the Government wants to bring this matter on this afternoon I will read all this material into the record, chapter and verse. The Minister continued in his answer:

Sadly, this is not even a new story. The article in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* was referring to tests conducted as far back as 1992. Even then the draft report identified only two occasions when cryptosporidium levels were probably high enough to be of concern. However, let us be clear about this. Since 1992, when the first tests were conducted, no further unacceptably high levels have been found.

That is precisely the opposite of what the Premier told the House today. Who is lying to and misleading this Parliament? Is it the Minister in charge of Sydney water quality, or is it the Premier? The Premier is again cracking a few jokes with his colleagues and laughing at the plight of Sydneysiders who have to boil their water. He should remember that the joke is on the people of Sydney. In 1996, the Minister, not content with saying in his answer in this House that a cryptosporidium outbreak was scaremongering, added:

Our water supply is getting better. Four water filtration plants, representing an investment of \$3.5 billion, are now coming on line. I can report to the House that those water filtration plants are currently going through their commissioning phase. The good news is that all the plants are either meeting their performance standards or they are performing in excess of design criteria, which will effectively remove cryptosporidium.

The Minister continued:

Quite clearly, Opposition members are not in the least bit interested in what I have to say. In the circumstances, given an attempt to bring about a public health scare, I would have thought Opposition members would have appreciated an assurance from the Government that our water supply was clean and was meeting health standards. As I said earlier, the water treatment plants are performing—

**Mr O'Farrell:** Who said that?

**Mr COLLINS:** The Minister responsible for Sydney water said that in October 1996, two years ago, before the Sydney water system collapsed. The story gets better. His answer continued:

Once the water filtration plants come on line we can expect the removal of cryptosporidium to a level of 99.9 per cent—a very creditable result. This matter received the attention of the present Government when it was in opposition and it received the attention of the previous Government.

The Minister was speaking about bipartisanship when he said that this matter had received the attention both of the previous coalition Government and of the present Government when it was in opposition. He continued in his answer:

So there should be unanimity in this attempt to dispel some of the nonsense that is appearing in today's paper. As I said earlier, the cryptosporidium story usually does the rounds at least twice a year.

Parasites are going the rounds every day of every week in Sydney's water system, and that means that the water is not safe to drink. I say that the first step to eliminating the parasites in our water to get rid of these Government parasites opposite. I commend the full text of what the Minister for Health said on 22 October 1996 as recommended reading for anyone who wants to know the truth about the Carr Government's mismanagement of Sydney Water and its deception of the people of New South Wales.

The Government of this State is asleep at the wheel, and has been asleep for the last 3½ years while Sydney's water quality goes down the drain. The Government is desperately seeking every piece of misleading information to drag over the trail to try to hide what really happened, and its inaction, during the last 3½ years. Of course, the Minister responsible for Sydney water was not the only one saying in October 1996 that everything was under control.

This is indeed a rare occasion: the Premier is actually present in the House for a parliamentary debate. This is probably the first time this year that he has participated in a debate of this nature, so he is probably not too familiar with procedure. I would like to familiarise the Premier with the speech he gave on 1 October 1996, which I will seek to table later. When the Premier speaks to the motion he will try to justify 3½ years of his Government doing absolutely nothing, delivering nothing to the people of New South Wales, and being asleep at the wheel. He will avoid details. He does not have the slightest interest in the detail of what happens in this State. Whatever his priorities are, they are not what might benefit the interests of the people of New South Wales. The Premier has been asleep for 3½ years. Problems have developed with Sydney water and everything else that is going wrong in this State, but he has been asleep.

The Premier has been attempting to interject, because he probably remembers some of his words. Honourable members should listen carefully to Premier Bob Carr's presentation at the official launch of the Prospect water filtration plant—the same water filtration plant involved in the current contamination. The Government in its search for scapegoats over the past six weeks asked who it could blame. Obviously, it could blame the previous Government, but who else? The Government blamed Chris Pollett, and was eventually forced to blame David Hill, the rain, foxes falling into the catchment, dogs and cows, and people camping in the catchment areas. When really forced to do so, it had to sacrifice somebody. What a great sacrifice David Hill was—but Danna Vale will finish him off on 3

October in the Federal electorate of Hughes. A few sacrifices have been made by the Premier, who is receiving a bit of counselling at the moment. However, on 1 October 1996, the Premier said:

Sydney was recently voted the best city in the world in an international poll conducted by a leading US tourism magazine. One of the many factors contributing to the lifestyle that has made Sydney famous is the quality of Sydney's water—

he has a great sense of humour—

the water we drink and the water we enjoy on our magnificent harbour and beaches.

He is a well-known beachgoer.

Today over three million Sydneysiders will enjoy fresh filtered water from Prospect Water Filtration Plant—one of the largest and most modern plants in the world.

The Prospect plant is fully automated and built to comfortably meet the quality required for both present and future demand.

That is what the Premier of this State, who is present in a rare visit to this House, said. He continued:

This facility is a triumph of modern engineering and technology and an example of the excellence which helped Sydney to win the 2000 Olympic Games.

Sydney's drinking water catchments have been kept in pristine condition through careful planning and management.

A year into Government the Premier said that the catchment areas were in pristine condition through careful planning and management—so there goes his excuse about the foxes, dogs, cows and campers. The Premier said, and this is where it gets interesting:

While Sydney's water supply is among the best in the world today, we have taken action to guarantee the quality of Sydney's water for future generations.

Obviously, future generations did not stretch too far, not even two years. He continued:

Increased population, development and higher consumer expectations are all placing increasing pressure on our water supply.

Water from the Warragamba catchment area is held at Prospect Reservoir to allow sediment and impurities to settle before the water enters the reticulation system. As demand for water increases, the length of this settling period is decreasing.

The process of filtration has been introduced to replace the settling period and guarantee the quality of water to meet future demand.

Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting.

On 1 October 1996, the Premier said that Sydney has fresh water, "crystal clear, healthy and great tasting"—and brought to you by the Premier, ever the humorist. Obviously, the hand of Bob Ellis is at work in this speech. The Premier continued:

This water is not only good enough to bottle but is great value—a tonne delivered to your home costs just 70 cents.

And although Prospect Water Filtration Plant represents a capital investment of \$200 million, I am pleased to say this will not lead to higher water charges.

If this Government would allow the tabling of these documents I would not have to read all this detail on to the record. The Government, in an attempt to shut down this debate, will seek to disown this vital information as quickly as it can. But it will all be on the public record. The Premier continued:

This is largely due to efficiency gains at Sydney Water of over 20 per cent since 1993. These gains will essentially pay for Prospect Water Filtration Plant and for the three other major filtration plants at Macarthur, Woronora and in the Illawarra.

In addition, Sydney Water charges to business have decreased by an average of 45 per cent since 1993.

The supply of affordable, filtered water to a wide range of industries enables NSW business to be more competitive both at home and overseas.

Environmental issues are also of great importance. Australia is the driest continent in the world and Sydney Water is to be congratulated for the active role it has played.

He finished by offering congratulations—and this is important, because the search for scapegoats is not over. The Government trotted out blame on the previous Government, and got rid of David Hill and Chris Pollett. The Government may yet get rid of the whole Sydney Water board. More public service scalps will go, but the Government also blames privatisation. In October 1996 the Premier said:

I congratulate Sydney Water and Australian Water Services and their partners in this joint venture, Lend Lease, Lyonnaise des Eaux and P&O Australia, on the construction of Prospect Water Filtration Plant.

The Plant is a model of a successful partnership between the public and private sectors and an outstanding achievement which will supply Sydney with clean drinking water for generations to come.

The Premier ended with great rhetorical flourish. Taking a glass of Sydney water in his hand—this was at a time before water had to be boiled—he concluded:

I would now like to toast Sydney and its fresh filtered water as we look towards the 2000 Olympics when our water will be water to the world.

To Sydney and to its water.

Both the Premier and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning would like to forget 22 October 1996. These people opposite allowed Sydney's water system to collapse and destroy the international reputation of this city, yet they say, "We do not know what caused it, we do not know what the solution is, we have no idea how long it will take to get this right, and this may go on until March next year." A culpable government is running this State, sadly a government which has been asleep at the wheel. No doubt the Premier will enlighten this House about the origin of cryptosporidium. I suspect it is something that grew out of a Labor caucus meeting, but the fact is that it paralyses—

**Mr Carr:** I am told you have only one party member to worry about—Peter.

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**Mr COLLINS:** Calm down, Pinocchio!

**Mr Carr:** With Photios as deputy. How we look forward to that!

**Mr COLLINS:** I know it hurts the Premier. This is a real parliamentary debate, he has forgotten the rules, and he is unaware that he is entitled to speak next in this debate. It has been a long time since the Premier participated in a parliamentary debate. It is good to see him in the Chamber. I would wager that later on he will say something about privatisation. Here he is, Mister "I'm going to get tough on Pauline Hanson, but boy am I going to back off as fast as I can on privatisation because One Nation doesn't like it."

**Mr Carr:** How does the honourable member for Maitland feel about that pledge?

**Mr COLLINS:** He will introduce privatisation of our dairy industry. He will have the opportunity later to speak about it.

**Mr Carr:** Is One Nation in Maitland getting your second preferences?

**Mr COLLINS:** Keep going. Have you finished? I will tell the House about the Premier's attitude on privatisation. Everyone would be thinking that Bob Carr has never really liked privatisation, and that he probably did not like the idea of water supply privatisation. One might expect that the way this debate would pan out would be that the Labor Party would say: it was Hill, it was the board, it was the technicians, it was the people who should have done the water monitoring, it was Australian Water Services, it was the previous Government, it was the flying foxes, it was the dogs, it was the campers, or it was the rain.

But what is Labor's attitude on privatisation? Let us deal with that question up front. I am sorry that the Minister for the Environment—who in 1992 was shadow minister for the environment—is not in the Chamber either, because I have in my hand another letter that ought to be tabled in this Parliament. It cannot be tabled in this debate, but I will make sure that everyone has a copy of it after this debate. This letter was written in 1992 by the Leader of the Opposition:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for briefing the Opposition last week on your proposal to tender for the Sydney Water Board's drinking water program and related build, own and operate projects.

The briefing was most informative.

Last December the Opposition supported the Water Board (Amendment) Bill 1991 to facilitate such projects. During the debate the Opposition supported the concept of private sector involvement in new infrastructure developments for the Sydney Water Board.

**Mr Debnam:** Is this the Labor Opposition?

**Mr COLLINS:** This is Bob Carr, Leader of the Opposition, in 1992. I do not know that anyone had heard of cryptosporidium then, but perhaps Bob Carr had. From what was said earlier today by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing, it seems he had heard of it, although he appears to have forgotten that by 1996. Perhaps the cryptosporidium had got to the Minister and destroyed his memory. I will repeat those extremely important words in Bob Carr's letter:

During the debate the [Labor] Opposition supported the concept of private sector involvement in new infrastructure developments for the Sydney Water Board.

The provision of private sector infrastructure for use by public utilities is an important feature of our policy approach.

We would support this approach in Government as we do in Opposition.

The Opposition is pleased to give this assurance to any financiers intending to give assistance to your development plans.

On behalf of the Opposition, we wish you well in progressing this exciting proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Carr MP  
Pam Allan MP  
Leader of the Opposition  
Shadow Minister for Environment

There we have it, ownership, lock, stock and barrel, of the private filtration plant, the plant that was

endorsed again by the Premier in his speech on 1 October when he opened the plant. Isn't politics ironic! There he was, the then Leader of the Opposition, in a letter of endorsement in 1992, saying that everything that the private sector could do in relation to water should be done—giving 100 per cent support for private financiers involving themselves in water supply. Government members are having a caucus meeting over there to determine whether or not they actually endorse that privatisation commitment by now Premier Bob Carr as far back as 1992. They are shocked.

I am not surprised that Government members are going into a huddle on that side of the House because I suspect that the now Premier did not tell them that he was committing himself 100 per cent to private sector involvement and private sector takeover of the filtration of Sydney's water supply. Of course, he went on to endorse that commitment in 1996—as he should, because he had backed it four years earlier, in 1992. So there we have Bob Carr committing his government to 100 per cent ownership by the private sector. That commitment was given by the now Premier of this State when his party was in opposition—a man now desperately searching around for any excuse to push this issue as far away from him as he possibly can.

The fact is that the Premier has not been doing his homework. He has not been doing his job. He has not safeguarded the interests of the people of this State. One might say it is not the job of the Premier or the Minister to get out there and take water samples every day, that it is not their job to be the biochemists. But it is their job to protect the public interest; it is their job to make sure that we have the highest standard of water purity in this State, and, if they do not know what the solution to the problem is, to find the experts necessary to provide that highest standard, and to put those standards into law, maintain them and enforce them. That is where they have failed.

There is no more basic service that State governments anywhere in Australia or anywhere in the world are required to provide than safe, clean drinking water. In respect of foreign aid offered by Australia and other developed nations to developing nations, one of the most basic requests that we have constantly had as a nation with a good reputation for clean water—until the last six weeks in Sydney—is for clean drinking water. The most primitive countries ask countries like ours for the technology, the advice, the know-how, the equipment and plant to give them clean drinking water.

The Premier has failed this State abjectly. He has failed the three million people of this city time and again. He has hidden in the bunker, pushing others out to offer feeble excuses. He has pushed Ministers forward to offer conflicting advice and excuses, only to have them within hours retracting their advice and say that it is wrong, that they do not know the cause of the problem and they do not know the solution to it. Where is the plan to fix this problem? Where is the plan to overcome the incompetence of the Carr Government, which has brought Sydney to its knees? This Government skims \$279 million off Sydney Water—

**Mrs Skinner:** And wastes it.

**Mr COLLINS:** —and wastes it. It puts the money not into monitoring, better filtration, or even research and investigation but into consolidated revenue. The money disappears into the general budget. It disappears into the Government's slush funds. This is money that should have been keeping our water up to scratch, in line with world's best practice. It is obvious to all members of this House and to everyone sitting at home that this Government should have been aware that, in the run-up to the Olympic Games just two years away, the world is looking at Sydney closer than we have ever been viewed before. Yet the same Government is prepared to go along with these coffee table annual reports such as was produced by Sydney Water Board in 1997.

It is yet another example of the misplaced priorities of the Premier and his Minister. This issue is turned into high farce. I will quote from this nice, glossy coffee table report. It is about as expensive as an annual report can be, with nice colour photos of the board and the senior executive. We see Peter Sams from the Labor Council. There is a photograph of Chris Pollett. Alas, we knew him well. There are a couple of lovely photographs of Paul Broad, who has gone to greener pastures, as it were, and there are some great quotes. This document tells the story of government in personal terms.

**Mr Photios:** It's upside down.

**Mr COLLINS:** It does not make any difference.

**Mr Photios:** It makes more sense upside down.

**Mr COLLINS:** It makes a lot more sense. This expensive coffee table annual report has some great stories. The first story is as follows:

6am Damon Harris runs marathons for fun. His body loses about five litres during a big race—and dehydration is a big risk. Water is essential to keep him going. Even the rest of us need a drink at least eight glasses a day to keep our bodies healthy and working well. It's the drink of champions.

It was the drink of champions but if people now drink Sydney water without boiling it—

**Mr Blackmore:** It makes you run faster.

**Mr COLLINS:** As the honourable member for Maitland said, if people drink the water now without boiling it they run a helluva lot faster. If Damon Harris drank the water today without boiling it he would probably knock about an hour off his marathon times. The document also has some sad stories. This is a day in the life of Sydney Water. I do not know where the sackings appear in the report; they are probably towards the back. Honourable members should think about this story:

8am Baby Lachlan is a patient at Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick where our community puts a premium on the highest standards of cleanliness and care. Lachlan's mum Kate Fraser can count on Sydney water to be fresh, filtered and safe. So all Lachlan has to worry about is his rubber duck.

Who is the greatest rubber duck of all? The rubber duck is sitting opposite. Honourable members would have got more intelligence from a rubber duck than from the Premier. Lachlan would have got better value from his rubber duck than from the Premier, who has ignored the plight of Sydney Water and the breakdown of the water system. He is ultimately responsible for this unparalleled debacle. The annual report further states:

2am Anna Di Donato is about to deliver a new Australian. We deliver them both a service they can't live without.

Sydney Water used to provide a service they cannot live without, but that is no longer the case. Sydney Water's credibility is in shreds, as is the credibility of the Government. I hope that many of my coalition colleagues will speak in this debate about the plight of their constituents. I do not care how long the debate takes. I do not care whether it runs for the rest of the week, because the people of Sydney want answers from the Government. They are fed up with the lies, the deception and the cowardice of the Carr Government. Government members have been hiding in their bunker, shoving people out to make misleading statements, pulling back the statements and then retreating to the bunker, with the people of Sydney left to continue boiling their water.

The Government's response has been simply to say to the people of Sydney, "We will not

compensate you for what you have paid, even in the first water crisis." We are now up to water crisis number three. All the Government has said is that the people of Sydney should count themselves lucky to get compensation of \$15 and that they should go away. At the outset the Opposition said that the people of Sydney should get compensation of \$40 for the first water crisis. In every sense the Government is short-changing the people of Sydney and the people of New South Wales. It is short-changing the people mostly by not telling the truth. The Government has not told the truth about this crisis and it will never tell the truth.

The coalition has put forward a 10-point plan which a Collins-Armstrong government would put in place. The \$279 million that has been skimmed off the top should be used immediately to improve monitoring, filtration and the pipe system. Our comprehensive plan starts with an entirely new Sydney Water board. The Government cannot revive the credibility of the present board, which has been so damaged. Sydney Water needs a fresh board with expertise, not simply mates. If ever a public board cried out for a cleaning and the serious appointment of experts and specialists who can solve this problem, it is the board of Sydney Water. The Government should have done that but it has refused to do so.

The people of Sydney should be provided with more information about water quality. The Internet is a vehicle for the distribution of information but the Government has not acted on that suggestion. There should be daily monitoring for cryptosporidium and giardia, which have well and truly emerged since the 1996 Sydney Water annual report. Those proposals are only part of our comprehensive plan. As competent as Mr McClellan is as a lawyer, the terms of reference for his inquiry are too limited to enable him to reach the conclusions that the people of Sydney want to hear. They want the whole truth about Sydney Water and nothing but the truth. However, the truth will not come from the Government. That is why I moved on behalf of the Opposition a motion of no confidence in the Carr Government for its total mismanagement of the Sydney water crisis.

**Mr CARR** (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs) [6.06 p.m.]: The only thing the Leader of the Opposition must explain to the people of New South Wales today is why under the coalition Government the level of cryptosporidium in the water supply was almost five times recent levels and there was no public warning. One significant aspect of this debate is the absence of the honourable member for Lane

Cove. She was not here to support her leader. She opted not to be present to support her leader because, while the Leader of the Opposition can move motions of no confidence in the Government, it is increasingly clear that his party has no confidence in him.

**Mr O'Farrell:** Where's your support?

**Mr CARR:** There is one of the conspirators. He tells the media daily, "It is 14, 14, 10 in the party room."

**Mr Photios:** Get your numbers right.

**Mr CARR:** The honourable member for Ermington is lining up for the position of deputy leader. He is undermining his leader by seeking to walk away with the deputy's post. The one bloke on trial in this Parliament is the Leader of the Opposition. What a lame, ill-researched, exasperated speech he made! There was not a revelation or a document in it. I have moved no confidence motions, and I have moved one in relation to Sydney Water but there was a bit of research behind it; I presented data, documentation and authority. There was no data, documentation or authority in the Leader of the Opposition's speech. It was shoddy staff work again—poor research, poor co-ordination and no indictment of this Government.

The Leader of the Opposition failed to demonstrate what the Government has done or failed to do which has contributed to the Sydney water crisis. He failed to demonstrate that any action taken by any member on this side of the House has contributed to the problem. He failed to demonstrate any area in which the Government has failed to act which has brought about the problem. On Sydney radio this afternoon people wanted the answer to one question: Why, under the previous Government, were there recorded levels of cryptosporidium five times higher than those recorded in the past month or so and why was there no public warning? Talk about being asleep on the job! This was deep sleep.

When the Leader of the Opposition was asked about it by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 3 August he said, "When I signed off"—that is, on the standards—"at the time cryptosporidium to the best of my knowledge was not around." Leaving aside what happened in Milwaukee, I am advised that cryptosporidium has been around since 1681. Excuse me for my fascination with history, but it was described by a Dutch scientist who found it in his own stools! That information comes out of history books.



The Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Health in the previous Government, he was the shareholding Minister in Sydney Water, and in August he said that to the best of his knowledge cryptosporidium was not around. Talk about being asleep on the job! It is disgraceful that the honourable member for Lane Cove did not come down to the Chamber hear her leader speak. Is she not the shadow minister for something? Is she not the shadow minister for the environment? She is upstairs with a calculator—for, against, doubtful. When were these levels last recorded in our water supply? They were recorded in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Pittwater may seek the call when the Premier has completed his contribution.

**Mr CARR:** The plea from the Leader of the Opposition today is, "Give us more information." He gave the people of Sydney no information on those dates when cryptosporidium levels went through the roof. No-one was told to boil water; no-one was given any information. Samples contained 58,660 cryptosporidium per 100 litres, almost five times higher than the highest levels most recently reported—and there was no health warning. This afternoon the staff of the Leader of the Opposition have apparently been downstairs shouting at journalists in the press gallery, trying to set them straight about the revelation of those levels of cryptosporidium when he was in government and the shareholding Minister in Sydney Water and did nothing. There were no health warnings and people want to know why.

What the people of this State want is what the Government has asked the McClellan inquiry to do. We have given the inquiry the broadest terms of reference and all the resources it needs. The other day the Opposition made a half-hearted call for a royal commission. That call was not repeated in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition or in question time. I wonder why the Opposition called for a royal commission a week ago but has not repeated that call when Parliament is debating the issue? Could it have something to do with the revelation the Government has made about the levels of cryptosporidium in the water supply when the coalition was in government and the absence of any public knowledge? The contrast is this: the Government has been absolutely honest with the people of this State. Whenever there has been advice from the expert health panel to issue a public health warning alert, the Government has done that.

Meanwhile the McClellan inquiry has produced two reports and its recommendations have been endorsed by the Government.

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

**Mr CARR:** The first interim report made recommendations concerning public health powers and regulatory controls, and the Government has endorsed those recommendations. The Opposition has asked what the Government is doing. The recommendations include the requirement for tests and other quality assurance processes to be undertaken by water suppliers, requiring water suppliers to disclose to New South Wales Health a range of information necessary for the proper evaluation of drinking water and safety, and empowering New South Wales Health to declare public health alerts in relation to drinking water supplied by any authority. The system of health alerts is being reviewed and a memorandum of understanding between Sydney Water and New South Wales Health will be drafted.

There will be contingency and emergency plans between New South Wales Health and Sydney Water, and we will increase the health expertise of the board of Sydney Water. The Government has accepted all of the recommendations in Mr McClellan's second interim report and has established a task force to fast-track their implementation. Yesterday Cabinet agreed to investigate the establishment of a catchment commission with tighter controls on catchment management. The Government is also tightening controls on all council-operated sewage treatment plants located within the catchment area; requiring the Department of Agriculture to work with all landowners to improve land management practices to reduce contaminated run-off; tightening management controls that restrict access to special catchment areas, including the possibility of increased penalties and on-the-spot fines; accelerating the reduction of feral animal populations; increasing the acquisition of private land inside the catchment; and continuing the acceleration of providing a sewerage system to The Oaks and Oakdale area south of Warragamba Dam.

Other measures include improving septic tank systems within the catchment where sewerage is not possible, and increasing the use of remote sensing in managing the catchment areas. During this session the Government will introduce legislation to increase the control of the Minister for Urban Affairs and

Planning in respect of Sydney Water. The Government is committed to cleansing the 22,000 kilometre pipe system. That has also been accelerated. At the start of this crisis the Government established the public inquiry. That inquiry has all the powers it needs, it has broad terms of reference and it has produced two reports. The Government has accepted those reports and is implementing the recommendations.

The Government is being honest with the people of this State. It is sharing with them all the available information. The Government will take no risk with public health. In the meantime, after the revelations during question time today, the public wants to know why there was a cover-up under Collins. The public wants to know why, under Collins, those astonishing readings of cryptosporidium were allowed to pass without a public health alert. That is what the public wants to know. I am operating under something of a liability. I want to rebut the half-hearted, exasperated, cranky little speech that the Leader of the Opposition made, but I do not want to damage his credibility to the extent he has any, because those on this side of the House are in a delicate position. We want to flick away his criticisms, which is fairly easily done, but we do not want to harm him. Throughout this session we are barracking for you, Peter. As depicted by Moir in the Herald this morning, I am in the "Save Collins" camp.

The rambling, cranky speech of the Leader of the Opposition sent the honourable member for Camden into a comatose state. I am worried about her. Will the Minister for Health take her pulse? She was virtually wheeled out of the Chamber at the end of his speech. The honourable member for Lane Cove, who I am told is the shadow minister for the environment, did not even turn up. I repeat that at the end of his speech the Leader of the Opposition had not identified a single thing the Government has done or failed to do that contributed in any way to the contamination of Sydney's water. He has not demonstrated a single occasion on which the Government has been less than honest and forthcoming with the public. Whenever there was a warning, the Government has issued the health alert. I rest my case.

*[Mr Speaker left the chair at 6.20 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]*

**Mr ARMSTRONG** (Lachlan—Leader of the National Party) [7.30 p.m.]: Who would have thought three or four months ago that on the opening day of the last session of this Parliament honourable members would be debating the water

quality in the largest city in Australia? Who would have thought that in what is allegedly one of the most sophisticated cities in the world, the city that will host the Olympic Games in two years and one week, the city that will host the turn-of-the-millennium Games that will be the pinnacle of attention for 4,000 million people throughout the world for 16 days, members of Parliament would be debating water quality? The city of Sydney has spent an unbelievable amount per head of population.

A massive investment has been made in a single event, the Olympic Games, to provide real growth for both the State and the country and to provide an improved quality of life into the next millennium. Notwithstanding that, the members of the State's Parliament are involved in a debate that could be taking place in any Third World country in the world today. It gives me no pleasure to be participating in a debate on a subject that is regressive and non-productive so far as the people of New South Wales are concerned. In recent days many cartoons have appeared in the press. The press cannot believe what is happening, and callers to talkback radio have shown a certain amount of scepticism.

They have always regarded Sydney as a safe place. People have always thought that it was safe to eat anywhere in Sydney, with its packaged or fresh food maintained in wonderfully hygienic conditions. They thought they could drink the water, and put ice cubes in their whiskey and in cool drinks to give to their kids in the summertime when they come home after a hot day at school. Suddenly they can no longer do so. They are now told they must boil their drinking water. Many of us can remember our mums having to boil water and, of course, women always boiled the water for babies. Honourable members can imagine the Carr Government's Christmas presents to the children of New South Wales this year, one of those wonderful Labor promises: every child will get a kettle for Christmas.

Let us get a few things straight. In relation to any service the Government is responsible for delivering within a designated budget, the buck stops in one spot only—with the Cabinet, the Premier and his Ministers. I have had enough of public servants and appointees being blamed for this so-called crisis. They may have been negligent—I am not prepared to pass judgment on that—but I have had enough of some members of the Government wimping out on their responsibilities. That is what they are doing. They want two bob each way.

When the Government was elected many of us said it faced many problems. The biggest problem

was probably the fact that members of the Government had no commercial experience. Only one or two of them have ever employed anyone. Lacking that experience, they have no understanding of how to handle people with respect and dignity or how to accept responsibility. The greatest disservice people can do for their employees is to blame them for what goes wrong and take the credit for good outcomes. That is what the members of the Government are doing. That demonstrates the incompetence of the Premier and the senior Ministers who are responsible for Sydney's water supply. They are not prepared to accept their management responsibilities.

In the past few weeks the public has seen page after page of rhetoric from members of the Government. All the available techniques have been used by the so-called spin doctors in advising their Ministers, and the Ministers have been giving the public the soft soap and the hard sell. They have been warm and folksy. They have asked people to understand and to work with them. They have asked the community to have trust in them because they share the problem. Later the Government said it gathered some of the best experts in the world to advise it on this problem that has suddenly been found. That is simply passing the buck once again.

The Government can use all the rhetoric it wants, it can use all the experts it wants, but the public and the businesses of New South Wales, and the visitors from overseas, potential investors, are interested only in how the Government will clear up the problem and when it will be safe for them to live and invest in Sydney, and be able to use safe, clean, pure water. The public does not give a damn about the rhetoric the Government is pumping out. Water is a simple product and the public wants a simple answer to the problem.

When I was a Minister in the previous Government I was scheduled to visit one of the larger northern Asian countries. I was being briefed by the head of the department, who talked about some of the customs and culture and so forth, and he got around to food. He said, "Minister, I would advise you to eat only bananas, because they are not washed with water and they come in their own packaging. We will have many foods offered to us. Bottled water will be at every banquet, and I suggest you have only three courses." I said, "Which three courses?" He said, "The three beers," and he said that because the water was no good.

**Mr Fraser:** I'll bet you enjoyed the courses.

**Mr ARMSTRONG:** I certainly did. So the advice to people coming to Sydney will be to forget

about fresh lettuce, forget about iceblocks or ice-cream, forget about cleaning their teeth under the tap and eat only bananas and drink only three beers. Sydney is now at the same stage as that Third World country that I visited back in 1989. Last Saturday morning when I woke up I heard on the 2UE 6.00 a.m. news that the Minister for Health had advised that Sydney water was safe. Several times between then and about 20 to seven the commentator said that it was great that Sydney water was safe. I was relieved. I cleaned my teeth, had a shave and had a drink of water out of the tap. It was great.

At 10 to seven there was a news flash that the Health Department had issued a warning that people anywhere in Sydney were not to drink the water, clean their teeth, use ice blocks or wash vegetables under the tap. Water to wash vegetables had to be boiled. There would be no stronger warning anywhere in the world about water being unfit for human consumption: it is the strongest condemnation there can be. That warning was put out by the Minister for Health. If he participates in this debate I will be interested to hear what he says.

I mentioned that the Olympics will be on in two years and one week. The same person is head of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the Olympic Construction Authority and the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority. He is responsible for the whole process. He is also a Cabinet Minister. If the head of the Olympic organising body in Barcelona, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Nagano or any of the Olympic cities of recent times had found that the water was unfit for human consumption two years and two weeks out from the Olympics he would have called in the army. We have not heard a squeak out of Michael Knight—Mr Olympics himself—because he and Premier Carr compromised the Olympics by having a member of the Cabinet as president of SOCOG. He cannot wear two hats.

The present situation demonstrates that the same person should not do both jobs, particularly a politician. He has been totally neutered. He cannot assist the Olympic movement in convincing people that it is safe to come to Sydney. He has not been able to put an ounce of pressure on the Government to get its act together in the interests of the largest Olympics the world has ever seen. That is the second disastrous aspect of the Government's actions in this exercise. Tourism, business and the quality of life have been affected but now there will be a lasting legacy with the Olympic Games. There is no champion from the Olympic movement who can speak on behalf of SOCOG because the president is the spokesman and he is a Minister of the Carr

Government, which has dropped the ball as far as water quality is concerned.

Projections going back to 1991 anticipated that the Olympics would be paid for by overseas tourist growth in years subsequent to the Olympics. In the five years from 2001 to 2006 Sydney could have expected a similar growth in tourism to that experienced by Barcelona—100 per cent compounding. That is how a real benefit would be achieved for the people who have underwritten the Olympics, the taxpayers of New South Wales. Imagine going anywhere around the world now trying to tell people how good Sydney will be after the Olympics and asking them to invest, to book tours, to build hotels and units and to send tour ships to Sydney. People would have to bring their own water because our water stinks and they cannot even wash their teeth in it.

The quality of living in Sydney and our international image with tourists and the Olympics have been damaged. The Government has made a monumental blunder in locking the head of SOCOG in as a Government Minister. The city has not been equipped for this crisis. Who would have thought a few months ago that Sydney would have a crisis such as this? It was never expected under any previous government that Sydney would have to face a crisis such as this in which our water quality would be equivalent to that of the worst of the Third World countries. The Premier and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning have referred to the world experts. They said that Australia had the very best. I do not doubt that that is the case, but why will they not let the experts tell the public what they think?

Why has the Minister for Health participated in the gagging of the people who have been brought to Australia, no doubt at enormous expense? It is probably a wise investment. The disaster has been kept a political issue: only politicians have talked about it, instead of the people who have the expertise. They are not allowed to speak to the media, to the public. They are kept behind closed doors because the Government does not have the slightest idea of how it will fix the problem. No doubt the experts are telling the Government what is going on but the Government knows that it does not have the money, and most likely the managerial expertise, to deal with it. So this is a cover-up. We have no idea of the recommendations of the experts that have been brought here.

I expect the Ministers who participate in the debate tonight to tell us accurately and precisely what the experts paid for by the taxpayers of New South Wales have recommended to manage the

problem affecting everyone in Sydney tonight. We need answers to some of the following questions. What program is there for the restoration of safe water in Sydney? I ask the Minister for Health and his colleagues to outline the program, put a critical path on it. It should be put up on a billboard in Martin Place so that people can see and monitor the way in which the Government will restore Sydney's water to its previous healthy condition. To this stage there has been no indication that the Government has a critical path or a managerial program. If it has been provided to the Government, it has not been articulated. The Government has not yet acknowledged that it has one so I suspect that there is no such program.

I ask the Minister for Health: what program will the Government undertake to restore world confidence in our tourism industry? Is the Government putting together a promotional exercise for when water quality is restored? Has the Government hired international public relations people? The Government has to restore the confidence of international travel agencies, major hotel chains, other governments and other tourism departments throughout the world. Otherwise we will never recover. The two fundamental questions are: what program is there to restore world tourism and business confidence, and what program is there for the restoration of safe water in Sydney? If this debate does nothing other than flush out the Government, force it to tell people these things, it will have achieved its purpose. The Government has botched not only Sydney water. I shall quote a few words from a speech by the Hon. Bob Carr, Premier of New South Wales, on 4 October 1997 at the Australian Labor Party State conference. On page 10 of his speech he stated:

Delegates, You recall the disaster of Wallis Lake.

Under present circumstances we spend \$60 million a year on country water and sewage. It's a 15 year program to fix our rural waterways.

Delegates,

We can fix them up with a burst of activity concentrated into the next five years—not stretched over 15.

That would generate more than 10,000 jobs in the bush.

Just think.

The Premier said that under the Government there is a 15-year backlog on water and sewerage services in the bush, that the Government is spending only \$60 million a year on country water, and that the Government's initiatives would generate 10,000 jobs. When this Government took office the annual expenditure on the country water and sewerage

services program was \$86 million indexed and there was a backlog on water and sewerage services of not 15 but nine years. The annual budget has been reduced by \$26 million and the backlog on services has blown out by six years. It is not only Sydney that has a problem. The water supply to more than 300 towns and villages throughout this State does not meet the current standards demanded by the Minister for Health and his department, and the Premier's speech to his own Australian Labor Party conference 18 months ago admitted as much.

Thus we have further evidence of the Government's absolute incompetence in managing water supplies in this State. The questions and answers paper of Thursday, 7 May 1998 contained a question about the estimated actual expenditure under the country towns water supply and sewerage schemes for each financial year since 1987-88. The answer tabled details of that expenditure, spread across a multitude of towns across the State. It is significant that the table outlining expenditure from 1987 to 1997 has contracted since 1995. The Government is in trouble with the management of water for several reasons: it has not committed the requisite amount of funding, it will not accept responsibility, it does not have a management plan, and it is not prepared to be honest about the situation.

This evening I call upon the Government to make several admissions. It should admit that it has made a massive blunder and that it has no ideas on how to restore either the safe water program or confidence—national or international. I call on the Government to adopt the coalition's 10-point plan announced today; to appoint a new water board based on expertise rather than political association—not jobs for the old mates; to introduce safe drinking water legislation similar to the legislation enacted by the Clinton administration; and to freeze the planned increase in water rates until the crisis has been resolved. The Government has stated that it will grant a cash rebate to holders of water accounts. What is the Government doing for those who live in rented premises? My colleague the honourable member for Myall Lakes has told me that approximately 1.5 million people in Sydney live in rented premises.

What is the Government doing for tourists staying in our hotels or for the country people who have come to Sydney for medical treatment, legal reasons or business purposes and who have to buy water? Country people supply their own water at home from a tank at the back of the house. Will the Government grant a \$15 rebate to those people as well? I call on the Government to establish an

Internet site providing up-to-date information on water quality. The Government should give a commitment that it will regularly monitor for cryptosporidium, giardia and other parasites that have emerged in the past two or three years as a significant threat to Sydney's water supply. I call on the Government to redirect money from this year's predicted \$278 million government dividend to improvements in monitoring and filtration treatment.

Today in question time the Premier was asked about the present calamity and how he was going to fix it. Immediately he gave a spiel about how much money Sydney Water will be putting into the government coffers. That reply will not go down very well with restaurant owners or with mothers who are trying to bath young children in foul water before they go to bed and who are boiling water before making up a bottle of formula for their baby or giving their young children a drink of water. The Premier's only answer relates to the amount of money being made from Sydney Water.

I call on the Government to provide a \$40 rebate on the next water bill to ratepayers, to transfer responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the Department of Health, to tighten access to water catchment areas such as the Warragamba Dam, and to initiate regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination of water supplies. This Government cannot get out of the dilemma in which it has caught the people of Sydney by trying to blame others—bureaucrats, previous governments, animals grazing in the catchment areas, greenies camping in the catchment areas or the many native animals that live in water catchment areas. The Government cannot get out of this.

If the Government is to treat the problem it has to accept responsibility. The first fundamental issue in management is acceptance of personal responsibility. When one buys a motor car, takes out a mortgage or wins a seat in Parliament one has a responsibility. I have a responsibility. The Minister for Health has more than one responsibility: he has a responsibility as a member of Parliament, a responsibility as a citizen, a responsibility as a Minister and another responsibility as a member of Cabinet. The Government must accept its responsibilities. Unless it accepts its responsibilities the problems will not be solved. In this evening's debate I should like to hear an admission that Government members individually and collectively accept and will honour their commitments and their positions within the Government.

It is essential that the Government clearly articulate its critical path for rectification of the

problem with Sydney's water. The Government must this week announce how it will restore confidence to overseas and interstate visitors who intend to come to Sydney for the Olympic Games. If we are to sell tickets for the Games and fill the hotels, there is a need for confidence. The Government must restore that confidence this week. It is essential that the Government deliver to those countries that provide the majority of Australia's tourists—the countries from northern Europe, northern America and Asia—the message that the water problem is being addressed. Visitors simply will not come to Sydney for the Olympics, to look at the Opera House, to walk up Macquarie Street or to visit country New South Wales if it is not possible to drink our water, use ice blocks or eat salads.

I have a secondary interest in the debate as someone who represents the party looking after country New South Wales. The National Party is well aware that 75 per cent of Australia's tourists come through Sydney. If they do not come to Sydney then country New South Wales will not see them. The main arterial routes across New South Wales and attractions such as the Dubbo zoo and the Coffs Harbour porpoise pools will not get tourists if confidence is not restored, and they will not be able to survive without those tourists. The people operating those businesses are doing their jobs honestly and they are accepting their responsibilities. It is time that the Minister for Health did the same.

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [7.58 p.m]: Debate from Opposition members has been disappointing so far. The Leader of the Opposition delivered one of the worst-prepared speeches I have ever heard. His speech contained no substance and provided no information on what he thought was the cause of the contamination, what he thought might be ways of solving the issue, what he thought the Government has done that he disagrees with, what the Government could have done to make things better or what would resolve the issue more speedily. The Leader of the National Party made a very interesting admission on this issue that the Opposition has decided is the most important of the day.

The Leader of the National Party said clearly that he prepared for today's motion of no confidence in the Government by scratching a few notes on the back of an envelope. Presumably he had been thinking about the debate for some weeks, yet he decided at the last moment that he might take a glove to it. It is amazing that he takes this matter so lightly, but like his colleague the Leader of the Opposition he is under threat from rumblings in his

own party. I was fascinated by his claim that as a former Minister who has travelled the world he understands Third World conditions. It offends me to hear people talk about Third World conditions in such a cavalier way. I am surprised that the Leader of the National Party presumes that the problems of the Third World—and they are significant problems—are in any way related to the issues that face us now.

If he wants to belittle people's commitment to the Third World by his cavalier and irresponsible comments, be it on his head; he has no understanding of Third World issues. The Leader of the National Party also reiterated the Opposition's 10-point plan—the plan that was released about two weeks ago. He does not even know what his Opposition colleagues are saying. Nothing in the 10-point plan identifies where the problem is, nor does it provide a solution to the contamination. It certainly does not suggest ways in which the Government could improve or change its tack. All it does is cut down more trees to issue ridiculous press releases.

The Leader of the National Party said also that as part of the Opposition's new plan the public health unit of the Health Department should issue health warnings. That is already happening. The Leader of the National Party does not take the motion seriously. The Opposition is desperate to find something to talk about, because over the past few months it has been on holidays or plotting its own demise. The corporatisation of Sydney Water is an issue that needs to be tackled. The coalition corporatised Sydney Water in January 1995. It set up a new-style corporate model, which was a total failure, as the report of the McClellan inquiry showed. The report states:

In my opinion Sydney Water was not prepared for an event of this magnitude.

Sydney Water failed to respond to the initial contamination by implementing an adequate testing regime.

Its executive decision making was flawed.

In regard to the Government's handling of the water contamination, Mr McClellan said:

It is my view that the actions of the government through the Premier and Minister Knowles in establishing an expert panel and Minister Knowles accepting responsibility of informing the public was essential.

In other words, Mr McClellan endorsed the Government's action of taking responsibility and working hard. The Opposition has no credibility. It corporatised Sydney Water, developed the model for

its operation and created the circumstances under which the contamination has occurred, and the Government is cleaning up the mess. The Opposition has proposed no sensible course of action. Nothing in its 10-point plan would have prevented what has occurred. The only action the Opposition has taken has been to panic. Its performance on this issue is a measure of the way it would run government—out of control.

The public wants answers and action. The Government shares the public's frustration and concern; it is demanding answers and attacking the issue. In contrast, the Leader of the Opposition is content to sit back and laugh at the people of Sydney; he is content to demean the concerns of ordinary Sydneysiders. The *Australian* of 27 August reported that the Leader of the Opposition laughed at news of the second boil water alert. The people of New South Wales expect leadership and the Leader of the Opposition has demonstrated that he is incapable of leadership on this issue. He and his shadow cabinet would run New South Wales like a row of laughing clowns at the Royal Easter Show—mouths open and shaking their heads.

Fortunately the Carr Government has acted quickly to identify the issues and attack the problem. It is getting water back on track. It has established an independent panel of experts to define the risk to public health and has kept the public informed every step of the way, in contrast to what the coalition did when in government. The former coalition Government had the highest readings of cryptosporidium ever recorded, but kept them from the public. The Government established the independent inquiry under Peter McClellan, QC, to identify the cause of the contamination. That inquiry has already handed down two reports and New South Wales Health has acted quickly on the recommendations.

Specifically, the Government has assumed the role of issuing health alerts as well as improving communication with Sydney Water. The Government took control of the issue from day one and its actions are in sharp contrast to those of a rudderless Opposition. Following the McClellan reports the Government's response has been rapid and comprehensive. The Government will present to Parliament this session a comprehensive legislative package to better protect Sydney's water supply and resolve serious management failures in Sydney Water. A key part of the legislation will be to restore ministerial control over Sydney Water.

The Government will also investigate breaking up Sydney Water to create a separate catchment

commission, which will have statutory obligations to ensure greater protection and management of Sydney's catchments. Additionally, a major review will be carried out of the top management structure of Sydney Water. With regard to my own portfolio, public health powers and regulatory controls will be strengthened. That will include the requirement that tests and other quality assurance processes be undertaken by water suppliers, requiring them to disclose to New South Wales Health a range of information necessary for the proper evaluation of drinking water and safety, and empowering New South Wales Health to declare public health alerts in relation to drinking water supplied by any authority.

The system of health alerts will be reviewed and the memorandum of understanding between Sydney Water and New South Wales Health will be redrafted. The Government will also increase the health expertise of the board of Sydney Water. In regard to the handling of the incidents by New South Wales Health, it is important to recognise that the department has been vigilant in ensuring that the public is regularly kept up to date on the results of water testing, the levels of contamination, and water boiling alerts. That is in contrast to the actions of the Opposition. [*Quorum formed.*]

Shortly after the first contamination the Government set up an independent advisory panel of expert microbiologists and parasitologists. The panel worked with the Director-General of Health, Mr Michael Reid, and the Chief Health Officer, Dr Andrew Wilson, to develop an appropriate protocol for action. The protocol set out actions to be taken following detection of any cryptosporidium or giardia in a sample of drinking water including: immediate reporting by Sydney Water to New South Wales Health; immediate second sampling for test by Sydney Water; and if significant levels in two samples of either cryptosporidium or giardia are found, the expert panel would be urgently convened.

It is important to make it clear that the committee does not look at water readings alone before a boil-water alert is called. The committee considers a range of factors, including the flow of water through the system, the turbidity of the water and the rate of illness in the community. Once a boil-water alert is in place, the protocol for release requires three clear readings from water supply sources, two clear readings and a 24-hour period of clear water through distribution channels, and consideration by an expert panel of any evidence of disease in the community.

Recent events demonstrate a degree of variability about contamination of the Sydney

drinking water supply. That, coupled with intermittent high readings, led the expert panel to advise New South Wales Health to announce a two-week boil-water alert beginning Saturday, 5 September. During this period the Government is stepping up its surveillance of illness in the community, including expanding public surveys and making giardia a laboratory-notifiable condition. In the meantime, all the normal investigations of plant and catchment areas will continue and water test results will regularly be released to the public.

If, at the end of the period, no increase in illness is found, the expert panel and New South Wales Health will consider lifting the boil-water alert. If further water contamination occurs, the normal protocol will be followed. The protocol does not require a boil-water alert for every incidence of cryptosporidium and giardia detected in the water supply. Many other actions occur before a boil-water alert is deemed necessary. The protocol makes it clear that other parameters, besides levels of parasites, need to be examined and be suggestive of a problem, including water turbidity and the level of illness in the community.

In addition, a working group of Sydney Water and New South Wales Health officials communicate or meet daily to discuss that day's results, for the management of boil-water alerts and to ensure adequate public communication. During the incidents water testing results have been released as soon as they are available, sometimes up to twice a day. One can only speculate about whether that level of openness would have existed under a coalition government. A coalition government would have known it was responsible for the badly set up corporate structure, and no doubt it would have covered up the risks to public safety, as it covered up the results of testing that showed contamination up to five times that which has been found to date.

It is important to put the issue of illness into context. At the moment cryptosporidium and giardia appear to be causing no increased rates of infection amongst Sydneysiders. In 1993 during the Milwaukee water contamination incident more than 100 people died and 400,000 people became ill. The Milwaukee contamination occurred just before the former Government issued press releases stating that cryptosporidium was of no concern. Sydney has seen nothing like the level of illness that occurred in Milwaukee. During the second water incident, New South Wales Health conducted a survey of 100,000 households to determine the effect on health of water contaminated by giardia and cryptosporidium. Surveys were carried out of 500,000 households in affected areas and 500,000 in unaffected areas.

The rates of diarrhoeal illness were exactly the same in both groups—about 2 per cent, the normal background rate for that illness. New South Wales Health is currently undertaking another household survey as a result of the most recent boil-water alert. It is also important to note that giardiasis has now been listed as a notifiable illness, and that will help to determine potential or real health risks posed by contaminated water. Both these processes will enable the Government once again to determine whether there has been an increase in diarrhoeal illness. That is another way in which the Carr Government is protecting the health of the people of Sydney.

The causes of contamination and the fluctuating results have led to some discussion. The widely varying contamination results tend to suggest the contamination is isolated in clumps rather than across the entire water supply. Early indications from the inquiry indicate that Warragamba Dam is contaminated by clumps of giardia and cryptosporidium. The realities are that the parasites of cryptosporidium and giardia are not evenly distributed throughout the water supplies and are not being completely filtered out at Prospect, as was flagged by McClellan in his first report.

That has been considered by the expert panel in reaching its decision to call a boil-water alert for the next two weeks. That is the essence of the Government's plan to ensure an appropriate response to contamination which best protects the health of the community. All expert advice indicates that it is not just levels alone which determine appropriate public health response. The Government must take a more sophisticated approach to looking at levels of illness and other water parameters. This is the third water contamination incident in two months, and is a completely new situation for Sydney.

As was made clear by Mr McClellan, protocols for the management of these incidents must be developed. As these protocols are being refined our knowledge also increases. We must have a more sophisticated approach to give the people of Sydney the greatest security with the least amount of inconvenience. It has been suggested that there have been delays in public health warnings from the time of testing. With each public health warning the Government has followed the protocols determined by the expert panel and New South Wales Health. The Government has moved to report results as swiftly as technology and the experts will allow.

Technology dictates that some delay will occur between testing and public release. The laboratory requires time and test results must be checked. At one stage during debate on this issue the Prime



Minister suggested he would be prepared to help. At that stage the Prime Minister probably did not know that the State Government, some weeks before, had already written to the Federal Government to ask for support through the National Health and Medical Research Council. The State Government is quite happy for the Prime Minister to expedite that request, even though the Leader of the Opposition did not seem to know what was happening.

The Government had announced the request some weeks prior to the decision of the Leader of the Opposition to enter the discussion. The Government followed directly on the McClellan report as was reported in the media. It is obvious that the Opposition had other things to do—it had been using the mobile phones non-stop to try to organise the numbers. I would rather deal with an opposition that took the issue seriously than with one which tries to perform stunts while knifing its members in the back. I would welcome a coherent opposition that offers help and solutions. At the moment that rabble is providing nothing.

**Mr PHILLIPS** (Miranda—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [8.18 p.m.]: I strongly support this motion of no confidence in the Government. The main point of defence of the Premier and the Minister for Health in particular is that the Opposition has failed to demonstrate one thing that the Government has failed to do on this issue. It appears to me, and I am sure to the people of New South Wales, that the fundamental issue is that the Government has failed to take the necessary action to ensure that the people of Sydney continue to have clean drinking water. Governments need to be able to guarantee fresh water for the people of Sydney. Sydney is a major international city, which we are proud of and which we want to showcase to the world during the Olympics. The Government has failed to ensure that the people of Sydney have access to clean water.

We have seen a disgraceful display by this Government. Every time there is a problem—whether it be a budgetary problem, a health problem, a gun problem, or some other problem—it is always someone else's fault; it is never the Government's fault. The Premier's great political skill is to be able to lay off the blame; that is what he prides himself on. He says, "Read the headlines. Find someone else to blame." It does not cut it on this issue. As Sydney enters its third water crisis in just over a month, the Carr Government continues to try to lay off the blame. It is looking—as it has done for the past three years—to blame anyone except itself for its abysmal failure, rather than accepting the responsibility. The Premier must

realise that the buck stops with him and that the people of this State want action. They want to be assured that the Government is continually doing things to upgrade the services that it is providing.

How has the Government been laying off the blame? If one looks through the newspapers one will see that the Government suggested, firstly, that the contamination was due to dead dogs; then it was due to the irresponsibility of the manager, Chris Pollett; then it was the chairman, David Hill. Then it was suggested that it must have been because the plant at Prospect was privatised. Then it was blamed on the heavy rains. Now it is the previous Government's fault. The Government continues to move the blame. The Minister for Health now starts to try to tie in the Federal Government, because it has offered assistance. Now the Government will be on the phone calling for assistance, and if it does not get enough assistance it will say that it is the Federal Government's fault that we have this water contamination.

The people of New South Wales have had enough. The Opposition is moving no confidence in the Government because of its failure to ensure the implementation of available new technologies to continually upgrade the plants to maintain the city's water quality. It is an evolving process. A system may be perfect today, but one cannot keep the same system for a whole century without changing it. The giardia and cryptosporidium issue is about change. When the coalition came to office in 1988 it moved to install filtration plants. In 1992 the coalition moved to approve the funds to build new filtration plants to the world standard at that time. Through to 1996, around the world more concerns were expressed about giardia and cryptosporidium, and the issue was starting to come through in government reports and water board reports. For three years, more and more information has emerged to suggest that the Government has done nothing to ensure the State's water system is kept up to standard.

The Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning must explain to this Parliament and the people of the State why, after three years of constant warnings, they did not respecify the contract with the private operator of the Prospect plant. Why did they not change the standards and require a higher standard of filtration? In 1996 the Opposition, along with numerous other observers, called upon the Government to react to the increasing threat of cryptosporidium and giardia. The response of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning at that time in this Parliament was that the Opposition was scaremongering. The Minister has

failed to act. As regulator, the Government has a constant role to upgrade licences of this nature to ensure that the interests of the public are guaranteed at all times. It does not matter who owns it, whether it is in government hands or private hands, or whether it is a joint venture.

The primary responsibility of government is as regulator. As regulator, the Government has a responsibility to ensure that the regulations keep pace with change and developments so that the public health of our community is not compromised. The ridiculousness of the entire incident was highlighted less than four weeks ago when the regulators of the licence conditions produced a report giving Sydney Water a big tick for meeting all the conditions under the licence agreement. At the same time, no-one in Sydney was drinking tap water. A plant was operating, fulfilling the Government's requirements, and Sydney Water gives it a big tick and says it is doing everything up to standard. But, at the same time, no-one is drinking the water.

Whose fault is that? Is it the operator's fault, or is it the regulator's fault? Who is in charge of standards and regulation? The Government. It is the Government's fault; the problem rests solely with the Government. The Minister should not think he can solve this problem by changing the structure, by sacking people, or by putting in a whole range of smokescreens, as has been mentioned. The problem is the regulation and the Minister's implementation of that regulation. They are the Minister's significant failures.

The next big mistake by the Carr Government was the sacking of the previous board. The Government came in and, as usual, wiped out the board and appointed its Labor mates to the Sydney Water Board. In sacking the experienced board members and replacing them with the likes of its mates David Hill and Peter Sams, the Government destroyed a team with enormous experience and expertise—a team that was steering the corporation through a new period of corporatisation. The last thing it needed was Mr Disaster David Hill and Peter Sams. The Government has failed to learn from this approach to the management of a vital organisation like Sydney Water, because today we learn it has appointed Michael Costa, of the New South Wales Labor Council, to the board. The Government stacks these boards with all its mates and wonders why it does not get the performance required to maintain the high standards.

Sydney Water has been squeezed for more and more money by a government desperate to plug its

gaping budget hole. This year it is planned to scrape from Sydney Water \$279 million in profits. The people of Sydney are paying their water rates and the Government is scraping off, as good as a tax, \$279 million. Since coming to office the Government has scraped off more than \$800 million in funds out of ratepayers' money. What capital advancements could have been made to pipelines, water filtration and catchment areas with \$800 million? That would have been an enormous investment. Yet this Government has been forced to take that money from Sydney Water because of the budget crisis that it has created for itself. Meanwhile, the Government is steadfastly ignoring the gathering weight of evidence pointing to the increasing threat posed by giardia and cryptosporidium.

When a government reduces capital investment, does not keep up with technology, does not keep up with changes, rips money out of organisations, continues to drive down the work force, does not keep its regulations up to date, the inevitable finally happens. Parasite levels have soared. Sydney Water is understaffed, overweight at the top and simply unable to respond. Senior management lacks the wherewithal to understand basic physical, microbiological and chemical concepts, because it lacks appropriate expertise in the sciences. Sydney Water's chairman was more concerned about becoming a member of the Federal Parliament than about ensuring that the people of Sydney had safe drinking water.

In other words, this crisis was a disaster waiting to happen because of inaction by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. After three years of sitting on his hands, three years of running down Sydney Water and three years of his mates controlling Sydney Water, what has happened? In the past three years massive dividends have been removed from Sydney Water by the Carr Government and that has made it impossible for Sydney Water to undertake the necessary major capital works to improve water quality or to alleviate pollution from Sydney's waste water in the Hawkesbury, in the harbour or in the ocean.

What irks me and the community most is the blame game that the Government continues to play. The Government's response to the water crisis raised in the House today is to find someone new to blame. That strategy or tactic is constantly employed by the Premier. He said that the problem was the Australian Water Services plant at Prospect in Sydney's west, a legacy, he said, of the previous coalition Government. The Premier conveniently ignored several facts. First, the Premier is on record

praising the plant as "a triumph of modern engineering and technology". And so it was—a world-standard triumph of engineering and technology in 1992 when it was proposed for building. Opening the plant on 1 October 1996 the Premier said:

One of the many factors contributing to the lifestyle that has made Sydney famous is the quality of Sydney's water . . . The Prospect plant is fully automated and built to comfortably meet the quality required for both present and future demand . . . Sydney's drinking water catchments have been kept in pristine condition through careful planning and management . . . Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting.

What has happened in the two years since he said those words? Today we hear the Premier talking about the need to change the management of the catchments, because it is a disaster. He is trying once again to lay off the blame, but the blame rests solely with him. The Premier made a point of saying:

The Plant is a model of a successful partnership between the public and private sectors and an outstanding achievement which will supply Sydney with clean drinking water for generations to come.

He concluded by clinking his glass in a proud toast to Sydney Water. The second fact is that the Treasurer, too, was seemingly unconcerned about the Prospect plant when it was built in 1996. On 3 December 1996 *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist David Humphries reported:

Michael Egan told [trade unions] he was keen on the sale of a government-owned business which few of us would have heard about but which pays the wages of 2,000 workers and racks up \$300 million in annual sales.

David Humphries was talking about Australian Water Technologies, the trading arm of Sydney Water. He continued:

The Treasurer talked about getting an "equity partner" for AWT so that it could fulfil its ambition of getting into the Asia-Pacific to compete for big water and sewerage projects.

Both the Premier and the Treasurer were enthusiastic about the Prospect plant and Australian Water Technologies just two years ago. They were effusive in their praise. Two years ago they said it was the best, the cleanest water in the world, but now they are trying to find anybody and everybody to blame. The problem, however, rests in their lap; is on their desk, and it is one they have to solve. What has changed in the past two years? The third fact that the Premier conveniently ignores is that his Government had the capacity to renegotiate the Government's contract with Australian Water

Services to add pathogens to the list of parasites to be treated.

In 1996 and 1997, as the evidence mounted of cryptosporidium and giardia posing significant health risks, that is exactly what the Government should have done. The Government has failed to move and has failed to act. At any time Minister Knowles could have used his powers under the State Owned Corporations Act to direct Sydney Water to renegotiate the contract to treat water for cryptosporidium and giardia. When he became aware of the risks and failed to instruct that the contract be renegotiated he failed in his duty to ensure that the people of Sydney were spared the crisis now confronting them. Examination of this issue and the current stance of the Government in trying to blame public sector reform and private sector involvement makes clear that this problem stems from regulation control by the Government.

It is important to note that the Carr Government strongly supported Sydney Water Board corporatisation in 1994. The Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning led the charge. During the corporatisation debate the Minister for the Environment spoke for an inordinate time about the lack of ministerial responsibility and accountability under the 1994 corporatised model. Members of the present Government thought the model was wrong and spoke against it. Notwithstanding those views, the Government did not change the model on coming to office. The Labor Party, having examined the Water Board Corporatisation Act and bleated long and hard while in opposition, has passed not one amendment to the Act in its three years since coming to office.

Yet as soon a crisis arises the Government resorts to blaming the very legislation which it failed to amend upon coming to government. The Premier's role in setting new standards in avoiding responsibility should be closely examined. As the Leader of the Opposition stated previously, in 1992 and 1996 the Premier publicly endorsed private sector involvement in water filtration provision and the performance of the Prospect plant. Earlier the Leader of the Opposition read extracts from a letter signed by Bob Carr and Pam Allan in 1992 which clearly demonstrated their full support for private sector involvement and the provision of water filtration at Prospect.

However, recently on the Graham Richardson radio program the Premier made two significant about-faces—one on private sector involvement in water filtration and the other on electricity privatisation. Let us cast our minds back to 1995,

when none other than the Premier made the following statement in relation to the State Owned Corporations Amendment Bill, the bill which governs the degree of responsibility and accountability of government corporations, including Sydney Water. The Premier stated:

The bill will ensure that this Government is accountable for the operations of a statutory State owned corporation . . . That is the kind of Government we are.

He went on to say:

. . . I believe that the public also expects that these bodies should be obliged to display a sense of social responsibility in the conduct of their commercial activities, and should be accountable for their actions. The Government is committed to ensuring that these public expectations are fulfilled . . . It is another promise kept by, and another big tick for, this Government.

However, the Government has done the opposite. Not one Minister of this Government has been held accountable or responsible for the water crisis. Instead, anything and everyone else is being blamed. Let me illustrate how effusive Bob Carr has been about the quality of water in Sydney, indicating that he does not expect his Ministers to perform. I go back to 9 September 1997. This was a statement made by Bob Carr when on a trip to Lebanon, as provided by Australia Monitoring Services:

I mean, there's no French or American group or Egyptian group that will do it better. When it comes to water treatment as well, we've got Sydney Water represented by Paul Broad here and their general manager, three other groups and again, we've got real expertise when it comes to managing waste water and protecting and enhancing the quality of drinking water.

What has happened in just 12 months? Why have the Premier and his Ministers suddenly changed their mind and why do they want to blame everyone else? When will the Ministers realise that they are responsible for what is going on, that they are responsible for the failure to upgrade Sydney's water system over the past three years. That is why this dead cat has landed on their desk. The people of New South Wales do not want a blame game; they want positive action, and they want that action now. They do not want the Government's response of testing the water while allowing them to continue drinking it, of waiting to see if anyone gets sick, of waiting to see what happens.

Nor do the people want a stunt involving restructuring of the board of Sydney Water—sacking a few people, reversing corporatisation and appointing new boards in the catchment areas. The people of New South Wales do not want any of that nonsense because that will not fix the problem. They

want an assurance from the Government that it will implement a program and provide capital investment to upgrade our water system so that high-quality water can be guaranteed. The health of our people and the reputation of Sydney around the world depend on action by the Government. This is no time for the political stunts that the Premier is so good at.

Let me summarise what has happened. Blame has been attributed for the Prospect treatment plant. Bob Carr supported the development of that plant. He opened it, and he praised it. Bob Carr supported private sector involvement in the filtration of Sydney's water. Now he is saying that privatisation is the cause of the problem. That is just not true. Bob Carr supported corporatisation of the Water Board. Now he is saying that is a problem. He has made political appointments to the board of Sydney Water. That most definitely is a problem when those appointed are mates and not people of competence. Bob Carr has stripped the water board of funds, at a time when substantial capital investment was needed for water treatment processes, the lining of pipes, the protection of catchment areas, and improvement of treatment plants. In that time the Carr Government has ripped \$800 million from Sydney Water, a major tax on the people of New South Wales.

**Mr Knowles:** A chairman resigned because of the dividend the coalition extracted from the board.

**Mr PHILLIPS:** Labor made that an art form. At least the coalition was upgrading the system. Labor stopped the upgrading of the system, and that is the fundamental difference. Also, the price of a kilolitre of water for the people of Sydney has been increased from 65 cents to about 85 cents.

**Mr Knowles:** Eighty cents.

**Mr PHILLIPS:** I thank the Minister for the correction, but it is still a substantial increase during the term of the Labor Government. Yet it has not continued to upgrade the water systems of this State. That has been nothing but an extra tax on the program. Labor has been ignoring the ever-growing evidence and information that has been coming forward on this growing problem of the need to do something to upgrade our water treatment plants. Labor set new standards in water quality but, stupidly, in setting those new standards, failed to invest appropriately in new technology as it became available to guarantee clean water for the residents of Sydney.

The real point of this debate on the motion of no confidence in the Government is that Labor has

been in government for three years. The issue of provision of water filtration to render our water safe from giardia and cryptosporidium has been a changing and developing issue. The previous Government moved to install treatment standards which it strongly supported. Time has moved on, standards have changed, but the Government has failed in its responsibility to ensure that treatment plants, pipes and catchments continue to be improved to ensure water quality in this State. Government members may present arguments that they have done this or that, or they may blame this person or that person, but the bottom line is that in Sydney I cannot do today what I had been able to do up to six weeks ago.

**Mr Nagle:** Yes you can.

**Mr PHILLIPS:** I can, because I live in the Sutherland shire. But I cannot turn on a tap in this Parliament and in most places in Sydney and know that I can drink the water without getting sick. That is the concern of Sydney people. They want the Government to fix that problem. It is a disgrace that on this first day back in Parliament Government members want to play the blame game. I support the motion of no confidence in the Government.

**Mr KNOWLES** (Moorebank—Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing) [8.48 p.m.]: At the outset I will deal with some of the nonsense inherent in the remarks of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. No wonder he and the Leader of the Opposition are under challenge for their positions. Frankly, their performance in a debate on a motion of no confidence in the Government was appalling. They exhibited a lack of research or direct knowledge of matters that have been the subject of enormous debate in this Parliament since 1992-93 that was nothing short of disgraceful. At least they could have come into the Chamber armed with facts and proper information in support of their argument.

I make a number of points to deal with some of the nonsense put forward by them, but I deal with those matters in no particular order. The House has just been told that it is a disgrace that Michael Costa and before him Peter Sams were appointed to the board. The fact is that legislation provides that they are members of the board. Indeed, the Labor Council of New South Wales can nominate two people from which the Minister can select one for appointment to the board. That is in accordance with coalition legislation. The House has just heard the assertion that this Government ripped dividends out of the Sydney Water organisation. The dividends paid by Sydney Water under this Government are

backed by proper and independent analyses of the cash management and capital programs of the organisation. The current dividend regime was verified by Coopers and Lybrand after some fairly exhaustive research.

Compare that with the fact that the coalition tried to pass off the special dividends of \$200 million as asset exchanges for which Sydney Water received the grand prizes of a swamp, a silted river, a golf course and the Alexandra Canal. That caused the collapse of the clean waterways program in 1993-94 and directly led to the resignation of the former chairman David Harley in protest. At the parliamentary inquiry David Harley and many other people gave evidence about their performance on dividends which demonstrated that not only the clean waterways program but also the pipe cleaning program had collapsed. The pipe cleaning program was an instrumental and fundamental part of the alleged success or otherwise of the water filtration plants that were being brought on line during the inquiry.

The former Government gutted \$200 million from the organisation and stopped the pipe cleaning program and the clean waterways program. Consequently, Sydney Water's capital program was put in jeopardy, and Sydney Water's capital expenditure went into a tail spin after that. Capital expenditure has only just recovered, and we are now witnessing substantial expenditure on capital programs. We are playing catch-up after several years of inadequate capital expenditure as a consequence of the special dividend payment. I turn now to water prices. We have been told that the price of water has increased. I can demonstrate that on at least 20 different occasions members opposite supported the principle of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal determining prices.

However, members opposite will not admit that during the parliamentary inquiry into Sydney Water and establishment of the water filtration plants the chairman of the inquiry, the honourable member for Manly, and I asserted that the water filtration plants would lead to increased water prices, that prices would inevitably be passed on to Sydney consumers. That was hotly denied by the former administration. Indeed, during the inquiry there was clear evidence that prices would not be passed on. Sadly, at that time there was a whistleblower, or someone made a mistake. In a 1993 article Greg Klamus, the former manager of the Illawarra region, made it absolutely clear not only that the price of the water treatment plants would be passed on to consumers but that the cost of water would increase from 65¢ a kilolitre to \$1.15 a kilolitre over the next few years.

Surprise! Surprise! When I became Minister I found that Sydney Water had made a submission to what was formerly the Government Pricing Tribunal for the full price to be passed on. I suspended that submission until a further full inquiry had been undertaken. History shows that Sydney Water and the Government of the day lied about the cost of water. Not only does New South Wales have an independent process for setting prices, and not only does Sydney have very competitive water and sewerage rates compared with other water authorities around Australia; New South Wales also has the big lie of the former Government which said that the cost of the water filtration plants, including the \$250 million water filtration plant at Prospect, could be absorbed in the Sydney Water program.

The former Government passed on the cost of the water filtration plants to consumers, which is why we have the current pricing regime. Members opposite said that the Government did nothing to change the corporate model. It is a matter of public record that Labor when in opposition voted against the corporatisation of Sydney Water on the basis that the regulatory framework was inadequate. The honourable member for Manly will well recall a meeting in Robert Webster's office at which Robert Webster, the honourable member for Manly, the honourable member for Bligh, the former member for South Coast, John Hatton, others and I debated the matter so that members opposite could decide which way to vote on the corporatisation of Sydney Water.

Members opposite voted for corporatisation, despite the strong view that I expressed at that meeting and in the Parliament that the regulatory framework was inadequate. I suspect that some of the chickens have come home to roost. I reject entirely the claim by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the Government has done nothing since that time to improve the regulatory framework. One of the first things I did was to ensure that Sydney Water moved immediately from the 15-year-old water quality standards used by the Leader of the Opposition when he was a shareholder at the time Sydney Water was corporatised to the 1996 National Health and Medical Research Council standards. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition used 1980 standards for a 1995 corporatisation.

Today's licence shows that the only improvement the Leader of the Opposition would have required was a gradual move to the 1987 standards. The Government leapt straight over the 1987 standards to the 1996 standards. The Government made cryptosporidium a notifiable disease from 1 January 1997, which required testing

for cryptosporidium and giardia. That fairly fundamental reform moved Sydney Water into a position to adopt health standards. The Government also objected to the corporatisation of Sydney Water because Environment Protection Authority regulations were not up to standard. At that time the Labor Opposition moved an amendment which stated that Sydney Water should not be corporatised unless and until what was then euphemistically termed EPA stage two legislation was in place. However, the former Government, the honourable member for Manly and others rejected the amendment.

That legislation is now in place: the Minister for the Environment introduced it in this House. In addition, in 1995 I issued section 117 directions to deal with proper catchment management to ensure that we did not go through a laborious regional environmental planning process lasting several years. This Government moved quickly to establish a better regulatory framework for an operator which, at the time of corporatisation, was using 15-year-old drinking water standards. The former Government did not care; it lied to the people about water prices and it ripped the guts out of the organisation with a special dividend payment in the previous two years. On top of that, it gave a guarantee that the water treatment plants would "remove 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium and giardia".

The guarantee was given on the basis that there was evidence at that time that cryptosporidium and giardia were an issue that would need to be dealt with, despite what the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have said today. Today in the Parliament the Government released two reports which verify that fact. Despite what Sydney Water may have said during the inquiry—and, indeed, up to and including 1996—and despite what members opposite may or may not have chosen to understand, learn or believe, the Government ensured that cryptosporidium and giardia were factored into the consideration of the health standards for the performance of Sydney Water's supply.

What gets up my nose is the fact that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Health from 1992 until the change of government in 1995. What was his purpose in not notifying the community about a cryptosporidium level of 58,000 oocysts in 100 litres of water? As the Premier said today, that is more than five times the levels we are dealing with now. It is a notifiable level in anyone's language. However, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition pretended that he did not know about it or that standards had changed. The

fact is that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition neglected to tell the public about the levels at that time.

This Government has chosen to give the public all the information as and when it becomes available. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition cannot pretend that he did not know about the issue at that time, or that it was not an issue back then but it may be an issue now. As a consequence, the coalition stands condemned for its performance in relation to the commitments and promises it made to the community at that time in relation to pricing, the performance of the treatment plants and notifying the community about health risks, and its failure to treat people truthfully and honestly. During parliamentary debates and the McClellan inquiry a lot more information will emerge about the coalition's performance. Obviously the Leader of the Opposition is swinging in the breeze. He is desperate to find something on which to hang himself as people marshall the numbers around him. It would appear that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is dead meat, but people have not taken the time to cut him down.

My advice to members of the Opposition is to stop pretending they did not know. They did know. The record demonstrates it. Quite clearly the Opposition is now trying to cover up the fact that it failed to notify the public, and is trying to smudge over the fact that it fundamentally dismantled the structure of our water supply system and made false promises to the community back in the days when the water filtration plants were being established. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said in his opening remarks that the fundamental issue in this debate is the provision of clean water. I would go one step further and say it is more than that: it is the protection of public Health.

The delineation could not be clearer. Despite the frustration, anger and hostility of the community, the uncertainty surrounding the issue and the commentary by numerous experts about the various levels of risk associated with the outbreak of cryptosporidium and giardia, the Government has chosen to notify the public and take the most conservative and precautionary approach to the problem. That should be compared with the performance of the former Government—the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition were both former Ministers for health—and its failure to notify the public.

The Government shares the Sydney community's frustration over the recent and repeated incidents of contamination of our drinking water

supply—and, of course, the boiled water alerts—but, its main and overriding concern is and always will be the protection of Sydney residents' health. That means, of course, that the Government will continue to take all necessary precautions to provide safe and clean drinking water. The Government certainly acknowledges, as I have acknowledged on numerous occasions, the inconvenience that Sydney people have had to endure, particularly in light of the fact that the results of the high-level tests for cryptosporidium and giardia have indicated no significant increase in illness.

Overseas experience has clearly demonstrated that these micro-organisms, when found in water supplies, can cause serious illness. That is why, of course, the Government has taken such a precautionary approach. In addition, there is clearly a need to go beyond Sydney and examine national standards, because the 1996 National Health and Medical Research Council standards do not require testing for cryptosporidium and giardia. New South Wales is one of the few water suppliers in this country that requires the testing in the context of international experience.

Until we have a national approach to this issue there will always be uncertainty about what constitutes a notifiable risk or otherwise. It is, therefore, entirely appropriate that the Premier has asked the Prime Minister to fast-track the work of the NHMRC to establish national drinking water standards for cryptosporidium and giardia. Sydney Water in the meantime has benchmarked its monitoring program against those undertaken by major water companies in the United States of America. The three recent contamination outbreaks have, of course, provided us all with an opportunity to examine not only what happened during the specific incidents, but, of course, the management and the corporate governance arrangements surrounding the treatment of Sydney's drinking water supply.

The issues, of course, date back to the previous administration when the path of corporatisation was constructed for contracts for Sydney's private water filtration plants and when they were signed. They will also be the subject of a final report by Mr McClellan, who is conducting the independent inquiry. Honourable members will recall that the McClellan inquiry was established on 31 July once it became clear that the parties involved—namely, Sydney Water, the Health Department as regulator, and the private operators of the Prospect plant, Australian Water Services—were in dispute over the cause of the contamination and the appropriate procedures for alerting the public.

The Government took control of the situation because the Premier and I were dissatisfied with the level and consistency of advice we had received and because we believed it to be in the best interests of the public to establish an independent and transparent process to examine all relevant aspects. During the initial contamination incident, the Government appointed an independent panel of expert microbiologists to monitor the testing procedures for cryptosporidium and giardia and to advise the Government on the need for both the implementation and lifting of public health alerts.

The panel has continued to work with New South Wales health authorities and Sydney Water to establish the protocols for future testing regimes. The Government will maintain the services of the expert panel until such time as it is satisfied that the best procedures for testing and monitoring these micro-organisms are firmly in place. The McClellan inquiry has already presented two interim reports which have been released to the public. The first report deals primarily with the possible source of contamination, while the second concentrates more specifically on management issues, including the procedures in place for alerting the public to any potential health risks.

The reports primarily reflect on the first incident between 21 July and 4 August. In those reports, Mr McClellan raised the scouring of the Upper Prospect canal or changes in operation at Prospect Water Filtration Plant due to maintenance as the more likely sources of contamination, given the absence of any preceding heavy rainfall. However Mr McClellan continues to stress that the exact nature of contamination for this first incident remains the subject of intense investigation.

In his second report, Mr McClellan heavily criticised the management of Sydney Water for its handling of the first incident and urged the Government to make a number of changes which have already been acted upon. They included: the strengthening of the protocols between Sydney Water and New South Wales Health; the introduction of legislative amendments to give me, as relevant Minister, more direct control over the Sydney Water Corporation; increased transparency of information in relation to testing and monitoring; and the establishment by Sydney Water and New South Wales Health of contingency and emergency plans to deal with any future incidents.

In relation to the second and third water contamination incidents it must be noted that the high readings of cryptosporidium and giardia in the water supply immediately followed the greatest

rainfall seen in the catchment area for at least six years. It is interesting to note that the intensity of the flow into Warragamba Dam is believed to have been the greatest in decades, given that it rose from a level of 55 per cent to overflowing in just ten days. Mr McClellan indicated in his second interim report that extremely high levels of rainfall following long periods of drought resulted in a number of possible causes for the presence of cryptosporidium and giardia in the dam.

These included a significant amount of faecal matter in the catchment area flowing into the dam, the scouring of settled sediment in the dam and the overflow of poorly treated sewage from council-operated sewerage treatment plants due to the downpour. Suffice it to say that Mr McClellan has clearly separated the first incident from the second and third outbreaks. Nevertheless, as a result of the later incidents, filtration experts were flown in from the United States and the United Kingdom to assist Australian experts in pinpointing the exact nature of the problem. These experts are currently working with the McClellan inquiry and will advise on ways to prevent further contamination of Sydney's drinking water supply.

The Government will not do be forced into any knee-jerk and expensive reaction which may in the end amount to very little. It has, however, tightened controls in catchment management and investigated the establishment of a catchment commission. These new measures include tighter controls over council and sewage treatment plants, increased acquisition of private land in the catchment area, further restriction of access to the exclusion zones around the catchment—including tougher penalties and continued acceleration of sewerage facilities in the Oaks and Oakdale areas south of Warragamba Dam.

The search for solutions brings me back to the issue of national drinking water standards for cryptosporidium and giardia. Honourable members will appreciate that this has been one of the enduring frustrations of recent months and that is why the Government is keen for Mr Howard to instruct the NHMRC to use Sydney's example in determining a national standard for cryptosporidium and giardia in drinking water. I suspect, of course, that such action will meet with a degree of resistance and reservation from other States and Territories, given that they either do not test or test irregularly for these organisms.

New South Wales will continue to maintain the most rigorous testing procedures for cryptosporidium and giardia in the country, based on



overseas experience. Routine monitoring for these organisms in Sydney water filtration plants began in late 1996 on a fortnightly basis. In November 1997 it was stepped up to include testing at customers' taps. From June this year, and prior to the first contamination incident, that testing regime by Sydney Water was once again accelerated to include three types of monitoring; routine, project-based and event-based.

Routine monitoring involves fortnightly or monthly monitoring of source waters at the water filtration plant inlets, twice monthly monitoring of filtered water samples from the water filtration plant outlets and twice monthly monitoring of each major supply system sample at the customers' taps. Project-based monitoring of selected source water catchments involves monthly sampling of selected catchment inflows that are considered to be a potential source of cryptosporidium and giardia. Event monitoring provides data over and above that collected by routine and project-based sampling. This program is initiated by events such as floods, water filtration plant malfunctions and point source contamination.

As I have indicated, testing for cryptosporidium and giardia is still not a requirement of the 1996 National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines for drinking water standards, yet this Government has implemented a testing regime that ensures careful and consistent monitoring of Sydney's drinking water supply. As I said earlier, that testing regime is based on those of United States of America water authorities, including cities such as New York, San Francisco and Washington. As I said in my opening remarks, the situation under former governments was very different. Under the Greiner and Fahey governments some infrequent testing by Sydney Water and the former Water Board occurred between 1991 and 1995. Even with such limited testing, Sydney Water became aware of high levels of cryptosporidium in its drinking water supply in late 1992.

However, that did not encourage the coalition to step up testing, and it did not lead to any significant upgrading of drinking water standards when the former Government finally corporatised Sydney Water with 15-year-old, 1980 drinking water standards. At the time, the Leader of the Opposition, for the short-term future, was Treasurer and the principal shareholder of Sydney Water. I note also he was at one time the Minister for Health. Yet when asked at a press conference on 2 August why he allowed Sydney Water to be corporatised with 15-year-old drinking water standards that did not test

for cryptosporidium and giardia he told reporters, as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Cryptosporidium to the best of my knowledge wasn't around then."

That statement clearly defies belief and demonstrates the extraordinary lengths to which the Leader of the Opposition will go to cover up and deceive the public over this issue. What was the Leader of the Opposition doing when his former administration was moving flat out to contract private operators to build, own and operate Sydney's water treatment plants on the promise that the plants would remove 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium and giardia from Sydney's drinking water supply? What was he doing when my immediate predecessor, his colleague Robert Webster, repeated that claim to Parliament on 23 September 1992? Where was he when the joint select committee particularly noted that evidence from representatives of the Water Board and the responses of Robert Webster to the inquiry made it clear that the water filtration plants would deal with 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium and giardia?

The evidence strongly suggests that the Leader of the Opposition could not have been unaware of cryptosporidium and giardia. The evidence demonstrates that he knew; he just did not care. Guarantees made it clear that the coalition hoped that the performance of these plants would deal with the problem it knew about but failed to tell the public about. On behalf of the people of Sydney, I feel insulted by those failures. That is, of course, in stark contrast to the Government's handling of this matter. It has fully informed the public, told it the truth and kept it informed. Today the Premier released a report by Dr Primrose Hutton which makes it clear that as early as 1992 the former Government knew about cryptosporidium and giardia.

During the parliamentary inquiry questions were repeatedly asked by me, by Richard Jones and by the honourable member for Manly, and government officials gave substantial evidence of the potential problems. However, they made it clear also that the water filtration plants would deal with the problem. Explicit statements were found in the environmental impact statement determination report by Paul Broad, the then managing director of the Water Board, in the evidence given to the joint select committee by Robert Webster and representatives of the Water Board, and in any number of other places during the inquiry.

By the time Mr McClellan finishes the inquiry and delivers the remainder of his report these issues

will be dealt with thoroughly. The people of Sydney have paid many hundreds of millions of dollars for a water cleansing system that clearly did not meet the expectations and promises made by the originators of the contracts. Of all the members of this House, only the honourable member for Manly and I recall the difficulties involved in trying to get information through a range of Standing Order 54 motions and letters backwards and forwards to the players, but even then information was withheld. It might now be five years later, but I assure this Parliament that the truth will come out. We will determine whether the problem we are dealing with now is merely a set of specific and isolated incidents or whether it involves systemic issues that go back to the heart and cause of the rationale behind the establishment of water filtration plants as one component of the cleansing mechanisms for Sydney's water supply.

Guarantees of 99.9 per cent clearance, undertakings that the water filtration plants would not cost ratepayers more, and guarantees that the dividend programs would not affect the capital program and result in the collapse of the Clean Waterways program will be dealt with, as well as many other matters, during the course of this debate. I was here in 1993, I am still here now, and I assure the House that my determination to seek information has not changed one iota between then and now. I will be here at the end of this debate to make sure that those who have their fingerprints all over these deals are called to account and that the information is made public. The results of the calls to expand the terms of reference of the inquiry will be interesting. There are people in this Chamber and in former administrations who will be called upon to answer questions by the time this debate is completed. I reject the motion and I urge the House, particularly the honourable member for Manly, to acknowledge the truth of much of what I am saying.

**Dr MACDONALD (Manly) [9.18 p.m.]:** For many years I believed Sydney Water would prove to be the nemesis of the New South Wales Government. In a sense that is what is now happening. The history of this matter ranges over two governments and is characterised by incompetence and neither side of politics has anything to be proud of.

**Mr Knowles:** Nor have you, Peter. I have your *Hansards* as well.

**Dr MACDONALD:** I listened to the Minister in silence and with respect. I ask him to do the same. A no confidence motion should be based either on maladministration or corruption. One of those matters must be proven before such a motion

can be carried. Let us make no mistake: the State faces a crisis in the provision of a fundamental service, that is, the provision of water.

My first remarks are directed at the current Government. It cannot slide away from responsibility for the present problem. I am sick and tired of governments constantly blaming those who were in office before them. It is fair enough if it is in the first few months of a government's term of office, but the Government has been in office for 3½ years. It knew about the problems in catchment areas and the water treatment plants. In fact, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for the Environment were members of the committee that inquired into Sydney's water supply.

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, who is responsible for Sydney Water, was a signatory to the majority report of the committee. He is aware of the problems that were anticipated by members of the committee in relation to the water treatment plants. He signed the document which said they should not be commissioned. A month after the tabling of the report and following the disclosures under Standing Order 54 the Minister for the Environment expressed concerns about the choice of New South Wales Water Services to build the Prospect plant. *Hansard* of 10 May 1994 reveals that she said:

The tender evaluation panel had regard to four aspects: first, environmental assessments; second, project delivery assessment; third, process assessment; and, fourth, operation assessment.

That is when the successful tenderer was being chosen. In each case Wyuna Water was ranked first, but was unsuccessful. New South Wales Water Services was the successful tenderer. On the same day the Minister said:

The prototype testing carried out to date with your nominated process using both clean water and artificially dirty water has not convinced us that your process is viable with the media you provided.

In other words, the present Minister for the Environment, who was a member of the committee, told this Parliament a month after the report came out that she was well aware of the shortcomings of and misgivings with the Prospect plant. Those shortcomings and misgivings have come home to roost. The Premier's speech today was completely unacceptable. I thought it was an amazing performance for the leader of a government which has had a motion of no confidence moved against it. This is the first such motion that I can remember being moved against any government during the eight years I have been a member of this Parliament.

The Premier spent 15 or 20 minutes telling the House that there were problems in 1992, 1993 and 1994, when there were very high levels of cryptosporidium. That is important information and puts the Opposition in a bad light. The Premier spoke about the report by Dr Primrose Hutton and the fact there were 50,000 oocysts per 100 litres. That is damning and supports the contention I put forward earlier that neither side of politics has anything to be proud of in this whole debacle. The Government came to office in 1995. If the Premier knew about the problem, why did he not do something about it?

Had the Government given proper care and attention to Sydney's supply of drinking water, to maintaining the catchments, to the cleanliness of the dams and to the effectiveness of the water treatment plants, it should have had access to the Primrose Hutton report. The Premier should have had that information. He should have known for five years that there had been levels of cryptosporidium five times higher than those recorded at the present time. I had hoped the Premier would convince me, as a member of Parliament who has to make a decision on this motion, why I should have confidence in his Government's actions. However, he has not spelled that out to me at all.

The Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board, which I chaired, took submissions and deliberated in 1993-94. A report was published in April 1994. As I said earlier, two of the Ministers in the current Government—the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for the Environment—were members of that committee and were well aware of its findings. The committee examined a wide range of activities of the Water Board and made recommendations. It examined the Clean Waterways program, how water should be regulated and the activities of the Government Pricing Tribunal. It examined catchment and demand management, environmental standards, strategic planning, the special environment levy dividends, et cetera, and made a series of recommendations.

I particularly want to draw the attention of the House to the recommendations that appear on page 97 of the report which relate to the water treatment plants. The Minister responsible for Sydney Water and the Minister for the Environment joined with the majority members of that committee and agreed on recommendation 28(b), which advocated that the contracts for the two water treatment plants that had not then been signed should not be proceeded with until a cost-benefit study of the plants had been prepared. The committee made that recommendation because of submissions it had received. In addition,

it had serious doubts about both the benefit and cost benefit of the plants. I asked Mr Manzi of Sydney Water whether he could guarantee that cryptosporidium would be removed from the water supply, and he said, "No."

So the Minister responsible for Sydney Water knows that water treatment plants do not remove cryptosporidium. He knows that the choice of New South Wales Water Services as the successful tenderer for the Prospect plant was the wrong choice, as the Minister for the Environment indicated in her speech to this House in May 1994. It was clear the committee was unhappy about that, but the government of the day, which is now in Opposition, bulldozed ahead with it. The majority of the committee was held up to ridicule. I was ridiculed both inside and outside Parliament, and members of the Opposition today have mud in their eyes because many of the problems they caused have now come back to haunt them. Indeed, they have come back to haunt all of us.

The other matter of grave concern to the committee was the fact that there were no catchment management alternatives. There is a feeling of *deja vu* about what is happening in 1998. Five years ago there was a debate about whether it is better to manage catchments or to put in treatment plants to treat water of variable quality. It was clear to the committee—and the Minister for the Environment will remember this—that Sydney Water had not examined or priced the alternative of catchment management; it pushed ahead with the expensive, gold-plate option of water treatment plants.

The government of the day was quite deceptive. It seems to me that it knew that the water treatment plants would not remove cryptosporidium, because it was represented on the committee. It knew cryptosporidium was around. The comments on page 100 of the members of the former Government who dissented from the majority report make interesting reading. In their minority comments the Government members—who included the honourable member for Davidson, the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai and the honourable member for The Hills—said:

In late 1992, two dangerous gastroenteritis-causing protozoan parasites, giardia and cryptosporidium, were discovered in Water Board storages. The levels of cryptosporidium discovered were similar to those which caused public emergencies in the USA and the UK.

So in 1994 members of the current Opposition drew to the attention of the House that high levels of both pathogens were discovered in Water Board storages, and they used that to justify the choice of water

treatment plants, even though they knew the water treatment plants would not remove the pathogens. Today the House has heard that the levels were much worse. Recordings of 50,000 oocysts per 100 litres have been referred to. Nevertheless, Robert Webster went ahead and signed the contract. He is quoted at page 89 of the report as saying:

I am aware that the Committee is concerned as to whether we need these plants at all and whether they will open the way for the Board to slacken its catchment management practices. I can assure the Committee that these plants will provide the Board with no such opportunity. Perhaps the strongest incentive of all will come into play in forcing the Board to look after its catchment when the treatment plants come on the line. It is called a business incentive.

Robert Webster was convinced that the plants would work. Robert Webster went ahead and signed for the plants and Robert Webster was absolutely wrong. Since then the board has slackened its catchment management practices and become sloppy. Peter McClellan is moving towards identifying that the problem lies above the Prospect water treatment plant, not in it or below it. The same coalition that signed for the water treatment plants is now behaving as though its hands are clean, and its hands are not clean. The government of the day ridiculed people such as the present Minister for the Environment and me for taking a strong stand on this issue. The coalition is not prepared to accept its responsibility. The Deputy Leader of the National Party, in his contribution to the debate on a matter of public importance in May 1994, really got stuck into the then Opposition and me. He said:

Let me refer to the mud that the Opposition and the honourable member for Manly have thrown at these plants. In desperation, they have tried every dirty trick and used every little lefty cliché they could possibly conjure up: water bills . . . Sydney's water . . . being sold off . . .

He said that we were making wild claims that the technology was no good. He should be very red-faced because, frankly, the technology is no good. It has proved to be a failure. It has not been able to cope with the variations in the flow of cryptosporidium. He should have known that. There were reports in 1993 and 1994 that cryptosporidium could be found in amounts up to five times those detected in the current crisis. Yet the coalition went ahead and signed for the treatment plant, which it said was wonderful. People at that time, including the present Minister for the Environment and I, said that it would not work. Of course, it has not worked. I am not going to get angry about it but the House should be reminded of it.

The coalition also resisted the introduction of tougher regulatory frameworks that were

recommended in the report in recommendations 28(b), (c), (d) and (f). The majority of the committee recommended that there be tougher regulatory frameworks. Had they been introduced, we would not be facing the problems today. It was recommended that the board should publish for public comment an annual auditing system and draft performance measures by which key senior executive staff could be held accountable, particularly regarding the success or failure of achievement of water quality goals and the current state of water and the quality and quantity the plant operators have provided.

Other recommendations in relation to accountability included implementation of quality and quantity targets in the contracts being made a performance measure of the appointed board. It was also recommended that annual reports and external audits should specifically account for the success or failure of the plants. None of that happened. In the three or four years since the plants were commissioned there has been absolutely no accountability and now at the end of the day they have proved to be a disaster. The government of the day rejected a tougher regulatory framework when Sydney Water was corporatised. I am convinced that corporatisation of Sydney Water was a good thing. Had it still been a government department the information we received in the last six weeks probably would never have come out. So corporatisation has brought its benefits. At the time I moved an amendment to strengthen the role of the licence regulator. But that was rejected by the coalition Government.

What I am drawing to the House's attention is that the movers of the no confidence motion have to be careful that they do not prove to be absolute hypocrites as they have a lot of blood on their hands. We need to set very clear water quality goals. The failure of national water quality guidelines to set cryptosporidium standards has now been brought into focus. There should be a clear accountability mechanism. Australia has fallen behind. In the United Kingdom a current discussion paper on cryptosporidium sets the level at 10 per 100 litres. The findings at Warragamba Dam last weekend or the weekend before were 10,000. The findings in 1993-94 were 50,000. The British standard is being set at one cryptosporidium oocyst per 10 litres. It is being argued in the United Kingdom that it should be a criminal offence to allow that level to be exceeded, that there should be continuous monitoring of cryptosporidium levels and that the results should be on the public record and constantly published. In my view that is the way forward.

The task of the McClellan inquiry has been enormously difficult. It could not have been given to a better person. Peter McClellan is enormously competent and is doing quite well. Frankly, the first report was a little wishy-washy but those were early days. He talked about bats in pipes or bats in caves and a diverse series of possible contamination points. This did not advance the matter much but the second report came much closer to providing good disclosures. The first of the two major findings of the second report was that there was a breakdown in the relationship between the Health Department and Sydney Water and that led to many of the event management problems. The breakdown was essentially a breakdown of the memorandum of understanding that had been agreed upon.

A few people are responsible for that. Peter McClellan dwelt for some time on that issue. The other major finding involved the cause of the second event. The first event was probably from scouring of the canal above the Prospect water treatment plant. The second event is much more serious and is due to very profound contamination of Warragamba Dam. It seems that over the years sediment had dropped to the bottom of the dam and dam levels dropped. After heavy rainfall, water entered the dam, stirring up sediment on the bottom, which entered the treatment plant. This should have been anticipated and managed. It should have been subject to proper technical studies by Sydney Water over the last few years. There is still work to be done on the way that is to be managed.

More technical and scientific work is needed on the next stage of the McClellan report. We need to decide where we will go from here in amending either the Sydney Water Corporation legislation or the regulatory framework. It is important that the inquiry continue. It will take some months before technical matters are resolved. I am confident that the McClellan inquiry is the way to go. I do not seek a royal commission, another inquiry or a parliamentary inquiry—the McClellan inquiry is heading in the right direction. What I do argue is the need for another interim report to the Parliament, which should be issued within the next month, making recommendations on changes to accountability and an amending bill. A number of peak environment groups have already made suggestions about what should be done. I have not read the coalition's bill so I do not know whether it moves in the direction I recommend.

It is important that the role of independent licence regulators be extended to enable them to conduct their own reviews. They should have oversight of the conduct of the regulators, that is,

bodies such as the Department of Health, the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Land and Water Conservation, and the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. Independent licence regulators should also be allowed to establish drinking water quality standards and reporting protocols. Sydney Water's operating licence should be amended to set standards for giardia and cryptosporidium. There is a need for greater transparency. Sydney Water should be required to publish on the Internet all of its regulatory instruments, all results, all reports and all communication necessary to inform the public of exactly what is going on.

Although this latter point is not necessarily concerned with legislation, I note the need for a much more rigorous focus on catchment management. That focus should include the release of joint plans of management between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Sydney Water. An urgent State environmental planning policy for outer catchment areas is necessary. There are many lessons to be learnt from the past but there is a way forward and it is clear that we need to move on and try to rectify the problems within Sydney Water. This evening there has been talk of dividends and the way in which they have been ripped out of Sydney Water. Neither side of politics has anything to be proud of. This matter has in many ways stymied Sydney Water.

I have spent most of my political life concerned with waste water management rather than with water provision, but I have always felt that ripping money out of a corporation that is falling behind with its maintenance programs is unwise. Whilst the credibility of Sydney Water is completely in tatters, I take this opportunity to ask that the more recent decision to spend \$400 million on completely unnecessary engineering for the north side storage tunnel be revisited. Frankly, the money would be better spent on sorting out Sydney's drinking water problems. At the end of the debate it will be necessary for honourable members to decide whether to support this motion of no confidence. The case against the Government is compelling. At least two Ministers served on the committee that knew of the shortcomings of the water treatment plants and supported recommendations that they not be proceeded with.

In 1994 a Minister admitted in the House that the choice that had been made was the wrong choice, as was disclosed by information provided to the Parliament. It is my belief that the Government has been fully aware of shortcomings and misgivings with regard to the water treatment plants

and likely impacts on the management of catchments above the treatment plants. Those likely impacts have transpired. This Government has now been in office for 3½ years and Sydney is faced with a public health crisis. As the debate unfolds I shall decide which way to vote on this motion. In closing, I recognise that there will be a battle of words from both sides of the House. The Opposition will attack the Government, claiming that this is all the Government's fault and that the Government has brought about this public health crisis. The Government will argue that this is all due to problems resulting from decisions made by the coalition prior to 1995.

I make the clear statement that there is blood on the hands of both the coalition and the Government. Sydney Water has been a monolithic, unaccountable, lazy organisation for as long as I have been involved in political life—which goes back to the mid 1980s. In fact, I entered politics because of Sydney Water and its impact on my community. I have never been impressed by Sydney Water and I should have hoped that governments of the day would realise that the shortcomings of Sydney Water would come back to haunt them, as is happening now. Sydney is in the middle of a very serious public health crisis.

**Ms ALLAN** (Blacktown—Minister for the Environment) [9.46 p.m.]: I wish to extend the debate by emphasising the present position and the steps the Government needed to take to remedy the situation bequeathed to the people of this State by the former Government. It is important for the Parliament to understand the context of this issue and the fact that the Government has undertaken substantial environmental reforms in water management in New South Wales, with consequent increases in the quality of life for citizens of this State. The Government has taken major action on the sewerage system, on stormwater and on reforming the way we use our waterways generally to ensure that our children have access to safe water.

On 1 May 1997 the Government announced the \$3 billion waterways package to solve current urban wastewater and stormwater issues by 2020. As many people are aware, the package included massive upgrades to sewage treatment plants in urban areas and a \$1.6 billion program to protect the community and the environment from sewer overflows. Twenty-seven environmental impact statements are on public display until 1 October, involving the community in choosing the best options for dealing with the sewer overflows that have plagued Sydney since early this century. I certainly recognise the political glee of the current

Opposition about Sydney's current water crisis, but I point out that there are several ongoing water problems—such as sewer overflows—that have been experienced in Sydney over many years and that the coalition has shown an amazing disregard for the importance of those issues.

Following consultation that has taken place on the environmental impact statements on sewer overflows the Environment Protection Authority will place legally binding conditions on Sydney Water to reduce the frequency and severity of sewer overflows. In making a decision, the EPA will use community feedback it will receive as well as information elicited from the assessments themselves. In the interim a five-year, \$135 million program to repair the sewerage system was announced in January this year. Apart from the major commitments I have outlined, the Government has announced the commitment of almost \$400 million to rural water quality for the next four years, including \$30 million to blue-green algae issues and \$20 million to total catchment management.

The Government has announced the expenditure of \$135 million on 80 projects under the country towns water, sewage and drainage scheme; nearly \$50 million for sewerage works in 1997 and 1998; \$60 million for an overhaul of sewage treatment plants in the Hunter; and \$375 million to intercept sewer overflows now going into Sydney Harbour and send them to North Head for proper processing. The Government has set up a \$60 million program to protect Sydney Harbour and other urban waterways in Sydney and New South Wales from stormwater problems. That money is being used creatively to help councils install pollution-trapping devices, set up education programs for their ratepayers and prepare strategic plans to ensure that all activities mesh together successfully.

The Environment Protection Authority has issued a legal direction to councils requiring preparation of these stormwater management plans. As part of the commitment to a whole-of-government approach the EPA has also issued legal directions to the Sydney Water Corporation, Hunter Water Corporation and the Roads and Traffic Authority requiring them to participate in the preparation of these plans. Our rivers and inland waterways have been increasingly under stress from the extraction of too much water and the impact of pollution. Clear evidence exists of water degradation. It includes poor water quality, the loss of aquatic species—especially our native fish—and declining wetlands. These problems have been recognised in numerous reviews and audits

undertaken at national, regional and State levels. I very much sympathise with the honourable member for Manly, who said, "We are not after more studies and reviews of this situation. Let us just deal with the current review and work from there." During recent years we have certainly had a number of opportunities to get the vital information that is necessary to get on with the job of fixing some of the problems.

The Government has established the \$117 million water reform process to ensure that the Government is using these precious resources sustainably. This process involves local communities setting interim objectives for water quality and river flows. Communities will be involved in working to achieve the interim objectives through a catchment planning process. To refine these objectives the Healthy Rivers Commission is holding public inquiries on individual river catchments across the State. The commission has an annual budget of \$1.25 million. Its task is to recommend to government longer-term environmental objectives for river flow and water quality, and strategies to achieve them. As many people are aware, particularly those in the Hunter, the commission's first inquiry was into the Williams River, a major source of Newcastle's water supply. The Government has already accepted the commission's findings, including establishing a power-boating plan which balances the use of the river for waterskiing with appropriate environmental safeguards.

The commission has reported its satisfaction with the actions taken so far by government agencies to achieve its recommendations. Most recently the commission has turned its attention to the Hawkesbury-Nepean rivers catchment, one of the most challenging catchments in the whole of the State because it is home to a large portion of Sydney's population and is a major source of economic activity for the State. Recognising the effectiveness of the commission's processes, the Government has announced as part of its August 1997 water reforms six further inquiries by the commission for completion under an accelerated two-year program. The catchments concerned are Shoalhaven, Clarence, Tweed, Hunter, Woronora and Bega. The Shoalhaven and Clarence inquiries are now well under way. Those in the Tweed, Woronora and Hunter are due to start before the end of the year. In addition, the Government is encouraging communities in these areas to become actively involved in the inquiries.

The Government has also set up a public inquiry to develop long-term strategies for the management of sewage and sewage by-products in

the coastal zone. The final report from Commissioner Michael Codd is currently before the community for review, before consideration by government early next year. In August last year the Government announced the second phase of its comprehensive water reform agenda. The Government has reinforced its commitment through the allocation of \$117 million over the next five years. In approving this latest reform package the Government has made the tough decisions needed for establishing a healthy future for all New South Wales rivers and ground waters. In particular, the Government is acting now to integrate environmental improvements with a sustainable rural economy.

Other water reforms now under way aim to achieve clean, healthy and productive use of water. They include: agreed environmental objectives and community-based action plans for all our rivers; better sharing of water between the environment and water users; the first comprehensive statewide policies on ground water and weirs; clearer water access and use rights for water users; a significant adjustment package to encourage industry to use water more efficiently; easier processes for buying and selling water to encourage regional development; and regular monitoring and auditing of the scientific and socioeconomic impacts of the reforms.

To achieve the reforms new river management committees—comprising community, environment, agriculture, industry and government representatives—are being set up in each valley to determine the best way to manage our rivers and ground water. Committees are now established on the six major regulated rivers and the Barwon-Darling and Murray rivers. Several ground water committees have been identified and the Government now has the framework and timetable for establishing the remaining committees. The major tasks for the committees are developing and recommending river and ground water management plans and actions. The Government is committed to ensuring that these committees are equipped for their tasks, which is why it has funded the five main agencies to provide direct input to the planning processes as well as administrative support for the committees.

Other important planks in the Government's water quality improvement program are Beachwatch and Harbourwatch. These programs are conducted by the Environment Protection Authority in co-operation with local councils and other government agencies to provide regular information to the public on the status of swimming areas, pollution sources

and incidents. Last summer, from October 1997 to April 1998, Beachwatch monitored and reported on 35 Sydney ocean beaches within six local government areas. Beachwatch is also undertaking quality assurance of monitoring in the Hunter and Illawarra regions. It has also been involved in discussions with local government in the central coast region with a view to setting up public reporting in the area.

The Harbourwatch program complements Beachwatch and extends monitoring to 53 sites in Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay, Georges River, Port Hacking and Pittwater. Daily Beachwatch and Harbourwatch bulletins are released and weekly beach reports are made available in the Illawarra and Newcastle press. The Government is also working to improve environmental controls on forestry, particularly to protect water quality, while recognising the importance of the timber industry to this State. A critical feature is preventing siltation of water courses as a result of forestry operations, which the EPA does by requiring State Forests to comply with a set of environmental controls.

Overall, this Government has announced and acted on firm plans to spend more than \$4 billion to clean up the State's stressed waterways. This represents an extraordinary rate of environmental reform that will help lead New South Wales into the next century. It gives the people of this State major improvements to the way water is managed and hope that at last we are on the road to using our waterways in a sustainable way. The Government's commitment to improving water quality is clear. It has provided the policy framework and financial resources necessary to see its commitment through. This is in stark contrast to the coalition, which is only interested in water issues when it believes it can score cheap political points. We must not forget that just three years ago the honourable member for Gosford was spearheading an attempt by the coalition to allow open-slather access to our drinking water catchments.

The coalition was hellbent on disallowing a regulation that would regulate access to Sydney Water's catchments. In fact, the honourable member for Gosford said at the time, "The regulation is ill thought out and has no scientific basis." He was more than happy to throw open Sydney Water lands to any activity, regardless of the consequences. His then frontbench colleague, Jim Longley, went even further. He referred to the Government's arguments about regulating the catchments as "hollow" and "nonsensical". In fact, the coalition was advocating jet skiing, power boating, waterskiing, swimming and a range of other polluting activities in Sydney's

drinking water. It had no concern for the impact that those activities would have on the purity of Sydney's drinking water and the health of the community. It was more than willing to put at risk these vital considerations. This Government has put a stop to that lunacy and is working to manage catchments appropriately.

Even when in government the coalition showed scant regard for adequate and rigorous water testing guidelines. It was the former Labor Opposition that repeatedly made the point that the filtration plants would not meet the most recent National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines. The former coalition Government accepted outdated guidelines and persisted with them despite their obvious inadequacy and repeated concerns from the Labor Opposition. It appears that coalition members, in particular, the Leader of the Opposition, have short memories. They are now jumping up and down complaining that giardia and cryptosporidium are only a recent phenomena.

Where was the Leader of the Opposition when the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board was being conducted, particularly when the inquiry focused specifically on the potential danger of cryptosporidium in our water supply? One of my clear recollections from my participation in that committee was the Hon. R. S. L. Jones persistently questioning the officials from the Sydney Water Board about the extent of their proposals and the impact that they would have on cryptosporidium in the water supply. It was the Hon. R. S. L. Jones, more than any other member of the committee, who put the issue of cryptosporidium firmly on the agenda of that organisation.

**Mr Hazzard:** What sort of parasite is cryptosporidium? Is it a virus or a bacteria?

**Ms ALLAN:** I can see that the honourable member for Wakehurst has been drinking something other than water. On 4 September 1993 the then Minister, Mr Webster, told the joint select committee, in regard to the water filtration plants at Prospect and elsewhere:

With regard to the . . . new plants' ability to cope with biological threats to human health, I can state that the plants have been specifically designed to meet current and historical water quality criteria . . . The current design will remove 99.9 per cent of crypto and Giardia as proved by the overseas studies, by the prototype studies at Prospect and in testing at the existing Orchard Hills Water Treatment Plant.

Obviously the Leader of the Opposition has never heard of the Milwaukee case, which has received widespread attention. Even if the answer to all these



questions is no—and I strongly dispute that that would be the case—how could the current Leader of the Opposition and a former health Minister make such a rash statement, expecting people to believe that an organism that breeds in the gut of warm-blooded animals, and that has been known to have been around for so long, has suddenly materialised in Sydney?

In fact, if the Leader of the Opposition had listened to the advice of his own department when he was Minister for Health he would certainly have adopted a precautionary principle on this issue. It is obvious that for many years the Health Department has been extremely cautious in alerting people to possible impacts of diseases. It is an insult to the people of Sydney that the Opposition has attempted to sabotage the Government's handling of this crisis with such obviously inaccurate and misleading information.

The Opposition has had very little impact, even in the media, in its attempt to achieve its objective. The Opposition is more or less a fellow traveller to the more informed critics that have appeared constantly in the media on the issue. Even the Opposition's campaign, launched in the Parliament today, has had an almost negligible impact on the Government. The Opposition is trying to shift the blame or to cover up its lack of action in the face of its own evidence. That is the sign of a desperate Opposition.

I appreciate that the honourable member for Lane Cove has entered the Chamber. Today the Leader of the Opposition has moved a dramatic motion of no confidence in the Government as a whole simply to try to get back into the race, not only to make an impact on the Government on the water crisis issue but to survive in the political stakes. If the Leader of the Opposition does not make an impact on this issue, as a number of media commentators have pointed out at some length for the last few weeks, then he will not make an impact at any level. Honourable members opposite are well aware that this is a testing time for the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Hazzard:** Not at all.

**Ms ALLAN:** It is an extremely testing time for him. Despite all the important happenings in the political world and within this Chamber—the Federal election and the excellent address by the President of Ireland—the Leader of the Opposition has still not managed to make a dramatic impact on this issue.

**Mr Hazzard:** The next Premier. Will he employ you? Will he give you a job, Pamela? What job would you like?

**Ms ALLAN:** I wish to place on the record that it is quite obvious that the honourable member for Wakehurst has been drinking something other than water. It is disgraceful that at several minutes past 10 this evening, during an important debate, honourable members opposite come into this House in an obviously tired and emotional state. Are you prepared to take a breath test, Brad?

**Mr Hazzard:** On a point of order. It is obvious that the Minister does not have much to say about cryptosporidium. She has been talking about the Leader of the Opposition but she should desist from attacking me when she knows that her waffle is absolute rubbish.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! No point of order is involved.

**Mr Hazzard:** Watch yourself, Pamela.

**Ms ALLAN:** I am trembling in my boots. That sort of juvenile behaviour—

**Mr Hazzard:** Get on with it, Pamela!

**Ms ALLAN:** No, I am not going to get on with it, because that sort of behaviour by members of the shadow ministry is indicative of the immaturity of the Opposition.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the first time. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the third time.

**Ms ALLAN:** The behaviour of Opposition members in this debate, as illustrated by the honourable member for Wakehurst, and the Opposition's lack of strategy in the current crisis that is affecting the State, is a sign of a desperate Opposition. It is obvious that Opposition members have short memories and are not prepared to acknowledge the vital role they play in corporatising Sydney Water. Sydney Water was corporatised on terms dictated by the current Opposition.

Although the honourable member for Wakehurst, who has been so vocal in this Chamber, may have played an almost minuscule role in that process, others who are more mature and more

senior than him and who currently occupy positions such as the leadership of his party in this Chamber, played an active role in determining the nature of that corporatisation. Part of that corporatisation has brought about our current problems. Over a number of years the Government has tried to remedy the problem of Sydney's drinking water. In the same period it has done an extraordinary amount of work to improve sewer overflows, stormwater, the health of river catchments generally, and has allocated resources to ensure that those improvements take place.

For the first time in the Opposition's history it has decided it is politically opportunistic to talk about an environmental issue, and therefore this matter has been raised today. The Opposition is desperate. It is trying to bury its promise to the people of Sydney that at the time the plants were constructed they would be effective against these potential diseases. Guarantees were given at the inquiry by the Parliament, not only by Ministers but also by senior bureaucrats of the organisation at the behest of the Government, that the plants would be effective. It has not been established that the plants are not effective. The current McClellan inquiry will confirm the reasons for the lack of effectiveness.

It is quite clear that the previous Government took a flippant approach to water quality, just as it takes a flippant approach to its behaviour in this Chamber after 10 p.m. The Opposition was quick to pay lip service to the safety of Sydney's water but slow to take measures to adequately protect it. The coalition has conveniently chosen to ignore its own involvement in the history of this issue. Today in the truncated question time the Government took the opportunity to talk about that history. On future days the Government will remind the Opposition of its pivotal role in establishing the current set of circumstances. When this Government came to office it had to pick up the pieces of the seven years of neglect and mismanagement of this State's waterways.

That includes stormwater management, sewer overflows, the upkeep of catchment areas and the maintenance of high drinking water standards—water quality. Clearly, this Government has a vision for clean waterways—a vision it has acted on and will continue to deliver on. The Government will not be paralysed or forced by the current crisis to rush into expensive and perhaps unnecessary solutions to the problems that are in the process of being identified. The Government will not respond to the hysterical bleatings that have been made by people who should know better. I refer not only to members opposite.

I am disappointed about some of the statements made over the past couple of weeks by Robert Wilson, a former managing director of the Sydney Water board, the current chair of Greenpeace and a private consultant. Bob Wilson has had an important role to play in the development and management of Sydney Water over many years. He was part of the process that led to the current crisis. Yet, he is one of the people who has rushed to criticise both the former Government, which at various times has been his employer, and the current Government, which also at various times has been his employer—

**Mr Hazzard:** That's a gutless attack on somebody who can't defend himself.

**Ms ALLAN:** The honourable member for Wakehurst obviously has not been watching the news.

**Mr Hartcher:** "Gutless" is the only word for it.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! I call the honourable member for Gosford to order.

**Ms ALLAN:** Unless members opposite have been completely blind, deaf and dumb—which I suspect on various occasions they have been, or perhaps they have had their heads burrowed in the shadowy corridors of the Parliament, working out the numbers for the future leadership of their party—they would have noticed some of the comments that have been made by someone who should know better. I do not care whether Bob Wilson is present in the Chamber tonight. It is important to put on record the fact that it is wrong for people who have been part of a historical process of creating these situations to continually criticise. It is important that we come up with some positive solutions, but we should not pretend that we were not part of the loop that created the situation.

It is not only important that we have a more mature response from members opposite but that we look for answers and at the need for positive strategies. That will not come about from simply pious whingeing. I expect it from the Opposition. They are not very good at it. They are certainly not getting much acknowledgment in the polls for it. Obviously, they are not being listened to in the community at large. But I would like to think that we could expect a higher level of contribution from someone who has held responsible positions in Sydney Water in the past and has continued to perform at a high level, particularly in recent years,

in the environment generally and in the management of waterways.

I am confident that the approach that the Government is taking on water quality is the one that will deliver the best outcomes for the people of New South Wales. While it has been an interesting exercise in recent days to trawl through the work of the water committee, which was chaired by the honourable member for Manly, I emphasise that the solutions to the current problems will be found now, the strategies that will be required to address those problems will have to be implemented as a matter of urgency, and this Government is committed to doing just that. Just as the Government has been prepared to allocate literally billions of dollars to solve water quality issues in a whole range of areas, it will not shirk its responsibilities on water quality and will continue to concentrate its efforts on the issue, despite the pathetic contributions made by the members opposite.

**Mr HARTCHER** (Gosford) [10.14 p.m.]: Under the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy the Minister responsible for serious problems in his portfolio is accountable to the community, and if he is unable to resolve those problems he must offer his resignation. If there is one person who should be offering his resignation tonight, it is the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. If there is one person who claimed to lack the power to solve this crisis but simply lacked the competence to do so, it is the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. If there is one person whom the people of Sydney would like to see dragged from office and made responsible for this enormous and ongoing disaster, it is the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. It was the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the Minister responsible, who in this Parliament on 22 October 1996, in answer to a dorothy dix question from the honourable member for Liverpool, told the House and the community of Sydney:

I am aware of the article on the front page of this morning's *Sydney Morning Herald*. All I can say is that today must have been a very slow news day. Sydney's residents are supplied with the cleanest drinking water in the world.

The Minister went on to say:

To make it clear, I said I was aware of reports on the front page and on page 6 of the *Sydney Morning Herald*—

because the *Sydney Morning Herald* had raised the issue of cryptosporidium in the water supplies—

As I said earlier it must have been a very slow news day. Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

The Minister continued:

Sadly, this is not even a new story. The article in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* was referring to tests conducted as far back as 1992. Even then the draft report identified only two occasions when cryptosporidium levels were probably high enough to be of concern. However, let us be clear about this. Since 1992, when the first tests were conducted, no further unacceptably high levels have been found. Sydney's water remains one of the cleanest supplies in the world. Our water supply is getting better.

Let those be the words engraved on the Minister's tombstone: "Our water supply is getting better." That is the level of his competence in his administration. The Minister continued:

Four water filtration plants, representing an investment of \$3.5 billion, are now coming on line. I can report to the House that those water filtration plants are currently going through their commissioning phase. The good news is that all the plants are either meeting their performance standards or they are performing in excess of design criteria, which will effectively remove cryptosporidium.

In 1996 the Minister pledged to the people of New South Wales that his administration was addressing the issue of cryptosporidium, that it was commissioning plants that would remove cryptosporidium, and he pledged, as I quote once again, that "Our water supply is getting better." The Minister continued:

Quite clearly, Opposition members are not in the least bit interested in what I have to say. In the circumstances, given an attempt to bring about a public health scare, I would have thought Opposition members would have appreciated an assurance from the Government that our water supply was clean and was meeting health standards.

The Opposition and the people of New South Wales would love an assurance from the Government that the water supply is clean—if they could believe such an assurance. But, as they boil their water each morning, as they boil it each afternoon, as they boil it each night, as they are told that they must not drink it without boiling it, as they are told they must not gargle with it without boiling it, and as they are told they must not clean their teeth with it without boiling it, they start to get a little incredulous of the assurances of a government that has simply lost confidence and the ability to resolve this ongoing contamination crisis. The Minister continued:

As I said earlier, the water treatment plants are performing . . . Once the water filtration plants come on line we can expect the removal of cryptosporidium to a level of 99.9 per cent—a very creditable result.

This matter received the attention of the present Government when it was in opposition and it received the attention of the previous Government. So there should be unanimity in this attempt to dispel some of the nonsense that is appearing in

today's paper. As I said earlier, the cryptosporidium story usually does the rounds at least twice a year.

That story has done the rounds twice this year—once in July and once in August—and it will keep doing the rounds at least until 19 September and possibly until Christmas. Cryptosporidium is here to stay. Minister Knowles' incompetence in 1996 brought forth a system of plants and monitoring which ensured that it would happen sooner or later, and happen it did. On that fateful day, 22 October 1996, the Minister said:

The last time the cryptosporidium story did the rounds was when Mr Archer's book entitled *The Water You Drink, How Safe Is It* was released in March this year. At best that book can be described as totally misleading and a distortion of the publicly available evidence.

Would Mr Knowles now say that that book is totally misleading and a distortion of the publicly available evidence? I would be interested to hear what he has to say, if he would only put aside his rhetoric and the fortress-mode self-defence which he has adopted over the past month. The Minister continued:

The original report, which Mr Archer's book quotes out of context, is purely a hypothetical projection of an economic risk analysis. However, Mr Archer's press release, which accompanied his book launch, makes the outrageous claim, "Up to 13,000 people became ill and 100 people died during a 12-month period as a result of drinking Sydney tap water". That statement, which is a nonsense, needs to be put to rest. It is outrageous to claim that 100 people died as a result of drinking Sydney's tap water. That nonsensical statement should be shown up for what it is. Obviously, there is no foundation for any such claim.

The Minister continued to attack Mr Archer. He further said:

Time and again, whenever there is a cryptosporidium scare, it is associated with the release of some new book or some fallacious claim about the quality of Sydney's water supply.

There we have it! The Minister claimed that cryptosporidium scares are associated with fallacious claims about Sydney's water supply. What does the Minister say now? We have heard all his self-defensive rhetoric and simulated outrage, we have seen him hiding behind economic figures and economic analysis, but at the end of the day the Minister cannot pour a glass of water from a tap and say to the people of Sydney, "This is safe, drink it." The Minister cannot deliver to the people of Sydney the most fundamental responsibility of his portfolio—clean, potable water. The Minister continued:

Cryptosporidium is a parasite which is found in the water supplies of cities all over the world. It is found in the gut of

most warm-blooded animals and humans. It has probably existed in drinking water supplies since the beginning of time.

This is great stuff. I imagine honourable members rocked with laughter as the Minister gave this analysis. Clearly, he was enjoying himself. He continued:

Water is only one potential source of the cryptosporidium parasite.

The Minister continued with another splendid quotable quote:

Sydney Water customers can be assured that their drinking water meets the standards and the health criteria of the National Health and Medical Research Council.

I digress at this point because in 1996 the standards that Sydney Water was meeting were the 1987 standards. Yet in 1996, when the Minister spoke, new standards had been introduced, but Sydney Water was not observing them. The Minister was clearly and deliberately misleading the House when he said, "Sydney Water customers can be assured that their drinking water meets the standards and the health criteria of the National Health and Medical Research Council", because it did not meet the most updated criteria of that council. Sydney's water met criteria which at that time were nine years out of date. The Minister misled Parliament—and that is but one of his many sins. He continued:

Therefore, Sydney tap water is the same as and sometimes better than bottled or filtered water. In addition to those tough standards, the Government has introduced the most rigorous management practices within the catchment areas to make those catchment areas upstream of the dams the most pristine in the world.

The Minister said that the Warragamba catchment is the most pristine in the world. So every time the Premier says that cryptosporidium or giardia is caused by bats, dingoes, dogs, foxes, or runoff from the catchment area, or talks about new catchment commissions to run the catchment area, or about more rigorous enforcement, or about buying up all private land in catchment areas, he should cast his mind back to the day his incompetent Minister told this House that the dam catchment areas are the most pristine in the world. The Minister continued:

I assure honourable members that residents of Sydney can be confident they are drinking water of the best quality provided anywhere in the world.

What a splendid statement on which to hang this Minister. How important it is that the people of Sydney are fully aware of the message he sent them and of the assurances and promises he gave to this House two years ago. I turn to other aspects of the

Minister's record. As the Minister responsible for the Sydney Water Corporation he took more than two years to finalise a memorandum of understanding—MOU—for the Health Department to take over the regulation of water health matters. He took two years to sign a simple agreement with the Health Department about water health regulation.

That memorandum of understanding came into force only earlier this year despite the Minister having directed Sydney Water two years ago to secure the agreement. Sydney Water was criticised in the 1996 licence regulator report for not having finalised the MOU. The licence regulator, which issues an annual report about the administration of Sydney Water, drew attention to and criticised this Minister for his failure to ensure the MOU was signed. It is inexcusable that this important MOU, vital for public health and safety, was allowed to drag on in a leisurely bureaucratic fashion for more than two years. When it became apparent that the two departments were having difficulty finalising the agreement, Mr Knowles should have intervened and brokered an agreement. But he did not, and he allowed it to continue.

The next allegation against him is that he allowed Sydney Water to be drained of its financial resources to prop up the Government's budgetary policy. In the four years that he has been the responsible Minister, the Carr Government has taken \$820 million from Sydney Water in dividends or tax substitution payments. In those four years Sydney Water has been drained, not of its cryptosporidium, but of its cash. The money taken the last financial year appears in the budget papers as a \$33 million dividend. In fact, the Treasurer took \$147 million in dividends. The Minister did not even have the intellectual courage to state in his budget papers the dividend he was paying the Treasurer. He sought, presumably with the compliance of the Treasurer, to conceal it from the people in the 1997-98 budget papers.

However, the 1998-99 budget papers contain the correct figure of \$147 million. What does that say about a Minister who presents a budget and says, "Yes, we will pay a dividend of \$33 million to the Government", but in fact pays a dividend of \$147 million? A public corporation that did would be dragged before a court by the Australia Securities Commission for the most misleading prospectus or the most arrogant and arrant failure to account to its shareholders. In this case the shareholders are Sydney water consumers. Last year alone the Minister took \$279 million by way of dividend and tax substitution payments from the people of Sydney to pay to his State Government masters.

*[Pursuant to Standing Order 122(8) Mr Speaker left the Chair at 10.30 p.m.]*

Wednesday, 9 September 1998

*[Continuation of Tuesday's sitting.]*

*[The House resumed at 9.00 a.m.]*

**Mr HARTCHER** (Gosford) [9.00 a.m.]: When the debate was interrupted last night I was addressing the issue of the dividend taken from Sydney Water and how this Government, on an ongoing basis, has ripped money from that organisation. As I said, \$279 million was taken from Sydney Water's budget last financial year. That money could have been, and should have been, spent on maintenance of Sydney's water system, on the upgrading of its technology, on the development of research, and if necessary on the introduction of measures to counteract giardia and cryptosporidium.

How did all these dividend rorts occur? They occurred in two ways. The first, as I outlined last night, was through the compliance by the Minister with the demands of the Treasurer. The Minister was not prepared to stand up for the people of Sydney. Nor was he prepared to stand up for his own organisation. He rolled over to the Treasurer. The other way in which it occurred was through the compliance of the board of Sydney Water. Over the past four years it had been stacked with Labor Party mates. One was Peter Sams, a Secretary of the Labor Council. On Monday we had the appointment of Mr Michael Costa, another Secretary of the Labor Council. There has been an ongoing series of appointments of Labor Party officials to Sydney Water. At the very apex was Mr David Hill himself.

Mr David Hill is one of the most pathetic figures in New South Wales. That man has been dragged out by the Labor Party as its Mr Fix-it: the State Rail under Wran, the ABC under Hawke, State Rail once again under Carr, and finally Sydney Water under Carr. The record of David Hill is deplorable, be it in railways, media or Sydney Water. He stands accused of gross incompetence and simple self-interest. But, more than that, he stands accused of jeopardising the health of 3½ million people, simply to advance his own political career. On 26 July, when he interfered with the warning alert to the people of Sydney, for the most base political motives, his own prospects in the Federal electorate of Hughes, that man passed upon himself the judgment of history as the ultimate cynic who would trivialise and put in jeopardy the health of 3½ million people. He is, as someone said, Adolf Hitler come to town.

It is not just of the stacking of Sydney Water for the past few years that the Minister stands accused; he stands accused also of the placement of its senior executives. The international executive search firm Egon Zehnders had been retained to find a replacement for the previous managing director, Mr Paul Broad, but outsiders did not make it to the final interviews. The appointment of Mr Chris Pollett, another Labor mate, was engineered by Mr David Hill. So not only was the board corrupted and tainted by politics, but the senior executives of Sydney Water also were corrupted and tainted by the political process. Chris Pollett did not win appointment on his merit; he won appointment on his political connections. His incompetence, along with the incompetence of the man who put him there, David Hill, is graphically and massively illustrated on 26 July and following.

Let us look beyond the board to the administration of Sydney Water itself. The work force has been reduced from 9,000 to about 5,000 in the past few years. Many of those who have been made redundant were patrolling catchment areas. Those were the very rangers who looked after the catchments, those areas into which rainwater falls before finding its way into Warragamba Dam, from which we the people of Sydney draw our drinking water. The on-scale running down of maintenance of catchment areas, the failure to ensure that animal wastes and chemicals did not wash into reservoirs, and the failure to prevent pollution from sewage all result from that massive reduction in the work force. Such a drastic cut to the work force of Sydney Water, particularly of those who patrol the catchment areas, was grossly irresponsible. It is clearly a major contributing factor to the present crisis.

I return to Minister Knowles. The crisis first broke on 26 July. It was not until Friday, 31 July, that Mr Knowles removed Sydney Water executives from managing the crisis, replacing them with an independent assessment team. The Premier admitted that the resignation of David Hill should have been sought two weeks before it was offered. The resignation of the managing director should have been sought after 27 July, because it was on that date that the managing director had a meeting with the Minister and failed to alert him—according to the Minister, if he has any credibility—about the impending crisis in Sydney's water. The managing director sat in the Minister's office and said nothing about the great crisis that was about to unfold. The Minister was only informed about that afterwards, according to the Minister.

What chief executive is allowed to escape having committed a crime of that nature and walk

away with \$350,000? Was it hush money that he was paid? Why did he receive such a payment after only nine months when his incompetence had been revealed, and when his Labor Party connections had been revealed? What was it that got him \$350,000? Was it a reward for good conduct? Surely not. Was it a reward for long service? Surely not. It has all the overtones of a be quiet and we will look after you payment, in which this Government specialises. That \$350,000 should be returned to the people of New South Wales. It should be returned to the Treasury. It should be returned to the ratepayers of Sydney Water.

The incoming coalition government will investigate that matter thoroughly. I send that message now to Mr Pollett, Mr Hill and Mr Knowles. This whole sorry episode is not finished, and it will not be forgotten. It is not just the incompetence of Mr Knowles that is revealed. The Premier also has played what might be termed the blame game. He said the problem was the Australian Water Services plant at Prospect in Sydney's west—a legacy, he said, of the previous coalition Government. Conveniently, he ignores several facts. First, the Premier is on record praising the plan as "a triumph of modern engineering and technology". Opening the plant on 1 October 1996, the Premier said:

One of the many factors contributing to the lifestyle that has made Sydney famous is the quality of Sydney's water . . . the Prospect plant is fully automated and built to comfortably meet the quality required for both present and future demand . . . Sydney's drinking water catchments have been kept in pristine condition through careful planning and management . . . Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting.

So said the Premier of New South Wales. Let those words be engraved on his political tombstone: "Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting." Sure, it tastes great; it tastes great after you boil it. The Premier made a point of saying:

This plant is a model of successful partnership between the public and private sectors and an outstanding achievement which will supply Sydney with clean drinking water for generations to come.

The Premier lacks none of Churchill's attributes. He loves the hyperbole. He believes that generations yet unborn will rejoice at his announcements. Let them remember this one: clean drinking water for generations to come. The Premier concluded by chinking his glass in a proud toast to Sydney Water. The Treasurer also was seemingly unconcerned with the Prospect plant in late 1996. *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist David Humphries reported on 3 December 1996:

Michael Egan told [trade unions] he was keen on the sale of Government owned business which few of us would have heard about but which pays the wages of 2000 workers and racks up \$300 million in annual sales.

Mr Humphries was referring to Australian Water Technologies, the trading arm of Sydney Water. He continued:

The Treasurer talked about getting an "equity partner" for AWT so that it could fulfil its ambition of getting into the Asia-Pacific to compete for big water and sewerage projects.

The Premier and Treasurer were both enthusiastic about the Prospect plant and AWT only two years ago. What has changed? The Premier also conveniently ignores the fact that his Government had the capacity to renegotiate the Government's contract with Australian Water Services to add pathogens to the list of parasites to be treated. In 1996, as the evidence mounted in regard to cryptosporidium and giardia posing significant health risks, that is exactly what the Government should have done. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning could have used his powers under the State Owned Corporations Act at any time to direct Sydney Water to renegotiate this contract to treat the water for cryptosporidium and giardia. When he became aware of the risks and failed to instruct a renegotiation of the contract, he failed in his duty to ensure that the people of Sydney were spared the crisis that now confronts them.

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning always had the power to direct Sydney Water. The State Owned Corporations Act was amended by this Government in 1995 in one of the first bills it introduced upon taking office. That gave Ministers the power to direct State-owned corporations provided the directions were tabled in the Parliament. The Minister did not act on the powers he had; he was not prepared to table his directions in the House. He ignored the warning of Sydney Water in its 1995-96 annual report that cryptosporidium was a growing problem. The Minister saw fit to describe as scaremongering any concern about this when the issue was raised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1996 and when he answered a question from the honourable member for Liverpool, a question that he had previously arranged to be asked. The Minister's incompetence has been adequately demonstrated.

It is clear that throughout this crisis the Government has been concerned not with water management but with media management. It has been concerned to ensure that as far as possible the responsibility did not fall back upon the

Government. However, it cannot ignore the fact that it is the Government. It cannot ignore the fact that it controls Sydney Water. It cannot ignore the fact that the Minister responsible for Sydney Water and the Minister for Health always had the full statutory power to intervene and act—the State Owned Corporations Act in the case of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Public Health Act in the case of the Minister for Health—yet they both failed to act.

The Opposition believes that a royal commission is required to investigate the operation, administration and finances of Sydney Water from April 1995 to the present so that it can consider everything that happened under this Government—the inactivity, the nonfeasance and the malfeasance of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for Health. It can consider the massive incompetence of David Hill and the Labor mates connections of Chris Pollett. It can consider the whole administration of Sydney Water, which does not have a single microbiologist on its board, which has no technical qualifications, but which has been used simply as a healthy cash cow to flow a river of gold into the coffers of the Treasury, but not to flow a river of drinking water to the people of Sydney.

This Government cannot expect to enjoy the confidence of this House when it cannot deliver drinking water to the people of Sydney. This Government has failed in its primary responsibility: to provide basic services to the public. This Government stands accused of incompetence, cronyism and financial mismanagement, but, above all, malfeasance and nonfeasance in its operation of Sydney Water. The people of Sydney have lost confidence in the Government. The Opposition will not support the Government's continuation in office. This Government must fall. This motion must pass. [Time expired.]

**Mrs BEAMER** (Badgerys Creek) [9.14 a.m.): The overriding concern in this issue must be the health of Sydney residents—those who drink our water, those who brush their teeth in our water, those who need to use water on a daily basis. Yesterday the honourable member for Gosford said that when the Opposition was in power the people of Sydney could always drink their water. That is true. They could always drink their water and they were not issued with alerts. Perhaps they did not get sick, but they are not getting sick now because the Government is doing the right thing and alerting people to boil their water. The overriding issue is the concern to ensure the health of Sydney residents.

The Government has not hesitated to tell the public to boil their water. Sydney residents can be assured that when they drink boiled water they are taking precautions against possible contamination from cryptosporidium and giardia. Compare that to what happened in Orchard Hills seven years ago. The honourable member for Gosford may not have drunk the water in my electorate, near Orchard Hills, where some of the highest readings ever were taken, but his Government certainly did not tell members of my electorate that they should not drink it at that time. If we tell Sydney residents that they have safe drinking water, we must assure them that in the future they will be notified if contamination is detected.

The recent water contamination has provided us all with an opportunity to consider what has happened during specific incidents, and to delve deeper and review the management, administration and corporate government arrangements in regard to Sydney's water supply. The Leader of the Opposition said, in regard to water standards, that when he signed off, to the best of his knowledge cryptosporidium was not around. That is not true. The Opposition did not notify the public of the high levels of cryptosporidium found in Sydney's drinking water supply in 1992, 1993 and 1994. In December 1993 the former Government found extraordinarily high levels of cryptosporidium at the Orchard Hills water filtration plant. Samples of cryptosporidium of 58,660 oocysts per 100 litres were recorded. But it was not limited to Orchard Hills. High levels of cryptosporidium were also found at North Richmond, which scientific experts considered notifiable. Such levels were not notifiable when the coalition was in government.

The coalition has accused the Government of being responsible to the people of Sydney and being honest. It has accused the Government of taking responsibility and informing the public of any danger. I would much prefer my constituents to know what is going on rather than not know what is coming out of their taps. All Sydney residents want to find the cause of the problem and want a speedy resolution to it. I defy any member of this House to say that he or she is a scientific expert and knows the cause. No Government members have said they know the source of the specific contaminants that produce such high levels of cryptosporidium. The levels were considered notifiable in 1993, but the former coalition Government did absolutely nothing about it.

In response to a front-page story in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 7 July 1993 entitled "Disease fears over bacteria in tap water", the current Leader

of the Opposition issued two press releases to the effect that Sydney's water was safe to drink, and that residents should not be alarmed by reports of the existence of the parasite cryptosporidium in the city's water supply. To the best of his knowledge, he did not know it was around. The next day the *Sydney Morning Herald* dutifully reported, "Water supply safe, says Board." Political expediency took precedence over public interest. How can the coalition again be trusted in government if it cannot keep the public informed? If one compares the Government's notifications with those of the coalition it is obvious that the Government is not the one with its head in the sand.

The former Government has no credibility whatsoever on this issue. Although the Government was quick to alert Sydney residents about the quality of their drinking water, the former coalition Government quashed such information. It decided that 58,000 oocysts of cryptosporidium was not cause for notification. How can the coalition criticise the Government's efforts and resources in seeking to solve this problem? How can the honourable member for Gosford hold up a glass of water in this place and say with a straight face that when the coalition was in government one could always drink the water, unless he is again lying to the public of New South Wales?

All Sydney residents must ask why they were not informed of the high levels of cryptosporidium found in their drinking water in 1992 and 1993. They must question the coalition's motives in not making that information public. Perhaps it was the fact that the Orchard Hills plant, in the middle of my electorate, was in the middle of a marginal seat. Perhaps it was simply fraudulent to tell the people of New South Wales that they could drink the water. The former Government's actions illustrate that this Government's administration is keeping the city of Sydney informed. I am hopeful of a speedy resolution, because the Government's overriding concern is public health. I am also hopeful that the residents of every electorate in Sydney will again be able to trust governments on these types of issues.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI** (Lane Cove) [9.23 a.m.]: Like many Sydneysiders I awoke this morning, went into my kitchen to have a glass of water—which is the way we have all been told to start our day: health authorities tell us water is good for us—but like 3.5 million other Sydneysiders I was unable to turn on the tap to get that glass of water. I had to go to the refrigerator, get a bottle of water and pour water from it. That is inconvenient and expensive. I have been told that I may have to do that for the next six weeks. I suppose like many



other Sydneysiders I asked myself why it is happening, why the Government has allowed it to happen and, more importantly, what the Government intends to do to fix the problem and ensure that it does not happen in the future.

It was adding insult to injury to find my latest water bill when I arrived home last night. Sydney Water states that we need to look after water because "Water is precious and scarce. We should preserve it come rain, hail or shine." Sydney Water should add that we will preserve a lot more water because we cannot use it. Speaking as a member of the community, not as a member of Parliament, I am distressed that in this city, which should be and has been regarded as one of the world's great cities, we are subject to a Third World water supply system. We are in the seventh week of a water crisis. We are constantly told to boil our water to avoid those diseases that travellers around the world have been told to worry about—Delhi belly and Montezuma's revenge—and now in this city we have Carr's curse.

Two weeks ago I visited beautiful Papua New Guinea which, as we all know, has recently been through some fairly difficult times. In the hotels in Papua New Guinea I was not told to boil the water, I was not told to avoid drinking the water, and I was not told to use boiled water to brush my teeth. In Papua New Guinea I was able to drink the water. But I returned home to my city, a place that I am told is one of the great cities of the world, to be told that I cannot brush my teeth with the water. What impression has this left some of our more recent distinguished guests? For example, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was told she could not use Sydney water to brush her teeth. The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, was told that if she intended to drink the water in this city she would have to boil the kettle for one minute to make sure it was safe.

Hundreds of thousands of visitors to our fair city are being dramatically inconvenienced by the water crisis, which the Government has been unable to solve. The water crisis began on 21 July. It is now in its seventh week. When it began we were told it was only a small matter and would be quickly resolved. Seven weeks later we are told it could be another six weeks before the people of this city can be confident that their water supply is safe. The usual players say they should not be blamed because it is not their fault. The Premier said it is not his fault, the Minister for Planning said it is not his fault and the very distinguished Labor candidate for Hughes, Mr David Hill, said it is not his fault. I remind honourable members that this same man,

when asked at a press conference to drink a glass of water, was not prepared to do so, but as Chairman of Sydney Water he said the water problem was not his fault.

We could spend all day blaming the bureaucrats and everyone else as the Premier, the Minister and David Hill have tried to do, but the fact is that under the system of government by which we operate, in a crisis of this proportion the blame rests with those who drive around in their big white cars. The responsibility rests with those who sit on the green benches on the opposite side of the House. As Harry Truman said, the buck stops there. The Government can deny it all it likes; it can seek to walk away from the responsibility. But at least the former President of the United States had enough sense to accept that members of government have to accept responsibility for a problem and do something about it. The Government's response to the crisis has been poor. It has been so busy throwing around blame that it has done little to reassure the people of this State and this city that it is doing something about the problem.

I have three points to make in this debate. The first is that the question of who bears responsibility for this problem and the way it arose has not been properly investigated. The Government has made much of the fact that because it adopted new standards for Sydney Water it now has a problem. I point out that the Government was dragged kicking and screaming into adopting the 1996 National Health and Medical Research Council standards, and did not adopt them until May 1998. The Government was reluctant to adopt the standards because it realised—at least I hope it realised—that in order to comply with those standards it needed to do one simple thing: update the treatment works.

In order to comply with the standards the Government would have had to reinvest in the system the money it had ripped out of Sydney Water. It was not in a position to do that because in the previous few years it had used Sydney Water as a cash cow; it had ripped money out of Sydney Water instead of reinvesting in capital expenditure to obtain the plant required to deliver water of a quality that this city expects. Last year \$279 million was taken from Sydney Water's budget by pressuring a compliant board—

**Mr Fraser:** Labor mates.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** As the honourable member for Coffs Harbour said, it was a board stacked with Labor mates. Those Labor mates provided that money to the Government instead of

investing it in technology. The board was aware that capital investment was necessary. I am advised that at the beginning of this year the board was aware that Australian Water Technologies wanted it to invest in upgrading plant. Earlier this year the board was advised that if Sydney Water was to guarantee the supply of water of the highest quality it needed to invest money to upgrade the plant. What happened? Instead of upgrading the plant the board did what the Government wanted: provided \$279 million to help fund the State's poor budget.

The people of Sydney have suffered as a result. It was a poor financial decision and huge claims may be made against Sydney Water as a result of the present crisis. The community is supposed to receive a rebate from Sydney Water, which will cost millions of dollars, and certain legal firms in this State are considering class actions. I suggest that the Government will be required to repay the \$279 million to meet the anticipated claims. If the Government wishes to take credit for introducing the standards, it must also accept responsibility for not implementing the necessary upgrading of the treatment works to ensure compliance with those standards.

The second point concerns the deathly silence about the role of the licensed regulator of Sydney Water. Whilst the regulator has a limited role to audit compliance with licence requirements, I ask the Minister for Agriculture to inquire of the Minister responsible for Sydney Water whether that body has been allowed to act completely in accordance with its legislative responsibilities. Has that body been stymied in any way from properly investigating whether there has been compliance with the requirements of the licence for Sydney Water? It is an independent body and should be allowed to operate independently. I seek an assurance from the Government that there has been no interference with that process.

The community would like to know that the independent auditor of the licence has at least been able to conduct a proper investigation and has had access to all information required under its statutory responsibilities. I seek that assurance, through the Minister for Agriculture, from the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, who is responsible for Sydney Water. The Minister for Agriculture is a fair-minded and sensible gentleman. In fact, he is a former policeman and understands the importance of scrutiny and appreciates that the community wants to know that all processes in relation to Sydney water have been complied with. I am sure he will

take that message to the Minister. The third point concerns the Environment Protection Authority. That authority is responsible for the administration of environmental protection in this State and responsible for ensuring that environment protection standards are in place.

I am somewhat disconcerted at the lack of comment by the authority. I cannot recall a statement about this issue from either the Minister responsible for the Environment Protection Authority—other than her comments in the House last night—or from the head of the authority, Neil Shepherd. I draw to the attention of the House the memorandum of understanding between Sydney Water Corporation and the Environment Protection Authority regarding the authority's role as a regulator of Sydney Water. That memorandum was signed on 26 November 1996 by the former Managing Director of Sydney Water, Paul Broad, and the Director-General of the Environment Protection Authority, Neil Shepherd. The explanatory note in the introduction to that memorandum of understanding states:

This Memorandum of Understanding was prepared by the Environment Protection Authority and the Sydney Water Corporation, in keeping with the requirements of the Water Board (Corporatisation) Act 1994. Section 35 of the Act requires the Corporation to enter into a separate Memorandum of Understanding with each of its regulators, including the Environment Protection Authority.

The Memorandum of Understanding is designed to facilitate effective interaction between our two organisations—

and I stress the following words—

and ensure environment protection, restoration and enhancement at the least overall cost to the community.

It is clear that environment protection is one reason that the memorandum of understanding was entered into. The introduction to the memorandum sets out the role of the EPA. It states:

The EPA has the responsibility to protect the environment in NSW taking into account community values, scientific and expert knowledge, best practice environmental regulation and economic considerations. As such, it develops environmental policy and programs, carries out regulatory functions and provides environmental education.

What regulatory functions has the EPA carried out with regard to Sydney Water and what inquiry has it undertaken during the present water crisis? What work has it done to satisfy the community that the EPA has fulfilled its statutory obligations for Sydney Water? The MOU notes that some of the responsibilities under licence conditions and monitoring will be vested in the EPA. It states:

Compliance monitoring and reporting by Sydney Water is to be undertaken as specified in licences, approvals and certificates of registration issued by the EPA. Compliance with relevant environmental legislation and requirements in EPA licence conditions, approvals and certificates of registration will be independently audited by the EPA.

What compliance monitoring has the EPA done for Sydney Water, not only during this crisis but overall? What compliance can it point to that could satisfy the people of this city that it has been overseeing Sydney Water in any shape or form? I ask the Minister for the Environment, who is responsible for the EPA, to advise the community of the action the EPA has taken in respect of its responsibilities for monitoring Sydney Water. The MOU states that Sydney Water must comply with all relevant requirements of New South Wales environmental law. Surely it is the role of the EPA to ensure that compliance, but the EPA has been deathly silent throughout the Sydney Water crisis.

It has had little to contribute to the debate and has done little to restore even limited public confidence that, in its role as supervisor, it has been monitoring what Sydney Water has been up to. Another issue of concern to the community is the fact that there has been less than full and frank discussion about the data relating to water quality that has been collected by Sydney Water. This memorandum of understanding provides:

... data gathered or collated by the Corporation may also be available to the EPA depending upon circumstances. In reaching a decision as to whether data can be provided, the following matters need to be considered:

- (i) whether the data has been gathered by Australian Water Technologies ... for an external client;
- (ii) whether the data requested is commercially confidential;
- (iii) whether the data requested is still in draft form or is "raw data", not having been quality controlled.

Given the amount of concern expressed by the community about the data collected by Australian Water Technologies—and, indeed, Sydney Water's new body recently established by the Government—I suggest that there is almost an obligation on the Environment Protection Authority to investigate that data and provide it to the community. The community is not confident that it is being told the full story, or that it is not being kept in the dark by the Government. The community would be reassured if it knew that the Environment Protection Authority was examining that data and independently assessing it. This MOU provides that opportunity and it is time the EPA came clean and told us it is fulfilling that role. I note with wry amusement that one of the provisions of this MOU refers to open communication:

The EPA and Sydney Water are committed to open communication and consultation with the community on key strategic issues affecting the regulation of Sydney Water. . . .

That particular clause should have been referred to David Hill. As honourable members know, David Hill took a somewhat different view about open communication. He decided it would be better to keep the people of Sydney in the dark about the problems with Sydney water, and not communicate with them in the way this MOU suggests should be the norm. The EPA and Sydney Water are committed to open communication. The Opposition would like them to implement that part of the MOU. The other part of this MOU that should have been more closely considered by both Sydney Water and the EPA is clause 4.2.5, which states:

Licence, approval and certificate of registration conditions should make reasonable provision for unforeseeable emergency conditions.

Someone within Sydney Water forgot to consider unforeseeable emergency conditions. The management response to the Sydney water issue has been less than edifying. To suggest that the Government has been in control of this issue is complete nonsense. The people of Sydney think it is complete nonsense. Those who have to boil their water on a daily basis think it is nonsense to suggest that Sydney Water and the Government have made provision for unforeseeable emergency conditions. I spent most of last night looking after my sick son, who had a very bad night. He was not at all well. As I was tending him the possibility that he had been infected by either cryptosporidium or giardia crossed my mind, and I suspect every mother in Sydney who is looking after a sick child has done the same.

**Mr Watkins:** And fathers.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** And fathers.

**Mr Amery:** And grandfathers, I would think.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** Indeed. In fact, my father is looking after his grandson today, so I accept that. All people who are looking after sick children today would be concerned to think that there may be some link between the water and the illness that has manifested itself in their homes. I do not intend to blame the Government for my son's illness, but I do blame the Government for creating an atmosphere within the city that would cause people to even consider that drinking the water is likely to cause their families to be ill. I blame the Government for not being in control of this crisis. I blame the Government for trying to shift the blame

to everyone but those who should accept responsibility, that is, the people who sit on the Government side of this Chamber.

A person who chooses to become a Minister should act in a responsible manner; he or she must accept the responsibility as well the good times. The Minister should take responsibility for the fact that in this State and city it is his problem. It is the Minister's crisis and he has not shown the leadership that the community would like to see. Therefore, it is quite appropriate and within the leave of the debate on this motion to say that the Government no longer has the confidence of this House or of the people of Sydney.

**Mr WATKINS** (Gladesville) [9.46 a.m.]: The most accurate thing the honourable member for Lane Cove said was that she does not blame the Government for her son's illness. That could be broadened to include most people in Sydney. They do not blame the Government for the problems associated with Sydney's water supply. The people of Sydney are aware that a major health problem exists, but they do not blame the Government because they are realistic and open-minded about the cause. They want to see if fixed, and that is the approach the Government has taken.

The depressing reality about this debate is that it seeks to apportion blame. The Opposition's objective is to find someone to blame for this problem. The debate has nothing to do with informing people about a major health issue or with trying to establish a process by which these problems can be avoided in the future. The process indicates how absolutely irrelevant and redundant such debates are. No doubt most members of the Opposition are praying that no-one outside this House is listening to their speeches. This debate has nothing to do with water quality or public health; it is related to the leadership ambitions of the honourable member for Lane Cove.

It is interesting to note that two of the conspirators against the present Leader of the Opposition—the honourable member for Gosford and the honourable member for Lane Cove—have taken part in the debate this morning. They were not given the guernsey to lead the charge yesterday. They did not speak last night and their names have been placed well down the list. That fits in with the very interesting body language and behaviour of the honourable member for Lane Cove, who sits quietly in the background when the pressure is on the Leader of the Opposition. When the President of Ireland was delivering her wonderful address the honourable member for Lane Cove could not have

been placed further away from the Leader of the Opposition. This debate, launched by the Leader of the Opposition, has more to do with the difficulty he has in maintaining his position than with any other aspect.

I have learned several lessons—no doubt we all have—from the incidents in Sydney in recent months. The first relates to the fragile nature of the Sydney water catchment. For too long we have taken for granted the high-quality water that magically appears when we turn on a tap. Too few of us have given any thought to where that water comes from and the quality of water in the Sydney water catchment system: we have assumed that all has been well. We should be aware of the experience in other parts of Australia. I understand that outbreaks of cryptosporidium and giardia have occurred in Lismore and other places. It is interesting to note that news reports today refer to a similar problem in Adelaide.

Everyone involved in water quality throughout the nation is examining the issue carefully. It should be noted that it is as much a problem in every developed western nation as it is in Australia. The proposition that because of problems with the purity of its water Sydney has become a Third World city is false. As the pressure of development and population growth impact on water catchment quality in the future, these problems will have to be faced in most major cities of the world. As a community I hope that we will learn that unless our water catchment areas are maintained in a pristine condition there will be problems. The cause of the present water quality problems in Sydney is unclear. Several reports suggest they were caused by a huge inrush of water into Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main dam.

A few weeks after having been at only 60 per cent capacity, the dam was full. Who knows what impact that has had on water quality. This crisis should make us realise the fragility and importance of our water catchment system and the need to protect it. I have been very pleased with the efforts of the Premier and the Minister for Land and Water Conservation who have announced steps to ensure that the issue will be carefully examined. The same course of action will be taken in every city in Australia. The water quality problem has concentrated our attention on our interdependence with natural systems. Unless we get the balance right, we will have problems in the future. The second lesson I have learned—a matter that has surprised me—concerned the reaction of the people of Sydney to the water crisis. To call it a crisis is an overstatement. The people of Sydney have

approached this water problem with great tolerance, forbearance and understanding.

**Ms Ficarra:** You think so, do you?

**Mr WATKINS:** If some honourable members do not believe that, I have only to point to my experience as a local member. Being a marginal seat, my electorate tends to quickly reflect changes in the public's emotions or focus. I have not received one call, letter or e-mail about the quality of Sydney's water, or about any of the problems that have arisen in the past three weeks. In my monthly column in the local paper I have included details about the water problems and information from the Health Department. No-one has contacted my office to ask or complain about water quality problems or about how the Government has reacted. No-one has criticised the Government, the Premier or the Minister or called for their heads.

The fact that not one constituent has contacted my office to complain about water quality problems does not indicate that the people of Sydney are unconcerned. No doubt all honourable members, certainly those with children, have been boiling their water. It is difficult to boil enough water to keep a family functioning. There is no doubt that the water problems have caused difficulties for the people of Sydney, but they have not contacted my electoral office. Other members of Parliament have told me the same thing—no-one has contacted them in anger or to demonstrate concern about the problem. In contrast, I received 600 letters about the Government's position on the State's south-east forests, and I interviewed 20 to 30 local constituents and received scores of letters about land tax.

The people of Sydney appreciate that the problem with Sydney's water is a public health issue that must be treated in an orderly fashion. They are confident when they see advertisements in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and hear radio announcements that the Government is attending to the public health issue in a proper, ordered and responsible fashion. The third lesson I have learned from this crisis relates to the behaviour of the Opposition. My expectation was that members of the Opposition—who want to be in government after the next election—would have detected the mood of Sydneysiders; that they would have understood the public's concerns and followed a course that the people of Sydney wanted.

However, they do not understand the public's desire for information and for health issues to be addressed. The people want to know the time frame for resolution of the issue. There is also an element

of resignation, but certainly not a strong desire to blame individuals. Members of the public understand the causes of the crisis and they understand that it is not within the control of any Government. This problem is occurring in Adelaide under a conservative government and it occurred in New South Wales under the previous Government, but, unfortunately, no-one was told. The people of Sydney know that no government is to blame for increased levels of cryptosporidium and giardia in the water system. It is how the Government reacts to the problem that interests people.

**Ms Ficarra:** That is what you will be judged on.

**Mr WATKINS:** That is what we will be judged on, and what we are being judged on at the moment. I have to tell the honourable member for Georges River that the judgment of the people of Sydney is a positive one. They regard this as a public health issue and they are happy with the Government's response. The people of Sydney do not want the apportioning of blame, the personality of politics. They do not want hypocrisy or political point scoring. In short, they do not want what the Leader of the Opposition did yesterday when he launched a senseless and foolish censure motion against the Government. The people of Sydney do not see the issue in that light at all.

What the Opposition has been saying throughout this debate has not helped. It has not helped the status of Sydney or the people of Sydney. The Opposition does not help by saying in this House, "We are a Third World city. What a shame that Madeleine Albright had to drink bottled water when she was here." That does not go down particularly well with the people of Sydney. I am able to understand why the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to take this path. For him this issue must have seemed to be a political lifeline. The issue of contaminated water has had an impact on every household in Sydney. The Opposition, which was having great difficulties in laying a glove on the Government, must have thought of this issue as one that dropped that from the heavens, much like the rain. The water supply is the responsibility of a government authority, Sydney Water, and the Opposition has chosen to lay the blame at the feet of the Carr Labor Government.

The present beleaguered Leader of the Opposition, must have been very pleased to at last find an issue that he thought he could use against the Government. The Leader of the Opposition misread the mood and, in his eagerness, developed a response that has been rejected by the people of

Sydney. The response of the Leader of the Opposition is interesting in that it has flipped and flopped all over the place. The Leader of the Opposition called first for resignations and then for special legislation. Yesterday he gave notice that he intends to introduce special legislation. The Government and the Leader of the Opposition know that his legislation will go nowhere. This issue will, it is to be hoped, be behind us in a few weeks and will then be forgotten, as will the proposed legislation of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition, however, considers that he has done his job. He has demonstrated that he intends to take action. As Leader of the Opposition he is required to do something, so he decided to introduce a bill. His legislation will disappear. The Leader of the Opposition then called for a royal commission. As the Premier pointed out yesterday, that call is no longer being made. The Government is aware of the reasons for the sudden silence on the call for a royal commission. A royal commission would consider the quality of water without fear or favour and would consider the previous Government's record on water quality. Yesterday in question time the Premier released information which showed that when the coalition was in government—

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills):** Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will cease interjecting. Such behaviour is disorderly.

**Mr WATKINS:** When those who now sit on the Opposition's front bench—those who have attacked the Government in this debate—were in office, many of them serving as Ministers, Sydney's water contained levels of giardia and cryptosporidium far higher than those that triggered recent warnings that people should not drink tap water. Ministers of the former Liberal-National Government received that information but they shelved it—they did not tell the people of Sydney that there were problems with the water. Giardia and cryptosporidium traces in Sydney's water are not a new occurrence of the past few months; they have been in Sydney's water supply for the past eight years and probably longer. The coalition when in government was given information about that but refused to issue a public health warning. How dare coalition members raise the image of suffering children today, knowing that when they were responsible they did nothing.

When the coalition Government received information about levels of giardia and cryptosporidium in Sydney's water it chose to do nothing. There was no way in the world that it

would tell the people of Sydney about that, because it realised what damage could result. The coalition chose to shelve the issue. Everything fell into place yesterday when the Premier released this information—people realised why the Leader of the Opposition's call for a royal commission fell silent a week ago. Someone in his party reminded him that when the coalition was in office, and he was a Minister, there were problems with the water but the coalition did nothing. The coalition decided that it would be best to drop its call for a royal commission, demonstrating the hypocrisy at the centre of this debate.

Coalition members are censuring the Government for doing something that they did not have the courage to do when they were in office. Coalition members when in office covered up this issue and now expect this Government to cop the blame for doing the right thing, for being honest and telling the people of Sydney when there is a problem with the water supply. Every time there has been a problem with Sydney's water the Minister has told the people of Sydney about that. Coalition Ministers did not do so. It is clear that this motion of no confidence in the Government has more to do with the problems being faced by the Leader of the Opposition in his role than it has to do with Sydney's water. The position of leader of the opposition is very difficult in any State. What does one do? One has to be seen to be acting—if a leader of the Opposition does nothing then the community complains that it never hears from him. On the other hand, if he starts to take action then many people say that he is complaining all the time.

The biggest problem the Leader of the Opposition has is not with the electors of New South Wales. The biggest problem for any leader of the Opposition is in keeping his troops happy. A leader of the Opposition, whoever that may be, has to ensure that the people behind him consider that he is doing a good and responsible job. The present Leader of the Opposition is having problems in that regard. We all know that there are grumblings and ructions within the New South Wales Opposition. The honourable member for Lane Cove intends to be Leader of the Opposition and would like to be in that position soon. In such a tense environment, the present Leader of the Opposition has been presented with an opportunity to take some action on a public health issue.

The Leader of the Opposition has decided to move a motion of no confidence against the Government. He decided to lead the charge against the Government by making a passionate speech that would show his troops that he can take a fight to the

Government, whack together some arguments, speak well and score some points that will strengthen his position and cause the attack on him from the honourable member for Lane Cove to lose some of its impetus. This motion is all about the position of the Leader of the Opposition; it is nothing to do with improving the quality of Sydney's water.

One could well imagine a scene in the office of the Leader of the Opposition late at night some weeks ago. Perhaps it was raining outside, and the inside of the windows would be misted up from a kettle boiling in the corner. The Leader of the Opposition was asking his loyal advisers how the coalition could use this issue. Someone came up with the idea of introducing legislation. Then there was a suggestion to move a censure on the Minister. That suggestion was discarded in favour of a motion of no confidence against the entire Government, in the hope that it would put the Opposition on the front page of the newspapers and show the Leader of the Opposition performing. Of course, he will have another chance to perform at the end of this motion, when he has the opportunity to reply. The Leader of the Opposition hopes to increase his standing and to diminish the attack of the honourable member for Lane Cove.

The Leader of the Opposition has not been concerned about the people of Sydney but about the honourable member for Lane Cove, who, on the very night we have been talking about, was probably out duchessing groups of Sydney businessmen who told her that she was the best thing that the coalition had going for it and that the sooner she took over as Leader of the Opposition the better it would be for the coalition and its hopes for government. It is depressing that that is what has driven this motion. The Opposition has suggested that the Government's actions in this issue deserve censure. A censure motion is mounted by an opposition against a government. If enough members vote in support of that motion, that is cause for great government embarrassment. The Opposition has suggested that the Government deserves censure on this issue. A motion such as this legitimately opens for consideration the record and the recent behaviour of the coalition.

In talking about the corporate body Sydney Water and its responsibility in this whole issue, it is necessary to talk about the present entity of Sydney Water. It was the coalition Government that corporatised Sydney Water and created the model that has led to the present situation. The coalition separated the Minister from Sydney Water and its operations. It pushed the Minister away at arm's length from Sydney Water. Today coalition

members criticise the structure that has in their view led to a poor response on the issue of water quality, yet they created that structure. As we all know, corporatisation of Sydney Water was the first stage in the coalition's plans to privatise that body.

Honourable members will remember the heady days when the Greiner Government was managing this State better for the people. Its way of doing that was to corporatise public authorities and then to privatise them. Corporatisation was always the first step on the path to privatisation. Honourable members will remember that Margaret Thatcher corporatised, sold off, the water quality of England and that the conservative South Australian Government tried to do the same thing. The answer of the former Government to any problem that it might have was to jump out of government control of any authorities. The coalition lost government before corporatisation went to privatisation, although honourable members will probably figure that the page of its policy that it will not reveal until the next election is the privatisation agenda that covers Sydney Water and electricity.

Everyone knows that the Leader of the Opposition is committed to privatising electricity. If the coalition regains government, it will try to privatise Sydney Water, the State Rail Authority and Sydney Buses, but it will not tell us about that. The former Government set up the structure of Sydney Water that it now criticises. It is opposing steps to reform the structure of that body to ensure that public accountability through the Minister is maximised. The shadow minister has realised that there are problems with the structure of Sydney Water and has therefore determined that the answer is to make Sydney Water more accountable to the Minister. This Government proposes to do that, but the Opposition is concerned that it will allow the Minister to get too close. The coalition is still on its corporatisation path, pushing public authorities away from the control of the Minister.

The Opposition is locked into its shallow corporatist view of the world in which ministerial responsibilities are unnecessary, a barrier to efficiency, an outmoded hangover from the past. I can tell honourable members that it is not an outmoded hangover from the past. The people of Sydney expect Ministers to be responsible for the operation of Sydney Water, which will happen under the Government's proposed structure. The most surprising and disturbing thing that I have heard in the recent weeks and months that water quality has been in the public eye was the information that the Premier released yesterday to the people of New South Wales.

I was shocked and saddened to hear that the Opposition is criticising the Government for doing something it would not do. The newspapers picked up the significance of it this morning. The Minister has advised the public when there is a problem, for when the giardia and cryptosporidium counts have reached a certain level it becomes a public health problem. The coalition Government did not do that. It had the opportunity and the information available but it did not have the courage to do it. The former Government was concerned that if it informed the public that high levels of giardia and cryptosporidium were present in the water it would cause a public health problem and the Government would cop the political problems. It shirked its responsibilities, fobbed off the matter and filed the information in a filing cabinet, never to see the light of day.

The present Leader of the Opposition; the would-be Leader of the Opposition, the honourable member for Lane Cove; the leader of Opposition business in this place; and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, were senior Ministers in the previous Government. They knew about the water quality problems but covered them up. If anyone should be censured it should not be the Government; it should be that mob over there. Why did the previous Government not take action? We really should not criticise some members of the Opposition.

Three members are currently sitting on the Opposition benches: one was a noble and well-liked Speaker—the honourable member for Hawkesbury—and the other two were members of the Government. They probably did not know. But certainly former Ministers knew the situation and they did not inform the people of Sydney. Why did they not take action? What sort of government was the previous Government to refuse to take action on a public health risk? What sort of people would decide not to tell the public but would dare to criticise this Government today for taking action to inform the people about what has happened?

**Mr Shedden:** Gross hypocrisy.

**Mr WATKINS:** People are concerned about our political institutions. Politics is anathema to most young people because they see the hypocrisy and the double standards of members of this place. The Opposition is a perfect example of that. Unless members of Parliament as a group realise that people, and especially young people, are not interested in political point scoring and hypocrisy and want governments to respond to problems when they arise, they will lose forever the support of the people, and that would be disturbing. I reject totally

the politics behind this censure motion. It should be laughed at in this place. When the vote comes it will be defeated.

**Mr O'DOHERTY** (Ku-ring-gai) [10.15 a.m.]: I often get the opportunity to follow the honourable member for Gladesville. I do not know how that happens.

**Mr Watkins:** It does not always happen that way.

**Mr O'DOHERTY:** As the honourable member says, it does not always happen that way. However, it does give me the opportunity to discuss some of his themes and put a correct perspective on them. The honourable member for Gladesville does not believe that there is a role for private enterprise to help society to progress. That is why he went on and on about these great bogymen and used scare tactics. The honourable member for Gladesville said that the coalition, of which I am a member, wants to privatise water, privatise this and privatise that. Let me make it plain from the outset. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition I inform the House that the coalition has absolutely no intention of privatising Sydney Water. As the Leader of the Opposition has said on many occasions, it has never been its policy and will not be its policy. If honourable members had been listening when the Leader of the Opposition came back from the United Kingdom—

**Mr Watkins:** We will write that down.

**Mr O'DOHERTY:** It is in *Hansard*. The honourable member can write it down and take his own notes. One of the things that the Leader of the Opposition said, which is held to be true by the coalition side of politics, is that the experience in Great Britain has taught us that water is a public utility that must never be in private ownership but must remain in public ownership and be accountable to the public. The honourable member for Gladesville has just said that the Government wants to make Ministers more responsible for our water system. Ministers are responsible. If the honourable member had taken the trouble to read the relevant Acts he would know that whether Sydney Water is characterised as a corporate body or as some other statutory authority the Minister still is responsible. How its internal structures work is not relevant to the debate, but the accountability and responsibility, are in the hands of the Minister and the Government.

There should be no doubt about that because in 1995 or 1996 the Labor Government strengthened



the Minister's control over the operations of Sydney Water. Therefore, what the honourable member for Gladesville proposes is already the case: the Government is responsible. If the Government is responsible, why has the Government not accepted its responsibility and acted, firstly, in a way that would allow the people of New South Wales and the people of Sydney to trust that the water system is clean and, secondly, to protect their interests? If the Government is already responsible—and I have demonstrated that it is—why do the people of Sydney not trust the fact that we have a clean water system and that the Government has its eye on the ball? Why is there a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the performance of the Government?

That is why the Opposition has moved a motion of no confidence in the Government, the most serious motion that can be moved in this House. The Government has sought to provide only a political solution, not a real solution, to the problems of Sydney's water crisis. I am not blaming the Government for cryptosporidium or giardia because they have been in the environment for a very long time—certainly longer than the Carr Government has been in office and before we were walking on this planet. They, along with other parasites, pathogens and other nasties, have been part of our water supply for a very long time. As long as bears have done whatever it is they do in the woods, those things have been in our water supply. I am sorry to talk in those terms but the Opposition tells it as it is.

**Mr Rozzoli:** Those are the bare facts.

**Mr O'DOHERTY:** As the honourable member for Hawkesbury says, those are the bare facts. Our modern society has progressed through industrial activities and developed as a civilisation. We have put greater demands on our own water systems and over the years have added to the pathogens and bacteria that have entered our water catchment areas. We have tried to solve those problems through a variety of means, such as sewage treatment plants and various other catchment management techniques. As society progresses and becomes more complex and as the demand on the water supply increases and more waste enters our water supply, increasingly sophisticated techniques are required to ensure a clean water system. One technique is water treatment plants.

The honourable member for Gladesville said that the former Government had recorded levels of giardia and cryptosporidium in Sydney's water supply storage areas and had done nothing about it. That is completely wrong. He corrupted the debate

by suggesting it is about whether health warnings were issued to the public. It is not. The debate is about the Government's handling of the situation and its attempts to create a political quick fix by sacking the chairman of Sydney Water and public servants, and remaining at arm's length so that the public could not make it accountable. That was the rhetoric from the honourable member for Gladesville. Because the Government has created a political solution it has lost the trust of the people. It is not a question of whether health warnings were issued but what was actually done and which side of politics has the correct vision to provide a system in which the people of Sydney can turn on the tap and be assured that the water will be clean.

I shall refer to what has happened since 1992, when I was elected to Parliament and when the coalition was in government. Levels of cryptosporidium and giardia were detected in catchment areas and storage areas during that time, and the coalition does not dispute that. It is on the public record and no-one would disagree, except the Premier and his mate the honourable member for Gladesville. I refer briefly to a report presented to the Parliament in 1994 by the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board. I was a member of that committee and Government committee members were alarmed at the direction of the Labor Party and the Independent who chaired the committee, the honourable member for Manly.

They were pushing for a system that would reduce the quality of drinking water for the people of Sydney. They wanted to rely almost entirely on catchment management and keep it free of pathogens and other nasties that occur when humans interact with the environment. They believed that a clean water system could be created by simply locking up the pristine environment around Warragamba Dam and its catchment areas. That is patently crazy. In the past few days they have blamed the drought and flood, which are naturally occurring events. What happened to their ideological position of 1994 in which they asserted that catchment management alone and a pristine environment are the best solutions, making the environment more important than human beings?

That ideology has gone out the window for political pragmatism. Now they seek to blame the environment and hail the success of the water treatment plants built by the former Government. Honourable members opposite say there were levels of cryptosporidium and giardia found in 1992 and 1994 and that nothing was done. That is wrong. First, the Government, through Sydney Water, introduced a technique to increase the levels of

alum, a settling compound that helps to settle clumps of bacteria and so on from the water. Also, it increased the dosages of chlorine in the system to try to cope with the levels that had been found. The former Government did one more important thing: it committed the people of New South Wales to one of the world's best treatment plants at Prospect. Honourable members should not just take my word for it; they should ask the Premier.

In 1994 the Labor Party, which was in opposition, opposed this measure. However, on 1 October 1996 the Premier opened this treatment plant, which the coalition built because of its concern for the safety of the people of New South Wales because of the contamination found in Sydney's catchment. The Labor Party did not want to build the treatment plant, because of its ideological obsession with the use of private money to build public facilities. The honourable member for Gladesville, who is from the left-wing of the Labor Party, went on about this. However, in 1996, by which time the Labor Party was in office, it said that the water plant was tremendous. The Premier said:

One of the many factors contributing to the lifestyle that has made Sydney famous is the quality of Sydney's water . . . The Prospect plant is fully automated and built to comfortably meet the quality required for both present and future demand . . . This plant is a model of successful partnership between the public and private sectors and an outstanding achievement which will supply Sydney with clean drinking water for generations to come.

Of course, that was until this year. Honourable members opposite assert that the former Government ignored the warnings. The honourable member for Davidson also was a member of the select committee. He would remember that at the time coalition Government members had to fight against members of the Labor Party and the Independent chairman, the honourable member for Manly, who did not want to use water treatment plants to cope with these problems. Government members were so incensed that they released a minority report, which is on the public record and which gives the lie to claims of the Labor Party today that the Government of the time did not inform people about problems in the water supply.

The minority report to this Parliament, which bears the names of then Government members who sat on that committee, spells out coalition concerns about cryptosporidium and giardia. The previous coalition Government spelt out why its solution, that of building better treatment plants, was better than that of the Labor Opposition, now the Labor Government, which did not want plants to be built.

Members of the coalition Government referred to the document entitled "Doing the Vision Thing" written by former chairman of Sydney Water and a former environment minister of the previous coalition Government, Tim Moore, the former member for Gordon. The report states:

In "Doing the Vision Thing", Messrs Wilson, Harley and Moore refer (on pages 66 and 67) to their support for the water treatment plants by:

- warning of the detection of giardia and cryptosporidium

There it is in black and white, a warning to the people of New South Wales of the detection of giardia and cryptosporidium. The document continues:

- noting that the Water Board had to increase alum and chlorine dosing in an inefficient manner
- inviting the private sector to assist in funding and developing solutions to the problem with drinking water quality
- undertaking investigations for water treatment plants to ensure the protection of Sydney's health.

The minority report, contributed to by members of the coalition Government of the day, continues:

The Government members share the views of the authors of "Doing the Vision Thing" that there can be no compromise on the issue of high health standards for Sydney.

In 1994 the coalition Government was concerned about what the Labor Party and the honourable member for Manly were doing. The report continues:

There is a persistent claim in this section that the Board was not interested in catchment management until 1993 (e.g. page 84), whereas catchment management was conducted for decades . . . The even more pernicious claim is made that "the necessity for water treatment plants is caused by catchment deterioration" (page 86). The majority on the Committee simply ignored all other possible reasons which were given for introducing treatment for water.

Coalition Government members further commented:

The Board acts on the principle that the high quality water from catchments into dams reduces the need for expensive treatment later in the delivery process. Prospect Reservoir management is currently under stress—settling times are near their limits. Prospect Reservoir was designed in the 1880s to detain water in storage for 180 days ("Doing the Vision Thing", page 66), but today water is detained for approximately two days. It has been estimated that at least two months detention is recommended for minimal standards of turbidity settlement. The third element in the strategy, treatment, is now necessary and the Board has to maintain a clean distribution system.

That is what I and other members of the Government in 1994 said in our minority report to the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board. There are two ways to ensure a clean water supply. First, make sure that the catchment is clean. Sewage treatment plants and industrial and other polluters within a catchment must do their bit. However, the current Government has not taken the necessary steps to ensure a clean catchment.

Second, the filtration system must filter out and treat the water to make sure that pathogens—bugs and nasties—in the water do not reach the taps. In 1994 the coalition Government realised that Prospect Reservoir, which was built back in the 1880s, was no longer good enough to meet the demands of Sydney, a city that has grown beyond all measure. Prospect Reservoir was designed by engineers to let the water settle for 180 days. When water comes down from a catchment into a dam it becomes churned up, especially following the recent storms which the Government blames for its water problems. The bacteria about which we are now concerned are churned up and pass into Prospect Reservoir. Engineers have stated that the 180 days is the optimum time to allow pathogens to sink to the bottom of Prospect Reservoir.

That is one of the reasons Sydney Water adds a compound called alum to the water. Alum clumps or chemically bonds onto the pathogens, makes them heavier and causes them to sink to the bottom. These days the water is not allowed 180 days to move from one side of Prospect Reservoir to the other and then to pass along the mains to our taps. Because so many Sydneysiders are taking water from Prospect Reservoir the pathogens have only two days to settle—a much shorter period than the 180-day flow period for which it was designed.

In 1994 the former coalition Government realised, first, that the water needed to be helped to settle faster and, second, that a world's best practice treatment plant was needed to treat the water that was coming through in two days instead of 180 days. The coalition Government committed a great deal of effort, time and expense to preparation for and building of a high quality water treatment plant. Why is Sydney experiencing problems now, and why does the Opposition blame the current Government? Since 1995 the Labor Government, which was elected with all its ideological baggage about not caring for private sector water treatment plants, has taken its eye off the ball. The Government has not been doing its job.

The current Minister for water, who also sat on the same committee about which I have just

spoken, knew full well about the problems of the system, and he is now running it. The Minister has done nothing to improve the quality of either the catchment or the treatment plants. The Government may have opened plants but it did not bother to ask whether they are meeting world's best practice health standards. In 1996 the coalition asked the Government why cryptosporidium was not being tested for, and the Minister said it was not necessary. The Government had no excuse for saying that, given that in 1994 the Minister for water was a member of the water committee on which I and the honourable member for Davidson sat.

The Minister heard all the evidence and knew all the facts. He was committed to catchment management alone and not to treatment. He has an ideological problem. Honourable members may remember the charade about production of contract documents. The then Opposition was worried only about who was paying for the project, where was the money going and whether the private sector—that nasty P word—was involved. The then Opposition did not worry about water quality.

Since 1995 the Government has been in control but has done nothing to improve the water system. Sydney has suffered a drought followed by a series of storms. The system could not cope. Worse than that, the Government actually removed catchment management inspectors whose job it was to police catchment areas and ensure that people did not enter where they were not supposed to be and generate waste in the Sydney water supply catchment. Let us not have such hypocrisy.

**Ms Ficarra:** It is cost cutting.

**Mr O'DOHERTY:** It is cost cutting, as the honourable member for Georges River rightly says. Today's *Daily Telegraph* points out that during heavy rains in August all the sewage treatment plants within the Warragamba Dam inner and outer catchment areas had large overflows and were unable to process raw sewage. That raw sewage flowed into the creeks, into the rivers, and down into Warragamba Dam. Many sewage treatment plants, large and small, impact on the Warragamba Dam catchment. Bob Carr will go out in his typical press release-driven fashion and say, "We have fixed the problem. We have strengthened our power. We will provide a better water system." He will point his finger, look seriously at the camera, and do all the stuff that he does in his marionette approach to politics.

The fact is that the Government has had the power all along but has done nothing. It should have

been upgrading sewage treatment plants right throughout the outer catchment for the Sydney water area, but it has not done so. As today's *Daily Telegraph* shows, that is one of the things that must be done. The Government should upgrade sewage treatment plants in Ku-ring-gai electorate, soon to be the electorate of Hornsby. The Labor Party has not provided a better system for Berowra Creek, which it said it would do when in opposition. Berowra Creek does not lead into the Sydney Water catchment, but it is part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean system. Our children play in that creek and in the Hawkesbury River. People go water-skiing there, and we eat the oysters that come from places like Brooklyn, which produces some of the best seafood in New South Wales. Constituents in Ku-ring-gai electorate want the Government to upgrade our sewage treatment plants. But Labor, despite its clear promises when in opposition, has not done so.

The Labor Party when in opposition spoke a lot about its plans, but it has done nothing. The people of New South Wales no longer trust that the Government has its eye on the ball, and that is the reason for this Opposition motion of no confidence in the Government. Has the Government had the financial capacity to fix the treatment plants to a better standard, to test for these pathogens, and to upgrade sewage treatment plants? We know that it has, because it has taken \$800 million in dividends from Sydney Water. Because the Government is the Sydney Water shareholder—in other words, Sydney Water is still in public ownership, and that is where it should stay—the Government gets Sydney Water dividends. Where has that money come from? It has come out of the water bills of the people of New South Wales.

A headline in today's *Daily Telegraph* states that \$100 million is required to upgrade sewage treatment plants. The Government has taken \$800 million out of Sydney Water. Why could not the Government spend \$100 million of that sum to upgrade the sewage treatment plants in the outer catchment area? Perhaps the Government will respond to that matter later in this debate. Who knows where the Government has spent the money? Perhaps it has spent it on marginal seats, flashy solutions, or inefficiencies in government. I assure the House it has not spent the \$800 million on public education, and it has not spent it on the sewage treatment plants, because those sewage treatment plants have not been upgraded.

If people think that that money is not coming out of taxpayers pockets, I assure them that it is. During the term of the Carr Government since 1995 the price of water has gone up from 65¢ per tonne

to 85¢ per tonne—in other words, an increase of 62 per cent over four years. As students in the gallery who are studying economics will understand, that is about eight times the increase in the cost of living. That is how much more the people of the State have paid for water under the Carr Government. That has allowed the Government to take about \$800 million in dividends out of Sydney Water, but it has not spent that money on upgrading the system and has downgraded catchment management.

I do not blame the Carr Government for giardia and cryptosporidium and other naturally occurring pathogens that have been part of the environment since creation, but I do blame the Government for not fixing the problem, which it knew about in 1995. I remind the House that the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning sat on the same committee that I sat on when we examined all this information in great detail. Secondly, I blame the Government also for being ideologically opposed to water treatment and for focusing only on catchment management. Thirdly, I blame the Government for downgrading catchment management. Fourthly, I blame the Government for its hypocrisy when it opened the treatment plants that it was opposed to, saying that they were the best in the world—in other words, proclaiming the success and pretending it was their own. Fifthly, I blame the Government for not keeping watch on the figures coming through about water treatment. Sixthly, I blame the Government for not testing for giardia and cryptosporidium, even though the evidence was that it should have been doing so in 1996. Seventhly, I blame the Government for trying to create political solutions, and for sacking David Hill and Mr Pollett, rather than taking final responsibility for creating a clean water system on behalf of the people of New South Wales.

Under the Westminster system the Government has that responsibility and accountability. That is what the Parliament is all about. Our style of Parliament, with a Government and an Opposition, follows a centuries-old tradition of Ministers having to answer questions asked by the Opposition on behalf of the people of New South Wales about how they are managing the affairs of this State so as to make it a better place for us all. Notwithstanding that tradition, the Government cancelled question time simply because it does not want to answer questions. The Government knows that it has the numbers to survive this no-confidence motion. But it also knows, despite what the honourable member for Gladesville said earlier, that there is deep-seated dissatisfaction in the New South Wales community about the Government's handling of this and many other similar issues. The Opposition believes that,

even though the majority of members of this House will not support this motion, the people of New South Wales have no confidence in the Government. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr HUMPHERSON** (Davidson) [10.45 a.m.]: There is no more basic commodity used by human beings than water. There is nothing more basic than our expectation, as residents of a developed country, to be able to turn on the taps in our homes and drink the water and use it in food preparation and for cleaning, without jeopardising our health. Sydney residents, contrary to their basic expectations, continue to suffer from circumstances they have been forced to endure for the past month or so. They lack confidence in the Carr Government because it has not properly responded to the water crisis and has failed to meet community expectations over the past three years. This motion is about accountability and about the people of this State having confidence in the Government to look after their health and manage Sydney's water system.

Sydney is facing a health and tourism disaster unparalleled in living memory. Our city—the city that won the bid for the 2000 Olympics and which will host those Olympics in two years—is being shamed and embarrassed internationally as reports filter overseas to large cities where people can drink their water straight from a tap, whereas we cannot. In August my father, who was recently in Oshkosh in the United States, could not believe that in that relatively small town the front page of the local newspaper carried a story about Sydney's drinking water problems. That is typical of the image that is being portrayed of Sydney as a result of the bungling and mismanagement of Sydney's drinking water by the Government. It has failed to live up to the expectations of the people of this State that it could manage Sydney's drinking water, and it has failed them in its response to the crisis.

There has been an abject lack of accountability, from the Premier down. The Premier, who has absolute authority and responsibility, has refused to accept that responsibility. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has also refused to accept responsibility. The Westminster parliamentary system requires that a Minister should accept responsibility for things that go wrong within his or her portfolio. Ministers certainly accept responsibility for things that go right. The Premier and his Ministers accepted responsibility and credit when they attended the opening of the Prospect water treatment plant. Equally, they have to shoulder absolute responsibility and accountability when things go wrong. They have failed to do that. They sought scapegoats, they blamed management, and

they sacked the chairman and the managing director, but they have not accepted responsibility for their actions and mismanagement.

I turn to the management of Sydney Water over the past 3½ years under the Carr Government. In four successive Carr Government budgets, dividends and tax equivalents of \$820 million have been taken out of the Sydney Water budget. That money was spent elsewhere notwithstanding a crystal clear requirement that funds needed to be spent on sewage treatment, particularly in the Warragamba catchment area, and also on water treatment to guarantee a safe water supply. Money has been taken out of successive budgets from 1995-96 to 1998-99. In the 1995-96 budget \$133 million was extracted; in the 1996-97 budget a little more than \$158 million was taken out; in the 1997-98 budget \$250 million was taken out; and \$279 million is budgeted to be removed this financial year. However, it is quite likely, given what happened last financial year, that that amount could be higher.

Last year the Government admitted and conceded that it had budgeted to take \$125 million but actually took \$250 million. That money came from the ratepayers, the public of Sydney, who expect to get not only quality sewage treatment for disposal into the waterways but also 100 per cent safe drinking water coming out of their taps. The Government has failed because it has taken that money, and has frittered it away in Labor seats on purposes other than health and education, for politically motivated and wasteful reasons. Over that time dividends have increased and the Sydney public has paid more for water. Just four years ago water cost 65¢ per kilolitre; today that charge has increased to 85¢ per kilolitre. The Carr Government's plan was that by 1999 water would cost 95¢ per kilolitre.

The Government, however, has put a temporary hold on that projected increase as it tries to remedy its own mess and to address the public perception that the Government is wasting money. That perception, unfortunately, is based on fact. For the past four years water charges, dividend raids and tax equivalent extractions from Sydney Water budgets have increased, accompanied by consequential capital expenditure reduction. That money should have been spent on treating effluent flowing from dwellings throughout the Sydney basin to deep-water outfalls or into the Hawkesbury-Nepean system, or on dealing with effluent from towns within the Warragamba catchment.

For example, in 1993-94, the year of the inquiry by the Joint Select Committee upon the

Sydney Water Board, \$315 million was spent on capital expenditure. That money was spent on upgrades and improvements to the sewerage and water systems. However, in 1996-97 only \$145 million was spent—a drop of \$180 million—but not on upgrading and improving capital works. That money was not kept in Sydney Water, nor was it spent on any recurrent purpose elsewhere within the Sydney Water budget, but it was plucked out and taken by Treasurer Michael Egan, with the concurrence of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Premier. That money should have been spent in protecting the health of the people of Sydney, but it was spent elsewhere.

David Hill was one of many political appointments by the Labor Party throughout the public sector. He was appointed as chairman of Sydney Water, following a less than glorious career in other Labor Party appointments at both Federal and State levels. When it came to the crunch at Sydney Water, David Hill made the wrong decisions and tried to cover up a health problem. When Sydney Water was warned about the danger, David Hill did not want to disclose to the public that it faced a disaster and that lives and health were at risk. He wanted to cover up. David Hill has been the temporary fall guy, and he might not be the last.

The Government required the resignation of and managed to get rid of Chris Pollett, but I am sure he will pop up somewhere else. On 3 October David Hill will face a real acid test in his federal electorate. Will voters, remembering what he did a month ago to the people of Sydney, believe that he will credibly represent their interests? Sydney Water did not spend that money on upgrading sewage treatment works and drinking water quality. No warning was given to the public even though test results showed high levels of giardia and cryptosporidium. I have been advised that evidence is available about test results which showed high levels of contamination at least one month before this crisis.

More than one month before admitting high levels of cryptosporidium and giardia, the Government possessed test results which showed that a potential health disaster was knocking on our doors. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning is the Minister responsible for water. He appointed David Hill and is responsible for the failure of Sydney Water to notify the Department of Health. The Minister is one person who, based on the evidence gained during the joint select committee hearing in 1993-94, should have known about the risks. He should have known what the problems were, but he did not. In 1996 the Minister labelled

concerns raised about cryptosporidium as scaremongering. In this House he said:

Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

That is what he said less than two years ago when he pooh-poohed any suggestion that the health of those who drink Sydney water was at risk. Clearly, their health was at risk then, as it is now. Despite concerns raised earlier, the Minister failed to respond. Several weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition disclosed that Sydney Water executives and managers, travelling first class and staying at five-star hotels, had studied experience overseas and evaluated how it could be applied to improve Sydney's water. However, the million-odd dollars spent on those executives achieved nothing. Not one of them visited Milwaukee, where in 1993 the worst recorded outbreak of cryptosporidium left 100 people dead and numerous others suffering from poor health. No-one bothered to go to Milwaukee to find out what solutions were put in place all those years ago. That simply shows the abject irresponsibility of the Government and Sydney Water in addressing potential concerns about the health of Sydneysiders.

One must ask whether Sydney Water notified the Department of Health each time positive test results for cryptosporidium and giardia were recorded in the catchment, the water system or the water treatment canals. The former managing director, Bob Wilson, the former Minister, Tim Moore, and David Harley have said that under the coalition Government the Department of Health was immediately notified when cryptosporidium and giardia were detected. Clearly, that practice has stopped since the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning assumed responsibility for Sydney Water. Was it the Minister or the Chairman of Sydney Water, David Hill, who directed that the Health Department not be notified of the positive tests? Obviously, David Hill intervened in August and decided that the Health Department should not be notified of the positive readings.

The Government will not come clean on when the tests for cryptosporidium and giardia were positive and when the Health Department was notified that there was risk to the four million people living in Sydney. It has not been forthcoming with answers to those questions. The second reason the Opposition does not have confidence in the Government is its response to the crisis. As I said, the Government has refused to accept responsibility. Ministers have tried to blame the former coalition Government and the former Sydney Water board.

The Government has failed to accept responsibility for the crisis, despite the fact that during the past three to four years it has been aware of potential problems. In particular, the Opposition has sheeted home the lack of response to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning.

Sydney Water made various announcements about the need to boil tap water, and the Government has trotted out various Ministers. The situation last Friday was ludicrous. Within 12 hours of the Minister for Health saying that the crisis was basically over and that the people of Sydney could resume drinking water without boiling it first the story had changed. After weeks of on again, off again alerts about the need to boil water in Sydney we have now been told that there is no solution to the problem. Sydney Water does not know what to do and the Government cannot guarantee that people will not have to boil their water for not only two weeks but perhaps as long as six months. The Government has failed to find a long-term solution.

The Government's response to calls for compensation for the people of Sydney has been ordinary and inadequate. It has treated the people of Sydney with contempt by offering compensation of \$15 at the same time as it proposes to substantially increase water charges. To put it simply, the fact that the Government is not prepared to offer reasonable compensation is symbolic of its lack of concern and its contempt for water users in Sydney. The only step taken by the Government towards a long-term solution has been an announcement in the media about catchment management. As the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai said, the Government has provided no real explanations and it has not been prepared to answer to the House.

Yesterday the Government curtailed question time so that Ministers would not have to answer questions asked on behalf of the people of Sydney about possible solutions and what responsibility it will take for the crisis. The announcements about catchment management relate primarily to controlling the catchment. A body will be established to examine the catchment. The Warragamba catchment area, which is massive, covers the Blue Mountains and extends as far south as Picton and the southern highlands. Development is taking place in towns covered by the catchment area and urban land is used for various purposes. By and large, 90 per cent of the land is relatively pristine. Unless the towns are wiped off the map the potential sources of pollution and the potential sources of giardia and cryptosporidium cannot be entirely removed from Sydney's water supply.

Obviously the Government can go a long way towards minimising the potential sources of pollution, including giardia and cryptosporidium. Money could be spent—something which the Government has not done until now—on treating the sewage effluent from the towns and properties in the catchment area. A number of steps can be taken to reduce the number of cattle grazing within the catchment area, but humans cannot be removed from the area. Regardless of what people think or say about catchment management one cannot stop birds from flying, kangaroos from hopping or wild pigs from roaming into the catchment area. As long as there are animals in the Warragamba catchment area there will always be potential sources of giardia and cryptosporidium in the catchment and, consequently, in Sydney's water supply.

While catchment management is an important factor—it is important to minimise potential pollutants or sources of disease in a catchment area—it is not the answer to delivering safe, 100 per cent pure drinking water to residential homes. I was a member of the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board, as was the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai and the honourable member for The Hills. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for the Environment, who were also members of the committee, played an active role in supporting the majority recommendations relating to Sydney Water's treatment plants. The coalition members of the committee vigorously opposed those recommendations for reasons that I shall outline later. It should be noted that the committee was chaired by the honourable member for Manly.

What the honourable member for Manly said in July and August, which is when the crisis first broke, during radio interviews in which he implied that the crisis was the fault of the former coalition Government and that the committee's recommendations would have solved the problem if adopted is abject rubbish. The honourable member for Manly should take greater responsibility for the health of the public, given his former occupation. However, the report of the committee he chaired contained no recommendations about addressing the quality of Sydney's drinking water or about the potential impact that drinking the water in Sydney could have on the health of the public. The honourable member, together with the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, had significant doubts about proceeding with the water treatment plants and strongly recommended that the only priority should be management of the Warragamba catchment.

As I said, no matter what a government does in relation to a catchment, it cannot guarantee that the quality of water flowing from it is 100 per cent safe for the health of water users. The majority of members of the committee—that is, essentially, the Labor members and the honourable member for Manly—adopted a suggestion that the expenditure of sums as low as \$1.7 million a year on catchment management programs could "eliminate the need for extra and expensive filtration processes." That was the evidence of an officer of a branch office of the Department of Conservation and Land Management. It is farcical to suggest that expenditure of \$1.7 million could eliminate the potential problem of giardia and cryptosporidium in our water supply.

**Mr Richardson:** That evidence was rejected by the department.

**Mr HUMPHERSON:** As my colleague the honourable member for the Hills points out, the department denied that assertion. Labor Party stooges within that branch of the department made that submission to the parliamentary inquiry. Dissenting members of the Committee, the Liberal Party members, noted in their comments on the report that certain evidence was ignored in the majority report. The first of that ignored evidence was that Sydney water at that time did not meet the 1987 health guidelines set by the National Health and Medical Research Council. Those health guidelines should have been met. Sydney Water, which was then the Water Board, was working towards meeting those guidelines, but that could only be done by constructing and installing those water treatment plants. The majority of members of the Committee—the Labor Party members and the honourable member for Manly—ignored that evidence and asserted that the water treatment plants were not required. Another concern raised by the Liberal Party members of the Committee was:

In late 1992, two dangerous gastroenteritis-causing protozoan parasites, giardia and cryptosporidium, were discovered in Water Board storages. The levels of cryptosporidium discovered were similar to those which caused public emergencies in the USA and the UK.

In "Doing the Vision Thing", Messrs Wilson, Harley and Moore refer (on pages 66 and 67) to their support for the water treatment plants by:

- warning of the detection of giardia and cryptosporidium
- noting that the Water Board had to increase alum and chlorine dosing in an inefficient manner
- inviting the private sector to assist in funding and developing solutions to the problem with drinking water quality

- undertaking investigations for water treatment plants to ensure the protection of Sydney's health.

That evidence was given on oath to the parliamentary Committee. Finally I quote from that minority report:

The Government Members share the views of the authors of "Doing the Vision Thing" that there can be no compromise on the issue of high health standards for Sydney.

That was the position that coalition members took in 1994, when in government. When we sought to incorporate that statement in the majority report, it was opposed by the Labor Party, by Minister Knowles, by Minister Allan and by the honourable member for Manly. That is an indication of the lack of responsibility that they exhibited in relation to the quality of water that Sydney people would receive through their taps. That was a measure of their concern about the health of the public of Sydney. Coalition members of the committee took a right and proper attitude to their responsibility of ensuring as far as possible that no recommendation of the committee would be to the detriment of public health. The majority of the members of the committee ignored the opinion of coalition members and opposed the establishment of water treatment plants. They proposed no solution but asserted that catchment management would solve all. I now want to make another point from the report of the minority members of the committee, the Liberal Party members:

This section has been framed to bolster a pre-existing position on catchment management and demand management which is anti any treatment plants. The majority report has been selective in the evidence presented and much relevant evidence has been ignored.

I stand by that statement as much today as I did four years ago. I think the Labor Party members of the committee and the honourable member for Manly had notions of a one-year \$50,000 inquiry by the Parliament to bolster their pre-existing positions. Most certainly in the case of the Labor Party members, and probably also in the case of the honourable member for Manly, that position was taken to bolster their political aspirations. They cared nothing about the health of the public of Sydney in making their recommendations. Their actions in the interim clearly demonstrate that.

I have only two minutes in which to make a number of points. On Monday evening's 7.30 Report two people were interviewed. One was Michael Mobbs, the consultant to the committee chosen by the honourable member for Manly and the Labor Party, and the person who was to draft the report. The other was Bob Wilson, former Labor Party



branch member and managing director of Sydney Water. Both Mr Mobbs and Mr Wilson inferred in the interview, but not in 1994, that their stated positions, submissions and recommendations had raised concerns about what was being done regarding the drinking water quality program and the impact of the quality of drinking water on the health of Sydney people. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Bob Wilson was managing director of the Sydney Water Board. For the two or three years that he was on the board he went through the process of the design of and tendering for the water treatment plants. Michael Mobbs was the right-hand man and attendant to the honourable member for Manly, Dr Peter Macdonald. He was supporting Dr Macdonald in the drafting of the report and saying that the catchment management solution was all that was required. There was no statement whatever about the need for water treatment plants. What we require from the Government is its recognition of the need to enhance our water treatment system. Some 99.9 per cent of giardia and cryptosporidium is being removed by those treatment plants. The final 0.1 per cent will have to be removed either by micro filtration or some other system such as laser flashing or ionisation. Unless there is a commitment to use the money that has been dragged out of Sydney Water by the Labor Party, we will not have quality drinking water in Sydney. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr RICHARDSON** (The Hills) [11.15 a.m.]: I arrived back in Australia on 28 August after a short holiday in Asia. I was greeted at Darwin airport with the news that the people of Sydney were boiling water again. I must say it made me feel right at home. I had spent a week in a place where one could not put ice in one's scotch, clean one's teeth under the tap, or eat salads and unpeeled fruit like apples, pears, nectarines, grapes, cherries and so on. When I arrived in Sydney exactly the same position obtained here. What a farce! Sydney is a major international city. It is to host the Olympic Games in the year 2000. I have lived here for 41 years and until this year, under this Government, there had never been a day that I had not been able to drink the water.

Last night I went to the dining room in this establishment to have dinner. The customary jug of water was not on the table. I was asked whether I wanted some mineral water. I said, "Yes." A bottle of mineral water was provided. I was astounded at the end of my meal to be presented with a bill for \$1 for the mineral water. I crossed out the name Richardson on the bill and put "Craig Knowles", the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, because the

blame for the problem and the costs of it should be sheeted home to him and to the Government. A constituent telephoned me yesterday expressing serious concern about this issue. He was particularly concerned that when he boiled his water he noted slime in the bottom of the kettle. The suggestion was that the water might not be safe even though it had been boiled. Certainly, slime at the bottom of a kettle would raise concern about the purity of the water that is being supplied under this Government.

Mr Ross Colosimo, who runs the Castle Hill Tavern in my electorate, told me that his business was incurring substantial costs. He is not able to use ice made from the water supply on his premises so he has ice brought in. Since the premises are large that has cost him thousands of additional dollars. That example points up the farce of the \$15 rebate the Government has suggested should be paid to all Sydney Water customers. As the *Daily Telegraph* headline said a few days ago, "You must be joking." The Government must be joking to offer that \$15 rebate after placing the city of Sydney and its people in the present situation. The water quality crisis is the Government's problem. The blame cannot be sheeted home anywhere else, although the Government is trying desperately to do just that.

The Government ripped a \$279 million dividend from Sydney Water. It was warned on several occasions of the likelihood of impending giardia or cryptosporidium contamination of the water supply, yet it took no action. The Government's response to those warnings was to sack about half of its catchment management staff. Catchments were not being maintained to the appropriate standards and, therefore, problems were not identified early. The Minister for Health in his contribution to this debate claimed that corporatisation was the problem. Corporatisation is not the problem. The Minister responsible for Sydney Water has taken additional powers unto himself; he remains able to issue edicts if he wants to and remains in charge of the Sydney Water Corporation.

The Minister responsible for Sydney Water is under siege and any Minister in that position naturally would attempt to find scapegoats. The honourable thing to do would be to accept the blame, but so far there has been no evidence of that happening. The Minister is flailing around like a drowning man. We hope he does not swallow any water, because if he does not drown the parasites will get him! Yesterday the Premier said that the Government had been completely honest with the people of this State. Far from being completely honest, the Government has made a mockery of

notifying the people of Sydney of the danger. On Saturday, 25 July, high levels of giardia were identified in the water system and the public was not informed.

Because the area around Parliament House was affected, I am sure members will recall that on 27 July Sydney Water warned residents within a two-kilometre radius of College Street to boil the water for at least one minute before using it. The Government still had not notified the vast majority of Sydney residents. On Wednesday, 29 July, after much bungling and confusion, and after the intervention of the then Chairman of Sydney Water, David Hill, an earlier Sydney-wide alert was retracted and Sydney Water reissued a warning for the area east of Bankstown and Silverwater, south of Sydney Harbour and north of the Georges River. That warning affected 400,000 households and 1.5 million Sydneysiders, but the fact that cryptosporidium had been found at Prospect was removed from the warning. On Thursday, 30 July, the Premier cancelled his visit to Lismore and Murwillumbah and returned to Sydney.

The Minister responsible for Sydney Water and Chris Pollett held a joint press conference during which the Minister refused to express confidence in Pollett. Again he wanted to pass the buck. Mr Pollett did not rule out the possibility that the bug discovered on Wednesday might have been present in the Sydney water system for up to a month. The Minister's office later clarified that by saying that because of daily testing since Friday the bug could have been present only since Tuesday. At 8 o'clock that night the alert was widened to include the whole of metropolitan Sydney, thus affecting one million of Sydney Water's 1.5 million households, and three million Sydney residents were ordered to boil their water.

**Mr O'Farrell:** Was that Mr Hill?

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I believe Mr Hill was out of the action at that stage. It was remiss of the Government to take six days to alert Sydney residents of the potential danger caused by drinking the water. How could a Government whose primary duty is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales be so neglectful of its duty? How could a Government, one of whose primary duties is to ensure a clean drinking water supply to the people of New South Wales, have allowed this situation to eventuate? The Minister has sought to pass the buck and shift the blame. I was a member of the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for the

Environment were also members of that committee. One of the terms of reference required the committee to examine the impact of the construction of four water treatment plants at Prospect, Macarthur, Woronora and the Illawarra. The committee was consistently told, and each of its members understood, that the major reason for building the plants was to guarantee the safety of Sydney's drinking water. The Water Board's submission to the joint select committee stated:

The reason the Water Board is now moving to filtration of the raw water supply is to maintain the ability *consistently* to deliver reliable, safe water to the greater Sydney region. The need for the proposed water filtration plants is to protect public health.

The water supply system is currently running at its limit of efficiency. There have been occasions recently for example, where the Board has temporarily been unable to draw water from whole reservoirs due to the inability to control particulate matter and bacteria in the water. This results in low levels of disinfection at the customers tap and jeopardises the Board's ability to provide water of an appropriate standard.

*... Catchment management is ... the first most basic and natural strategy to address water quality issues.*

The Water Board and all members of the committee clearly understood that catchment management was one of the strategies available to address the issue of water quality. The submission continued:

The most difficult of the well known pathogenic pollutants to treat are *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia*. These are best controlled by management of the system at catchment level. *Cryptosporidium* is a protozoan parasite that infects most young mammals and is shed to the environment in their faeces. Infection in humans occurs during the oocyst stage when *Cryptosporidium* can invade the intestine causing gastrointestinal illness ... In late 1992, *Cryptosporidium* was detected in all the Water Board's storages at levels comparable to those reported overseas in similar water bodies. These were preliminary investigations. A more comprehensive investigation programme is under way to determine the characteristics of this occurrence and to ensure that the proposed water filtration plants can effectively remove or inactivate it.

Members of the committee members clearly understood the primary reason for constructing the water treatment plants and incorporating them into the Sydney water system. However, the responsible Minister did not seem to grasp that reason. He may have undergone a conversion on the road to Damascus, because he stated in his contribution to the debate that the overriding concern was the protection of Sydney residents. In the past he did not seem to think so. The honourable member for Davidson told the House that the majority report from the joint select committee, following the lead set by its chairman, the honourable member for Manly, who has been making some strange

pronouncements about this issue over the past month, recommended only the cleaning of the catchment areas. The majority report consistently referred to the cost of the plants. For example, at page 90 it states:

The contracts appear to make it less likely that the Board will be able to implement least cost planning measures such as by recycling water through its storages instead of building dams.

I doubt whether too many residents of Sydney would be keen on effluent being recycled through Warragamba reservoir. Some might feel that is what is happening right now under this Government. The entire thrust of that part of the majority report related to catchment management and the cost of the water treatment plants. The health considerations and health rationale for building the plants did not appear to come within the ken of the honourable member for Manly, the Minister for the Environment or the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. As late as last night the Minister followed the same line in his speech on this issue:

Surprise! Surprise! When I became Minister I found that Sydney Water had made a submission to what was formerly the Government Pricing Tribunal for the full price [of the water treatment plants] to be passed on. I suspended that submission until a further full inquiry had been undertaken. History shows that Sydney Water and the Government of the day lied about the cost of water. Not only does New South Wales have an independent process for setting prices, and not only does Sydney have very competitive water and sewerage rates compared to other water authorities around Australia; New South Wales also has the big lie of the former Government which said that the cost of the water filtration plants, including the \$250 million water filtration plant at Prospect, could be absorbed in the Sydney Water program.

The former Government passed on the cost of the water filtration plants to consumers.

In his defence of the indefensible the Minister in charge of Sydney Water once again referred to the economic issues relating to the building of plants rather than the need to supply safe drinking water to the people of Sydney. In contrast, the honourable member for Davidson, the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai and I stated, in the minority report of the joint select committee:

The Board's ability to provide a consistently safe, reliable water supply depends on the performance of the whole system. The treatment plants are only one element of the water management system. The Board acts on the principle that the high quality water from catchments into dams reduces the need for expensive treatment later in the delivery process. Prospect Reservoir management is currently under stress—settling times are near their limits. Prospect Reservoir was designed in the 1880s to detain water in storage for 180 days . . . but today water is detained for approximately two days. It has been estimated that at least two months detention is recommended for minimal standards of turbidity settlement. The third element in the strategy, treatment, is now necessary

and the Board has to maintain a clean distribution system. No single element of itself can be expected to deliver safe and secure water to the customer.

Treatment is no substitute for proper catchment management. Rather, treatment complements catchment management. There is a commercial incentive for the Board to protect its catchments. It will cost the Board more to deliver water if catchment management is not maintained.

Another issue that was raised in the minority report was the natural contamination that can occur in any catchment, regardless of whether there is human habitation in the catchment area. We said in that report:

Turbidity in rivers and storages is natural, as are bushfires, which also cause problems for water quality. Restoring things to some imagined pristine state—were that possible—would not eliminate all problems. Contamination from storm flows washing over ground and picking up and/or dissolving "polluting" compounds such as sediments, minerals, mulch from plant growth, animal droppings, dead animals, ash from bushfires and so on, means that reality is more complex than implied in the majority report.

Those comments are as apposite today as they were then. The McClellan report refers to the likely causes of the latest contamination, and an article in today's *Daily Telegraph* states:

Mittagong, as well as the sewerage systems of Goulburn, Bowral, Berrima and Bundanoon, has been pinpointed as the source of the major sewage overflow into the Wollondilly River, which along with the Cox's River, accounts for 60 per cent of water flow into Warragamba Dam . . .

Goulburn was unable to irrigate its treated effluent and this was released into the Wollondilly River. Sludge ponds at Bowral were flushed into the river and the Bowral, Mittagong, Bundanoon and Berrima plants were all required to operate at extraordinary levels. There is also evidence of faecal contamination in the Cox's River.

The map supplied by the water board to the committee in its submission clearly showed the extent of the catchment area for Warragamba reservoir. As the honourable member for Davidson said, short of bulldozing all of those towns and returning everything to a completely pristine state, one could not, simply by catchment management, guarantee the safety of Sydney's drinking water. The only way to deal with that issue was—as we said then, and we stick by that position—through catchment management and building water treatment plants.

For all the huffing and puffing of the Minister and the Government they cannot deny that they live in a house of straw. In its 1996 annual report Sydney Water flagged the possibility of problems with cryptosporidium in the future. In an estimates committee hearing in July 1996 the honourable

member for North Shore asked the Minister for Health whether testing should be undertaken. She was ridiculed for asking that question. She was told that regular testing was not appropriate. We now see how appropriate the question was.

On 22 October 1996 the honourable member for Liverpool asked the Minister in charge of Sydney Water that famous Dorothy Dixier. Remember, this was a Dorothy Dixier, not a question the Opposition dreamed up to embarrass the Government. The Government did a terrific job of embarrassing itself on that day. In answer to the question, "What is the Government's reaction to a report today of a dangerous bug in Sydney's water supply?" the Minister replied:

In the circumstances, given an attempt to bring about a public health scare, I would have thought Opposition members would have appreciated an assurance from the Government that our water supply was clean and was meeting health standards.

The Minister continued:

Once the water filtration plants come on line we can expect the removal of cryptosporidium to a level of 99.9 per cent—a very credible result.

That is precisely the same information that was supplied to the joint select committee. The Minister continued:

This matter received the attention of the present Government when it was in opposition and it received the attention of the previous Government. So there should be unanimity in this attempt to dispel some of the nonsense that is appearing in today's paper.

Then there were those famous comments about Sydney tap water:

... Sydney tap water is the same as and sometimes better than bottled or filtered water... the Government has introduced the most rigorous management practices within the catchment areas to make those catchment areas upstream of the dams the most pristine in the world.

Honourable members should remember that this same Government has reduced the number of staff employed to manage those catchment areas. Does the McClellan report suggest they are the most pristine in the world? The Minister continued:

I assure honourable members that residents of Sydney can be confident they are drinking water of the best quality provided anywhere in the world.

What did the Minister have to say when he was quizzed about those comments? According to the *Sun-Herald* of 2 August he said that Sydney Water had misled him; he used briefing notes supplied by

the administration when he addressed Parliament in 1996. He is trying to pass the buck by saying Sydney Water misled him, it was not he who misled Parliament or the people of New South Wales. He has not accepted his responsibility as a Minister of the Crown. That is an indication that he supported those water treatment plants. He underwent a conversion on the road to Damascus and believed the water treatment plants would perform a beneficial function. So did the Premier. When he opened the plant at Prospect on 1 October 1996 he said:

One of the many factors contributing to the lifestyle that has made Sydney famous is the quality of Sydney's water... The Prospect plant is fully automated and built to comfortably meet the quality required for both present and future demand... Sydney's drinking water catchments have been kept in pristine condition through careful planning and management... Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting.

I encourage the Premier to chug-a-lug a few schooners of untreated water right now. As the Minister responsible for Sydney Water has noted, the McClellan inquiry stated that there were three causes of parasitic contamination—the overflow of council sewage treatment plants, the stirring up of sediment on the bed of the Warragamba reservoir and the washing down of faecal matter. The honourable member for Manly, in his contribution to this debate yesterday, spoke about scouring and referred to the "very profound contamination of Warragamba Dam." He said:

It seems that over the years sediment had dropped to the bottom of the dam and dam levels dropped. After heavy rainfall, water entered the dam, stirring up sediment on the bottom which entered the treatment plant.

That statement is consistent with the McClellan inquiry and with the need, first, to maintain catchments and, second, to provide some sort of downstream treatment process for the water coming out of Warragamba Dam. Nobody can foretell what sort of rainfall we are going to get. Indeed, if the sediments were already in the reservoir then with a heavy rainfall event such as was experienced in August—the heaviest rainfall we have ever had in August, which, according to the Minister, meant the dam filled from 60 per cent to overflowing in a matter of 10 days—it could be expected that such a situation would occur, that the sediment would be stirred up and that there would be problems with the quality of the water supplied to Sydney.

The coalition's conscience is very clear on this issue. The water treatment plants were necessary. The Government stands condemned because it has not maintained the catchments to the standard

required and because, clearly, it has not acted on warnings that have been given to it about the possibility of parasites entering the Sydney water system. One would have to ask how all those problems could have been eliminated simply by cleaning the catchment, as the former honourable member for Moorebank, the former honourable member for Blacktown and the honourable member for Manly wanted at the time of the inquiry. I suggest that there has been a cover-up of, appropriately, Watergate proportions and buck-passing that would have made Richard Nixon envious.

As I said earlier, safe drinking water is probably the most fundamental of all the services that any government is required to deliver. Regardless of corporatisation and all the buck-passing that the Carr Government has attempted, the Government is in charge of delivering safe drinking water to the people of Sydney. It has failed to do that. Not only has the Government failed, it has added insult to injury by significantly increasing water prices from 65¢ a litre to 80¢ a litre, with another increase of 5¢ a litre proposed. Those increased prices have been imposed on a product that can be used for only half the purposes for which it was intended. The Government is more interested in ripping \$279 million in dividends from Sydney Water. The major cause of the problem is that the Government has not applied the profits made by Sydney Water or the price increases imposed on the people of Sydney to improving the system to a standard of world's best practice.

The downgrading of Sydney Water's capital works program has parallels in other aspects of government administration. The capital works program for schools has been downgraded from \$201 million to \$129 million. As a consequence, schools in this State go without assembly halls and have to make do with makeshift classrooms. In my electorate schools are not being built. Schoolchildren have to bring boiled water from home because they are not able to drink water from bubblers or taps at the schools. This example is consistent with the Government's economic incompetence.

It is the Government that is to blame, for all the reasons I have outlined. There is no point in the Government blaming all and sundry: Chris Pollett, the former managing director of Sydney Water, who was effectively sacked after nine months in that position; the egregious Mr David Hill, who is about to meet his Waterloo in Hughes; Mr Paul Broad, former managing director of Sydney Water; the board of Sydney Water; or the coalition, which

foresaw these problems and attempted to address them when in office. It is the Carr Government that is in office and has been in office for 3½ years. It is the Carr Government's responsibility to ensure the safety and purity of the drinking water provided to the people of Sydney.

One has only to ask those who are responsible for clean water. The community is not saying the responsibility lies with the Leader of the Opposition or the honourable member for Gosford; the community is not saying that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should have done better. The community is blaming the Premier, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and this Government. Everyone I speak to and every talk-back radio program I listen to highlight that fact. As Harry S. Truman so appositely said, "The buck stops here." The buck stops with the Government, the Minister and the Premier. This Government should go. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

**Mr PHOTIOS** (Ermington) [11.45 a.m.]: I take this opportunity to quote an article from the international press, which speaks volumes for the way in which Sydney is seen as a direct consequence of the water crisis. The article reads:

During Sydney's water crisis, when we all slurped the bottled stuff, a woman was seen pouring imported Evian water on the potplants in the office.

"What on earth are you doing using Evian water for the plants?" she was asked.

"Well there's been such a run on bottled water, we're out of Perrier," came the reply.

This sort of carry-on does little to dispel the belief the rest of Australia earns the money, Sydney spends it.

We may well consider those remarks with an element of mirth if it were not for the fact that Sydney now faces arguably its greatest environmental crisis—certainly one of its greatest domestic crises. Water as we have known it in this great rich land of ours has not only been in abundance in Sydney but has been recognised as being clean—clean until CryptoCarr got his hands on the levers of the Sydney water system. The hard, cold, damning reality internationally is that the drink of champions, Sydney's water, is now seen as being one of the most humiliating features of our lifestyle and local landscape. Those remarks, quoted with a snigger and with much mirth at Sydney's expense, damn all those on the Government benches who are responsible for the cover-up and for the inaction and inertia and who now demonstrate an appalling inability to govern and lead us out of the crisis.

For the reason I have given, this Government has to go. It should no longer enjoy the confidence of the House. In relation to our international reputation, I am appalled at the Government's inertia and ignorance in regard to the impact of the water crisis on tourism. The Minister for Tourism would have us believe that the crisis does not affect us one iota. He stands particularly condemned for not arguing a case on behalf of the tourism industry to get our act together fast and for arguing that any attempt to paint Sydney in a bad light, any attempt to evaluate the impact of this crisis on our tourism industry, is no more than scaremongering.

This morning I was interested to read an article by Greg Lenthén in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which referred to the effect of the water crisis on the tourism industry. The Minister for Tourism arrogantly dismissed the valid concerns voiced by the Federal Government, the Australian Tourism Commission, Tourism New South Wales, and Tourism Council Australia—all the independent leading authorities on tourism, which would have us believe there is at least an emerging problem, and in some instances a very real and existing one. Yet the Minister for Tourism misled the community. He argued that the Federal Government is being misleading and sensationalist in its attempt to focus on this serious problem.

**Mr Debus:** It was not just being misleading; it was a lie.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** It is not a lie. The Minister for Tourism says it is a lie and that no international damage will be done. I will give the big lie to the Minister. If it is a lie that internationally New South Wales is being looked upon in negative terms, I will quote some media reports. Have I made up a New Zealand media report which states, "Sydney's nice, but don't trust the taps"?

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! For the benefit of Hansard I ask the honourable member to identify the articles to which he is referring.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** Is it a lie that the Malaysian *Star* of 31 July published an article entitled "Parasites found in Olympic city's water supply", or is the Minister lying?

**Mr Debus:** You are lying, Michael.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** The Minister should tell me if it was not printed on 31 July in the Malaysian *Star*. In New Zealand the story continues. The Hong Kong *South China Morning Post* stated on 31 July,

"Olympic city in parasite shame". I am not lying about what is in the *South China Morning Post*. The Minister does not have a copy of the article. The Singapore *Straits Times* of Saturday, 1 August, stated:

#### BOTTLED WATER SNAPPED UP

No safe drinking water in all Sydney

Residents have been warned to boil their water, even if it is for their pets, after the discovery of a third parasite in the Australian city's water supply

Another report refers to New Zealand's water supply and states, "Clean water, no boiling needed" but in regard to Sydney it states, "Sydney's nice, but don't trust the taps". I say Sydney is nice but do not trust the Minister. The Minister wants us to believe, in the face of hard, cold evidence, internationally Sydney is not hurting. The Minister cannot read if he cannot believe these stories; he cannot listen if he does not appreciate the import of what I am saying and what the tourism industry says. On Monday 7 September, the Los Angeles *Times* quoted the *Sydney Morning Herald* and gave a damning report of Sydney's water crisis. It stated:

Canadian tourist Morreen Prior agreed. Hearing about the crisis, she bought bottled water at home in Toronto [Canada] and was drinking it today in front of the Sydney Opera House.

"The hotel told me not to drink the water," she said. "It's really embarrassing for Sydney."

The Minister continues to deny that we have a real problem with our international reputation. The Minister probably wants us to believe that whilst a few parasites such as giardia and cryptosporidium are serious, the taps are turned off in Sydney and nobody knows about it anywhere else in the world. The reality is that not only do we and the Australian Tourism Commission know about it but his own department knows about it. In the *Weekend Australian* Tourism New South Wales made it clear that the problems in New South Wales are serious.

The Australian Tourism Commission reported that Sydney has a major problem. John Larkin, acting chief executive officer of Tourism Council Australia, said, "The safe, clean and friendly environment could be severely tarnished by the crisis." Tourism New South Wales, the independent body which is at the Minister's disposal, reported the problem in the *Australian*. The Minister, has demonstrated, for purely political reasons, either his manifold ignorance or his covert attempt to join with colleagues in the Government to cover up the nature of the crisis, refusing to accept the advice of Tourism New South Wales. This critical situation

caused the Federal Minister for Sport and Tourism to write to the Premier yesterday in the following terms:

I am writing regarding the meeting I conducted this morning with representatives of the tourism industry to discuss the Sydney water crisis.

The Commonwealth's international marketing arm, the Australian Tourism Commission (ATC), today gave me an extensive dossier of external media coverage of the ongoing crisis dating from August 3.

It shows that the coverage has been extensive, and potentially damaging.

Whilst it is too early to gauge the effect of inbound tourist numbers, I note your own tourism marketing authority, Tourism NSW, stated in yesterday's *Australian* newspaper that it has already seen cancellations by domestic visitors.

Today I do not want to be the first to issue warnings of cancellations and missed opportunities, both domestic and inbound, tourism in New South Wales. As the shadow minister for tourism I want to remind the Minister for Tourism that his department has warned of this crisis and has already been made aware of cancellations by domestic visitors. I have been advised today that I will soon receive information of a cancellation of major tourist groups to some of Sydney's major hotels. If those early reports come to fruition, then certainly Tourism New South Wales, the Minister's department; the Federal Australian Tourism Commission; the Federal Minister for Tourism; and the Australian Tourism Council, representing industry across the board, all got it right. That certainly gives the big lie to this Minister's failure to contain, admit and respond to a crisis affecting the fastest growing industry in the Olympic city—the parasite city of the world—where the drink for champions is meant to be consumed.

Those participating in a marathon race would have to pull up every few kilometres and boil the old-fashioned Australian billy. The only way to get clean water these days is not to turn on a tap but to set a match to a little fire or get out the old Bunsen burner. It is a great day for Evian, a great day for Perrier and it is a damming day for CryptoCarr. The Government has failed to tell the truth, it has failed to respond, and it has failed to provide an answer. The nation is crying out for a solution from the Minister and his Government but they offer nothing but excuses and resignations and accept no responsibility. The Government has provided no solutions and has not proposed any engineering, technological or scientific answer.

That is what the people want from Bob Carr and from the accident-prone Minister responsible for Sydney's water. That is what leadership is all about.

The Minister is busy finding scapegoats across the State—in one case, five dead dogs were blamed for the contamination. We want a response, and the Leader of the Opposition has provided such a response. The coalition pleads with the Government, in the face of its inertia and intellectual bankruptcy, to embrace the solution offered by the State Opposition.

The 10-point plan of the Leader of the Opposition contains only one or two elements which were subsequently embraced by the Government. The first element is that a new Sydney Water board should be appointed based on expertise, not political association. During the past year I have had dealings with David Hill, a political apparatchik who has been used by the Australian Labor Party, up hill and down dale. The public perception is that David Hill was used, then left spent and discredited. Sydney water may have passed its use-by date, and surely David Hill has reached his during the water crisis. When he goes to the polls in southern Sydney the voters will pour cold water over his electoral chances. His was a great career in the making but it is not going anywhere now. David Hill, as chairman of Sydney Water, said:

In all the roles I have played it is the managing director who has the focus, without the chairman meddling.

If ever there was an extraordinary statement, a big lie, that is it. David Hill's reputation was built on his total and absolute over-the-top involvement. Suddenly David Hill found it too hot in the kitchen when the buck stopped with the chairman. He beat the Government by hours to being dismissed—by resigning. He spoke of the dangers when he said:

I never for a moment thought that something like this could happen and neither did anyone else. Sydney Water prided itself on its clean water and to my knowledge there is no record of warnings that this was a problem waiting to happen.

That is one of the most extraordinary statements imaginable. The glossy annual Sydney Water report stated:

Cryptosporidium and giardia are an emerging problem.

The annual report by Sydney Water, run by David Hill, warned him that this was an emerging problem. His authority had undertaken tests which had revealed the danger. He made that statement while trying to duck and weave in a measly, miserly way. When he resigned he certainly got what he deserved, and he will get what he deserves at the polls on 3 October. The people will tell him that they do not want to touch him with a barge pole. David Hill, the master of all cover-ups, claimed that he knew

nothing. He said, "I know nothing, I have no hands on the levers, I am not responsible, I am only the chairman of Sydney Water."

David Hill, as chairman, said that the contract with Australian Water Services for the Prospect plant did not specify several other water quality guidelines which would safeguard against giardia and cryptosporidium, even though the contract did not specify removal of the two parasites. David Hill is an extraordinary man. He was in charge of that authority and was responsible for the appointment of Chris Pollett as managing director, shortly after his own appointment. Despite his track record of detailed, intricate involvement in everything he does, suddenly he knows nothing, sees nothing, and does nothing. David Hill is three blind men in one.

The first element in the 10-point plan of the Leader of the Opposition is that a new Sydney Water board be appointed on the strength of expertise, not political association. That element is critical, because scientific, technological and engineering solutions are needed, not political claptrap from a government that refuses to accept that it has any responsibility but wants to blame the problems on a few bureaucrats, the previous Government, the weather or five dead dogs. The second point of the plan is that a Safe Drinking Water Bill similar to the legislation enacted by the Clinton administration be introduced. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition foreshadowed such legislation. This is an opportunity for the Government to grasp the nettle, to admit it cannot find a solution to the problem, and to embrace in bipartisan spirit the proposal suggested by the Opposition.

The third Opposition proposal is that a freeze be placed on the planned increase in water rates until the crisis is resolved. I am pleased to give credit where credit is due. The Carr Government, backed into a hole, recognised that Opposition proposal as a good one, but for political purposes decided to embrace it and freeze the planned increase in water rates. After all, could anyone imagine the Government increasing the price of undrinkable water from 80¢ to 85¢? Within a period of three years the Government raised the price of water from 65¢ to 80¢ and now wants to increase it to 85¢. Sydney battlers, who have been warned not to drink the water, were told that under a Carr Labor Government, with inflation running at around 1 per cent, they would have to meet a one-third increase in the price of water.

The 10-point plan later explains people have had to pay more for water. The fourth point, a small initiative, is establishment of an Internet site with up-to-date information on water quality. At the

moment people have to buy newspapers or listen ad nauseam to radio broadcasts hour by hour detailing postcodes. It is humiliating that this city has been brought to its knees in this way. Most people cannot access information instantly when they need it. The Government is so incompetent that after three days of testing it gave an all clear for water but 24 hours later admitted it had made a mistake and that the water was still not safe to drink.

The Government has said that the process could continue for a further six months. Even if the water is all right today the taps cannot be turned on until at least 19 September because the Government does not want to make a bigger fool of itself by making pre-emptive announcements about water quality. If the Government cannot test the water and tell the people whether it is safe to drink, how can it be trusted to get it right? At great expense the Government brought in international experts to give advice. If they cannot say whether we can drink the water, how can we expect the Government to fix the problem? If the Government cannot get its public relations right, it certainly will not be able to fix the problem. Over the past year the Government authorised Sydney Water to send bureaucrats on 36 international junkets, trips which cost New South Wales voters more than \$1 million. It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome burned; under this Government, Sydney Water executives spent \$1 million on international junkets while the water system went from bad to worse, and then into crisis, yet the Government still cannot come up with a solution.

The fifth element of the 10-point plan is that a coalition government would regularly monitor for cryptosporidium, giardia and other parasites which have emerged over the past two or three years as a significant threat to Sydney's water supply, and this should be done with transparency. The sixth point, probably the most fundamental proposal, is that money be redirected from this year's predicted \$279 million government dividend to improvements in monitoring and filtration treatments. This problem will not be solved by water alerts or by bringing in international experts to say whether we can drink the water, or by holding inquiries, necessary and fundamental as they are. The only way to solve the problem is to find an engineering solution that fixes it.

**Mr Fraser:** Give every child a kettle for Christmas.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** The Government will enter the new millennium promising a new gift, a kettle for Christmas, as the honourable member for Coffs Harbour suggests.



**Mrs Skinner:** A billy.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** A billy for the boys, from CryptoCarr. This is the big solution offered by the Government. There has been no engineering solution, not even a public relations solution, merely the spectacle of an accident-prone Minister with his hands on the levers and a Government incapable of coming up with any proposal. The Government embraced the proposal for the private sector to treat water at the Prospect treatment reservoir. In a letter written in 1992 the Premier thanked the private water treatment people for their briefing. He said that the provision of private sector infrastructure for use by public utilities was an important feature of Labor's policy approach.

I throw in that small commercial because my old mate the honourable member for Gladesville has entered the Chamber. In an otherwise excellent speech—99 per cent of the honourable member's speech dealt with this subject, so I will not accord him much more than 1 per cent—he focused on the private water treatment plants as part of the problem and the alleged privatisation of water as a potential contributor. Even before Labor took the political levers members opposite received briefings from the private sector and endorsed the very treatment plants that the Premier subsequently opened with much fanfare, taking the credit which the honourable member for Gladesville now seeks to discredit and for which he seeks to hand responsibility to the Opposition.

**Mrs Skinner:** More blame gaming.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** The honourable member for North Shore says, appropriately, that the blame game continues. The Opposition wants the Government to say "No" to the filthy attempt by the Treasurer Michael Egan to rip \$279 million from Sydney Water this year to be spent on whatever the Government wants to waste it on. The Opposition believes that the money should be spent on cleaning Sydney's water system. The health system and the hospital system demand a quality health outcome from water. The honourable member for Gladesville agrees that the money must be spent on health. He wants to disown his Government as quickly as the people of New South Wales have disowned it.

Money needs to be spent on fixing Sydney's water. We do not need more inquiries, commissions, royal commissions, investigations, ombudsmen, auditor generals, international experts, junkets or reviews, important as they are. In addition to the investigations we need a substantial solution. As we speak the Government is ripping \$300 million from

Sydney Water and, consequently, from Sydneysiders who are crying out for a solution. That money provides the only opportunity to fix the problem. The Minister will not fix the problem without spending a dime or while a lack of credibility hangs around his head while he refuses to respond.

The seventh point is the provision of a \$40 rebate to ratepayers on their next water bill. The Government offer of a \$15 rebate is a joke. It would be better not to offer any rebate. For many households it is \$1 a day. However, \$1 will not buy half a litre of water from Franklins. Is this the party of the battlers, or is it a sick joke? The Government has offered a rebate of \$15 at the same time as it is ripping \$279 million out of Sydney Water. Last year it ripped \$150 million out of Sydney Water. Indeed, over the past three years nearly \$1 billion has been taken from Sydney Water and thrown into Treasury coffers as a dividend. If the private sector owned Sydney Water it would not be so negligent.

The Opposition does not want the private sector to own Sydney Water because it is anti-privatisation. I am worried about what the Government will do. I fear that the Government's solution to the problem will be to privatise water. I fear that it intends to raise a dollar or two from the privatisation of water. That warning concerns me and it concerns the people of Sydney. The coalition Government did not privatise Sydney Water during its seven years in office. The Opposition has made a commitment that a coalition government would not privatise Sydney Water, but I fear that that is what the Labor Government wants to do. The Opposition will not tolerate that; it will fight the privatisation of water to the death knell. The eighth point is to transfer responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the public health unit of the Department of Health. That is the only point in the 10-point plan that the Premier borrowed from us; we acknowledge that the Government has largely implemented it.

It is ridiculous that the very authority that was meant to supply the water was issuing the warnings. It is little wonder that the Government was involved in a massive cover-up. The ninth point is to tighten access to water catchment areas like Warragamba Dam and to initiate regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination. Amongst the other negligent mistakes in relation to water, the Government has removed the patrol officers—the police force, as it were—who are responsible for water catchment areas. As part of its economic rationalism, government downsizing, cost cutting, job shedding policy the Government has removed the catchment inspectors and asked them to take a walk to the dole office.

**Mr O'Farrell:** But that's the right approach, according to the Premier.

**Mr PHOTIOS:** If the Premier wore a dress he could be excused for being mistaken for Margaret Thatcher. The honourable member for Northcott is quite right. The Premier has reduced the catchment patrols to zero and left us exposed. That is only one factor contributing to the crisis. The final point is that statutory obligations be imposed on the Minister and that the Department issue health warnings as soon as relevant information is made available to them. In other words, the people of Sydney will not accept any more excuses or cover-ups from the Premier—CryptoCarr—and the accident-prone Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. The Opposition wants to make it a statutory obligation for them to tell the truth and nothing but the truth on their parliamentary oath. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition made a positive announcement when he foreshadowed the Opposition's intention to introduce the Safe Drinking Water Bill. The Opposition has offered the Government bipartisan support if it will get on with the job. If the Government fails to respond to the cry for action from the people of Sydney and the people of New South Wales it is destined for defeat on 27 March next year.

**Mrs SKINNER** (North Shore) [12.15 p.m.]: My personal involvement in this issue arose from the incidence of cryptosporidium discovered in public swimming pools during the warmer months earlier this year. A young woman working in my office, Kate Merrill, undertook high-quality research which led me to put several questions upon notice at the beginning of June this year. It is important to note the date.

**Mr O'Farrell:** When was that?

**Mrs SKINNER:** That was at the beginning of June this year, about a month before the public was notified about the first outbreak of cryptosporidium. I asked the Minister the following questions:

(1) Dr McNulty, NSW Health Department, claims that cryptosporidium can be killed by high levels of chlorination. On what grounds does the Department base its claims?

(2) What, if any, methods have been employed by the Department of Health to provide adequate and accurate testing procedures for cryptosporidium?

(3) There is serious concern in the community that alarming levels of the cryptosporidium parasite have been found in New South Wales water mains. Are you able to assure the public that this is not the case?

On 25 June this year the Minister replied as follows:

(1) I am advised that Dr McNulty was quoting a reference in a scientific paper from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

One would have expected the Minister for Health and his public health officials to know better and to say that the information that cryptosporidium can be killed by chlorination is wrong. If the Minister for Health does not have personal knowledge about these matters he has access to expert advice. However, from the outset he did not provide the Parliament with accurate information. In response to my third question the Minister said:

The 1996 Australian Drinking Water Guidelines state that "Routine monitoring for Cryptosporidium is not appropriate."

**Mr O'Farrell:** A non-answer.

**Mrs SKINNER:** An absolute non-answer. That is typical of this Government. The Minister's answers to my questions show that he has shirked his responsibilities in relation to clean water supply and providing truthful answers to the people of New South Wales. Members opposite should be concerned and they should be agitating, as they are about the Minister's lack of response and his dishonesty. It is particularly important to note the date of that reply because the McClellan interim report points out, as many honourable members have said in this House, that since 1996 Sydney Water has had in place a monitoring program for cryptosporidium and giardia and that, according to the June 1997 Sydney Water interim drinking water quality incident management plan, in filtered water one oocyst of cryptosporidium per 100 litres of water, or one cyst of giardia per 100 litres of water, triggers a significant incident, and that more than those levels triggers a major incident.

Why did the Minister for Health not know that? Why did the health experts who are advising the Minister not know that? Their lack of knowledge is even more extraordinary in the face of a memorandum of understanding that was developed between Sydney Water and the New South Wales Health Department following two years of discussion. Under the memorandum of understanding, which was signed in November 1997, Sydney Water must "immediately report to NSW Health any event within its water supply system which may have significant implications for public health." It could not be clearer. I repeat that this is the memorandum of understanding developed by the Minister's own department over two years. Yet the Minister knew nothing about it? This is referred to in the 1997 annual report of the Department of Health.

It is noted at page 3 under "Highlights" and under the pen of the Director-General of the Department of Health. This is typical of the Minister, who has bunkered himself in his office in North Sydney. He really does not know what is happening in his own department. The complaint made about this memorandum of understanding is that there are no clear guidelines on who should issue public health alerts or take rectification action in the event of a contamination incident. The McClellan report said that the water crisis was the first test of the memorandum of understanding, and stated:

... the value of this instrument in its current form must be doubted. At the time of the incident there was no protocol in place for the issue of a boiled water notice.

So much for the expertise of the Minister and his department and their taking two years to develop this memorandum of understanding, which is supposed to resolve these kinds of issues. I now focus on the responsibilities of the Department of Health regarding the regulating of Sydney Water. The department is responsible for regulating Sydney Water in relation to public health outcomes, and in particular the provision of safe drinking water. The Minister for Health has emergency powers contained in the Public Health Act 1991 allowing him to take action to restrict or to prevent the use of water which is unfit for drinking or domestic purposes, or which is suspected to be a risk to public health. That power has been delegated to the Chief Health Officer in New South Wales Health.

Under the memorandum of understanding with Sydney Water, New South Wales Health is responsible for the development of a public water supply regulatory program for the purpose of making independent judgments on public health matters relating to Sydney Water's activities. I now want to touch upon the chronology of events leading to the recent outbreak of cryptosporidium and giardia. The chronology demonstrates a total lack of planning and understanding of the issue by the Government. The left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. I still think it does not. The Government is fobbing off blame and directing it to everyone but itself.

The people of this State want answers. They want to know why the Government has failed so miserably in its handling of this issue. They want to know not only why the Government cannot provide clean water but why it is not showing any leadership in the provision of solutions to dealing with such problems from this point on. The chronology of events leading to the latest incident starts on 21 July this year when New South Wales Health was

notified of cryptosporidium levels of two oocysts per 100 litres of water and three cysts of giardia per 100 litres of water at Prospect and at Potts Hill, but decided that those levels did not raise a health concern. I remind the House that, according to the June 1997 Sydney Water interim drinking water quality incident management plan, in filtered water one oocyst of cryptosporidium per 100 litres of water or one cyst of giardia per 100 litres of water was identified as triggering a significant incident, and that higher levels constituted a major incident.

Sydney Water made the decision that the levels detected at Prospect and Potts Hill did not raise a health concern, contrary to the advice in the interim plan. Because of the Department of Health's view, no warning was issued. On 23 July New South Wales Health was notified of new levels of infestation at Sydney Hospital, right next door to this parliamentary establishment. The readings were 43 oocysts of cryptosporidium and 19 cysts of giardia per 100 litres of water. A meeting was organised between the hospital and Sydney Water—so at least the hospital was informed. The next day, 24 July, the Department of Health was notified of levels of cryptosporidium in Sydney Hospital water and at the Art Gallery. Sydney Hospital took local action. But there was still no warning to the public. So the public was kept in the dark by New South Wales Health, which has responsibility to let the people know that they cannot rely on the safety of Sydney's drinking water.

On that occasion the Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Health was informed. He in turn informed Minister Dr Refshauge, who in turn informed the Premier. But, it appears, Sydney Water did not tell its Minister, Mr Craig Knowles. Neither did the Premier nor the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Health. That validates my claim that the left hand really did not know what the right hand was doing. And, above all, the people of Sydney did not know what was happening because none of the persons I have mentioned were being honest enough to tell the people what the problem was.

The same situation applied the next day, 25 July, when at 6.35 p.m. New South Wales Health was notified that test results showed up to 15 oocysts of cryptosporidium and 161 cysts of giardia at the Art Gallery and in the Crown Street and Macquarie Street areas. At 7.30 p.m. the department notified that test results at the Crown Street reservoir revealed 104 oocysts of cryptosporidium and 461 cysts of giardia per 100 litres of water, with Sydney Water agreeing that it needed to obtain independent validation of the results by Macquarie University.

Again, no action was taken to advise the public. I find this extraordinary behaviour on the part of the Minister for Health, who knows the impact particularly of cryptosporidium on people with suppressed immune systems.

I repeat that this reading was taken in eastern Sydney. One of the hospitals in that area is St Vincent's Hospital, which treats many people with suppressed immune systems through suffering from HIV and AIDS. At no stage was St Vincent's Hospital notified of this contamination of its water. So that hospital went on merrily carrying out its work, in ignorance of this health risk, doing its best to treat people who would be at severe risk from this contamination. Nothing shows the heartlessness of this Government and of the Minister for Health more than that total disregard for that serious risk to the health and wellbeing of the people most at risk in our community, those with suppressed immune systems, for example, those suffering from HIV and AIDS and undergoing cancer treatments, as well as older people and children.

By 26 July the public had not been notified, yet contaminated water had been discovered on 21 July. At 9.00 p.m. on 26 July the Acting Manager of the Health Department's water unit was notified of extremely high readings in the eastern central business district. Those readings were validated by Macquarie University. The Acting Manager, Mr Adrian Farrant, took no action other than to note the extremely high readings, and New South Wales Health gave no consideration to the required public health response. The next day, 27 July, the Health Department convened a teleconference between 11.45 a.m. and 1.15 p.m. involving Sydney Water and representatives from authorities dealing with public health, infectious diseases and water testing. It was decided that the Health Department would issue an immediate statement warning people in the eastern Sydney CBD to boil the water.

Fighting over how the media alert would be carried out led to an unacceptable delay in issuing the public warning, which the McClellan interim report said could have resulted in serious health consequences. Limited warnings had been given only to those living in the eastern CBD. On 28 July the Health Department issued a press release to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which, because it was used only in part, led people to believe that cryptosporidium would not have any effect on their health. The McClellan report criticised the use of that alert, the selective reporting and the decision by Sydney Water, based on the *Sydney Morning Herald* selective reporting, to drop cryptosporidium from its warnings and include only giardia.

The interim report made the sensible recommendation that only one agency was entitled to issue media alerts. At 1.30 p.m. on 29 July a meeting was held between Sydney Water and the Health Department, but again there was confusion between the respective media units of Sydney Water and the Health Department. That confusion delayed the issuing of a media release to extend the warning to boil water until almost 6.00 p.m. The meeting was held at 1.30 p.m. and the warning was not issued until 6.00 p.m. That delay represents the first breach of the Health Department's memorandum of understanding with Sydney Water, that is, Sydney Water kept the news of further contamination from the Health Department for more than two hours.

Following confusion at Sydney Water about which area should be alerted to boil water, the Health Department took it upon itself to issue a media alert with a Sydney-wide warning that evening on the late television news. I was at home and, on one of those rare occasions when I watch television, I heard the warning, which included the area in which I live. What about those who were not watching television and who had gone to bed after cleaning their teeth and perhaps having taken tablets using non-boiled water from the tap? This Government stands condemned for its inaction in not advising people of the risks to their health.

The situation was made all the more extraordinary by David Hill ordering that the warning be retracted and that Sydney Water issue a second release approved by the Health Department that excluded a cryptosporidium warning. The McClellan interim report labelled this omission as inappropriate—the understatement of the year! That series of events in July speaks volumes about the total lack of control and management by the Carr Government of this issue. That lack of control and management starts with the Minister for Health, who, only a month earlier, told this Parliament that cryptosporidium did not have to be monitored. He was not prepared to provide an assurance to the people of Sydney that their health was not at risk from any potential contamination.

Much of the media coverage claimed there had not been any reports of increased illness in the community so perhaps people need not worry, but on 3 August the *Daily Telegraph* revealed that a doctor had notified the Health Department three months earlier of a case of cryptosporidium-related illness and was told by an official that it was only one of 500 cases relating to drinking water. One must ask how much reliance can be placed on the information given to the public about disease resulting from our contaminated water. Given that

the Minister does not believe there is a problem or that it is necessary to warn people about contamination, perhaps he is fudging figures about people becoming sick from drinking our contaminated water.

My office has taken calls from people describing symptoms they believe result from drinking contaminated water. I hope the offices of all Government members have received similar calls because members of the Government are the ones who should be providing the answers. I know the honourable member for Bathurst, who is in the Chair, will provide the answers because he is an honest bloke, but I am not too sure about many of the members opposite. I remind the House of the nonsensical claim of the Minister for Health that routine monitoring for cryptosporidium was not appropriate and of his inability to assure the public that there was no health risk to their health. Two years earlier his chief health officer, Dr George Rubin, warned that giardia and cryptosporidium posed a unique threat to drinking water and sought rapid action to assess the risks. That action was never undertaken.

The former Managing Director of Sydney Water, Paul Broad, responded that Sydney Water had world's best practice land management procedures in its first line of defence—the catchments—and that treatment plants would intercept as much as 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium. At the same time experts from Sydney Water advised that treatment plants would need to achieve greater than 99.9 per cent removal to reach acceptable cryptosporidium risk levels. Obviously some people do not know what they are talking about. My final comment about that matter relates to a report in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 30 August, a copy of which I received on my return from a six-day tour of country hospitals.

That article reported that the Health Department said it did not want to stop and start issuing warnings. On Friday, 4 September the Health Department all but lifted the warning when the Minister said that it was reasonable to expect that Sydney's water would get the all clear by the end of the weekend. By 8.00 a.m. Saturday morning Sydney was told it would again have to boil its water, possibly until Christmas. Again the Minister for Health was proven to be unreliable. The only thing he can be relied upon to do is tell lies. Like his colleagues, he had no strategy to deal with the problem. His only response was to again play the blame game, a process in which he and his colleagues have developed a great deal of expertise over the past three years.

The Leader of the Opposition has shown the way forward with his 10-point plan. That plan demonstrates leadership. He has shown the House how the Government can solve the problem. My colleagues have read out that plan, so I shall not take up the time of the House by repeating it. However, on behalf of the people of New South Wales, particularly those most at risk—babies, young children, the elderly, cancer patients, HIV and AIDS patients, and those suffering other immune-suppressed systems—I plead with the Government to take the lead shown by the Opposition, adopt the plan of the Leader of the Opposition and support the coalition's proposed legislation.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Whelan.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Routine of Business

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [12.40 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the interruption of business currently before the House for the taking of questions without notice at 2.15 p.m. this day.

I have moved this motion because Standing Order 122 is very specific. The House must proceed with the motion of no confidence that is before it until the motion has been determined. Standing Order 122 does not provide for question time to take place today, and the issue may arise again tomorrow if the House is still debating the motion of no confidence. The Government is content to have question time take place today. The issue that was raised in relation to question time yesterday has been properly resolved by the Government bringing on this important debate. It has enabled members of the Opposition to speak for half an hour, to put any number of multiple questions to the Government and to make speeches on behalf of their constituents rather than restrict them to five questions during question time. However, I understand that the Opposition does not share that view. To remove that doubt, the Government intends to have question time take place at the normal time today.

**Mr Hartcher:** With questions about Sydney Water?

**Mr WHELAN:** Because of the Government's desire to have question time a non-precedent ruling will be sought from Mr Speaker that on this special occasion questions may be asked about the matter that is currently before the Chair. That is a departure from the normal practice, but we will take that in

our stride. Standing Order 122 was born at a different time out of the charter of reform. It was born when the former member for South Coast, the honourable member for Bligh and the honourable member for Manly had the numbers in the House. The standing order relates to section 24B(2)(b) of the Constitution Act, which provides:

(2) The Legislative Assembly may be dissolved if:

(b) during the period commencing on the passage of the motion of no confidence and ending 8 clear days thereafter, the Legislative Assembly has not passed a motion of confidence in the then Government.

The time in which the standing order was born has passed and, regrettably, the standing order has not changed. I do not seek to change it today, but the Government will give consideration to that. The standing order does have constitutional implications. The Government is aware of that and will do something about it. However, first we must conclude this debate. The Opposition's motion will go the way of most of its attempts to embarrass the Government: it will fail.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! The suggestion of the Leader of the House is roughly equivalent to a change in the bowling from the Paddington end. I should like to hear the views of the Opposition.

**Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [12.42 p.m.]:** My experiences of cricket are not as vast or as rich as yours, Mr Acting-Speaker, so I will speak about parliamentary procedure. I welcome the assurance from the Leader of the House that the Government, while allowing question time to take place, will seek the appropriate ruling from Mr Speaker that questions can be asked about matters concerning Sydney Water. Question time would be a farce if questions about the issue Parliament is debating and, indeed, the main issue of concern to the community of Sydney were ruled out of order because of a technicality in a standing order which was never intended to have that result. I thank the Leader of the House for his assurance in that respect.

Yesterday question time was interrupted by the visit of Her Excellency the President of the Republic of Ireland; it was a most welcome visit. The Government could have allowed question time to be concluded and could then have moved to suspend standing orders to bring on the motion of no confidence. The Government elected not to do so. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Opposition to ask whether the Government was running scared. The Government has become very concerned about that allegation. Government people have been running

around the press gallery all morning saying the Government was not scared; it thought the issue was so important that the debate had to be brought on at once.

The debate was not so important that it had to be brought on immediately after the visit of the President of Ireland. It could have waited a further 30 minutes. The somewhat pious claim by the Leader of the House that he has moved this motion in the best interests of everyone concerned ignores the way he and his cohorts acted yesterday. Their action yesterday was unprecedented since Barrie Unsworth's ill-fated attempt to stifle Nick Greiner in 1987. It was designed to stop the first question time in this Parliament since June proceeding to its completion. By stopping question time the Government cut and ran from the people and the Parliament of New South Wales, and from the issue of Sydney Water.

The Opposition accepts that question time will take place today. It accepts the assurance of the Leader of the House that he will seek the appropriate ruling from Mr Speaker to allow questions to be asked about Sydney Water. Members of the Opposition will be asking such questions as they believe are in the best interests of the people of this State. We will be extremely concerned if any attempt is made to stop questions being asked about Sydney Water. Whether we get answers about Sydney Water is, of course, the \$64 question. We so rarely do. We are so used to the Premier engaging in histrionics in this place. Yesterday one member of this House engaged in histrionics and he was ejected, but the Premier is allowed to engage in histrionics everyday.

**Mrs Lo Po':** He is good at it.

**Mr HARTCHER:** He is good at it because he gets a lot of practice—more than anyone else.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! The honourable member for Gosford should return to the subject matter of the motion.

**Mr HARTCHER:** I do not intend to prolong this debate. Let us have question time and let us address the real issue facing the people of this State, that is, the competence of the Government to run Sydney Water.

**Motion agreed to.**

*[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Clough) left the chair at 12.47 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**FORM OF QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members are aware that debate on a most important motion is being interrupted for the taking of questions. Indeed, it is the most serious motion that can be moved in this House. That raises the difficult and vexed question of anticipation of debate, a matter that was discussed earlier today in the House. I intend to allow questions to be asked relating to the subject matter of the motion before the House. However, my ruling should not be regarded as a precedent for the future. The general purpose of question time would be defeated if questions were allowed every day relating to matters before the House at that time.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

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**SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION**

**Mr COLLINS:** I address my question to the Premier. Was the Premier acting on advice provided by the Minister responsible for Sydney Water when he told Parliament yesterday that cryptosporidium levels reached 58,660 per 100 litres at the Orchard Hills water system in 1993 and 6,700 per 100 litres at North Richmond in 1994? Will he now table the advice provided by his Minister on that issue?

**Mr CARR:** In the largely unreported speech the Leader of the Opposition gave yesterday he failed to identify anything the Government had either done or might have done that would have averted the health warnings about contaminants in Sydney water.

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

**Mr CARR:** He also failed to explain, and this is the subject of his question today, why readings were five times higher than current readings yet there was no public health alert in the early 1990s when he was a member of the former Government.

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

**Mr CARR:** The source of my advice is nothing less—

**Mr Collins:** Table the advice.

**Mr CARR:** Listen, Bozo, it was tabled yesterday.

**Mr Collins:** No, it wasn't.

**Mr CARR:** I am reading from it. I am reading from the document that was distributed yesterday. I quote from the report—

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

**Mr Photios:** On a point of order. The question was explicit: will he or will he not table the advice? The Premier is misleading the House.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Ermington will resume his seat. I call him to order.

**Mr CARR:** The report was distributed yesterday, and the honourable member for Gosford has a copy of it. It was publicly distributed. To answer the question—

*[Interruption]*

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier needs no assistance from Ministers on the Government front bench. Hansard and the other members of the House will be assisted if they remain silent.

**Mr CARR:** I am delighted to quote from the report; I quote from it now.

**Mrs Skinner:** On a point of order. I seek clarification from the Premier. He keeps talking about a report. The question related to advice to him from the Minister.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member will resume her seat. If she wishes to ask the Premier a question, she will have an opportunity to do so at the appropriate time.

**Mr CARR:** When I said in this House yesterday that cryptosporidium at Orchard Hills was 58,616—

**Mr Collins:** On a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Although members may be a little excited about the subject matter of the question, there is no reason for three points of order to be taken when the Premier is obviously attempting to answer the question. If members believe the answer is inadequate, the appropriate time to take a point of order is when the Premier has concluded his response. However, any member taking a frivolous point of order will be placed on three calls to order.

**Mr Collins:** You will recall that when I asked the question I asked specifically about the advice, not the report. I asked the Premier to table the advice.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition did not listen to what I said. I said that if members have a problem with the Premier's answer, the appropriate time to take points of order is when he has completed his answer rather than halfway through his dissertation.

**Mr CARR:** To put members of the Opposition at ease again, yesterday I quoted from the report. The honourable member for Gosford has the report.

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

**Mr CARR:** I will quote again from the report, which states:

Given that the raw water source for Orchard Hills is the pipeline from Warragamba Dam, a similar concentration of oocysts may have entered Prospect Reservoir, and given the lack of protection against cryptosporidium oocysts in the system, these oocysts may have entered the reticulation system.

The report concluded:

Water treatment provided by Orchard Hills and North Richmond WTPs is effective in reducing concentration of cryptosporidium oocysts. However, when challenged with high concentration of cryptosporidium oocysts, sufficient numbers of oocysts to constitute an effective dose may pass through treatment and enter the system.

That is the point. When that occurred those opposite felt no moral obligation to let the people of Sydney know. Who was the Minister for Health? Who was the shareholding Minister?

**Mr Hartcher:** On a point of order. The Premier in his answer used my name as the member for Gosford, and alleged that I had the report.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member is seeking to make a personal explanation. This is not the appropriate time to do so. I call the Minister for Roads to order.

**Mr COLLINS:** I ask a supplementary question. Why did the Premier lie to Parliament by omitting to tell the House that the ministerial advice on this issue was that water samples involved were not analysed for many weeks and could not be validated while treated water at both plants showed no cryptosporidium?

**Mr CARR:** When the Government was still analysing water from Warragamba Dam it alerted the people.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Bathurst rises on a point of order. I anticipate that he will ask the Chair to rule on the supplementary question. The question is in order.

**Mr CARR:** The question of viability highlights in fact the very point the Government is making: that it has honestly alerted the people whenever there has been any suggestion of a risk.

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

**Mr CARR:** The Opposition is defending its failure to notify the public of any contamination. The Government did. The Government knew that was important, and that goes to the heart of the contrast. The Government did notify the public, irrespective of the possible viability of the samples. That is the point. The Opposition is trying to argue that the samples have not been properly and fully tested.

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

**Mr CARR:** The fact is that the Government has alerted the people, irrespective of the possible viability of the samples.

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

**Mr CARR:** In other words, the Government notified the public until it could determine to its satisfaction whether the organisms were dead or alive. The Government erred on the side of caution, but the former Government did not.

## KNIFE POSSESSION PENALTIES

**Mr WATKINS:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. Could the Premier update the House on the success of the Government's tough new knife laws?

**Mr CARR:** In the last session the Government introduced the toughest knife laws in Australia. It did so because anyone carrying a knife without lawful reason is attacking the civil liberties of other



people. Today in New South Wales it is illegal to carry a knife in a public place or school without a lawful reason. Police can search for knives and confiscate them. Police can demand names and addresses and ask people who are harassing, intimidating or causing fear to others to move on. The Government's policy can be described as zero tolerance on knives, and it is proud of that. I can report to the House that the laws are working. All the evidence so far points to a terrific performance by policemen and policewomen using the laws to deliver a safer community.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. If the honourable member for Northcott wants to have a discussion with the member seated next to him, he should do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr CARR:** I report that since 1 July, 389 knives and other dangerous weapons have been confiscated—that is 389 knives and dangerous weapons no longer in our community. They included a crucifix that can be converted into a knife that was taken from a 14-year-old at Miranda; a samurai sword that was taken from a man at Newcastle railway station; a 35 centimetre knife that was taken from a man in a crowded hotel at Glen Innes; a tomahawk taken from a man at Campbelltown; a 60 centimetre bayonet taken from a man at Marrickville; an axe taken from a juvenile in a playground at Ryde; and a knife that had been strapped to the ankle of a juvenile at Taree.

Other dangerous weapons confiscated include meat cleavers, a machete engraved with the title "Indiana Jones", a broken but sharpened pool cue, screwdrivers, razor-like paint scrapers, laser pointers and swords. The 389 knives and weapons were found after police had searched 345 people. Police in the Manning Great Lakes report that since 1 July by using their powers they have searched 40 people for knives, issued 65 directions to move on and laid 24 charges. I praise the policemen and policewomen of this State for taking the power this Parliament gave them and using it to help build a safer community. In Cabramatta, youth liaison and community safety officers visit schools and other venues to tell young people to hand in their knives voluntarily.

Knives can be handed in at Cabramatta police station and Cabramatta Police and Community Youth Club. At Minto and Campbelltown community groups are working to get people to hand in their knives. Local youths, some as young as 10, have handed in more than 100 knives. Students have been provided with youth information

cards on the new laws. The cards have been issued to every school student in the State, and they make it very clear that no student should carry a knife; it is simply against the law for anyone to carry a knife at a school.

The Government congratulates all those community and school groups, as it congratulates the police. These laws can work if they are supported by the community. As honourable members would be aware, the Government has also supported the new laws with a major education campaign that can be seen displayed at railway stations around the State. The campaign was funded from money confiscated from criminals, from the Confiscated Proceeds Account. It is altogether appropriate that money taken from drug dealers and criminals is used to fund anti-knife measures; money that has been taken from criminals is being used to fight crime.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Northcott will cease interjecting. I place him on two calls to order.

**Mr CARR:** As I said in this place in March, there is violence in our society, but that means we have to fight harder against the use of knives and weapons in our society. That is why the Government has introduced new laws, that is why the laws will stay in force while I am Premier, and that is why the Government will shortly announce stage two of its new anti-weapons campaign—an assault on prohibited weapons.

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG INFORMATION SERVICE

**Mr GAUDRY:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What action is the Government taking to protect families affected by drugs?

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Carr Government is determined to help families protect their children from the scourge of drugs. It is tackling the problem head on through law enforcement, education and prevention and the expansion of treatment services. A key strategy is the scientific assessment of new forms of treatment for drug addiction. The Carr Government was the first government in Australia to launch pilot naltrexone programs in public hospitals. They are the focus of attention not only across Australia but also internationally.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Government established the pilot programs to develop proper clinical practices and safety guidelines before embarking on full, random clinical trials. Naltrexone is used in two ways: either as a means of withdrawal from opioid addiction or as a form of maintenance treatment. Often patients will undergo both forms of treatment. It is usual with well-designed trials that there be a preliminary pilot stage. I am pleased to advise the House that I have received some preliminary data from one of the pilots conducted at Sydney Hospital under Dr James Bell. The results are encouraging. Of the 31 patients involved in the study, 16 were addicted to heroin. A further 15 patients were on methadone programs.

Unlike as happened with the Westmead pilot, patients under the treatment of Dr Bell were not anaesthetised during withdrawal. Rather, they were sedated and given medication to suppress the withdrawal symptoms but remained awake during the procedure. Of the 16 patients who were addicted to heroin, five, or 31 per cent, are now off heroin and being treated with methadone. This means that they are off the drug treadmill and have a greater chance of getting work and re-establishing relationships with their families and friends. A further two patients, or 12.5 per cent of those involved in the pilot, are on naltrexone maintenance programs and clear of heroin. One patient, or 6 per cent of those on the pilot, is entirely free of heroin use without naltrexone assistance.

In total almost 50 per cent of patients are now off heroin. These figures are more than comparable with other treatment forms for drug addiction including methadone, which has a 50 per cent retention rate, and abstinence-based therapies, which have a 20 per cent retention rate. To complete the picture five of those patients have returned to heroin use and two are on naltrexone maintenance with occasional lapses. One patient died over the period of the program. Dr Bell's study also looked at the effectiveness of naltrexone on 15 patients enrolled in the methadone program.

After treatment with naltrexone six patients, or 40 per cent, are abstinent after one month; three patients, or 20 per cent, returned to the methadone program; four patients, or 27 per cent, relapsed; and the outcome of two patients is unknown. As suspected, naltrexone is not a miracle cure but there are encouraging results that suggest that naltrexone has an important role to play not only in treating heroin addiction but also in weaning patients off methadone. I stress that these results are preliminary and subject to further scrutiny and assessment.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** In addition, the results of the yet-to-be-completed Westmead naltrexone pilot will need to be analysed with Dr Bell's data before any larger random clinical trial can take place. The early data certainly suggests that naltrexone may become a valuable tool in the fight against drug addiction. The Carr Government is fighting the scourge of drugs on many fronts. Earlier today I launched a statewide advertising campaign to help parents and young people become better informed about the dangers posed by drugs. The Government has a clear message for parents and young people. The answers to their questions on drugs are a phone call away.

Many parents find it difficult to talk to their children about drugs. It is a job made even harder if they do not fully understand the issues or know what to ask. Similarly, many young people are nervous, even embarrassed, about talking to their parents about drugs and drug abuse. That is where the Alcohol and Drug Information Service can help, by providing expert advice and answers to the questions that parents and young people ask. A hotline has been set up to help, and I urge anyone seeking information on drug or alcohol problems to use it. Only through education can we better protect those we love from the dangers posed by drug and alcohol abuse.

## **SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION**

**Mr SOURIS:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. Why did the Minister sign a letter on 10 August 1998, just six days after the Sydney Water contamination crisis ended, stating that Sydney's water performance has continued to improve? How can he stand by Sydney's water performance when residents cannot drink the water?

**Mr KNOWLES:** The Opposition uses the Deputy Leader of the National Party as the mug in the Parliament. He has obviously forgotten that he introduced the Sydney Water corporatisation legislation on behalf of Minister Webster. Research has shown that on 22 September 1994 the honourable member said:

I have no doubt that corporatisation of the Water Board will result in improved accountability, increased efficiency . . . clear performance criteria to protect the environment and public health . . ."

The coalition gave that clear assurance. Its clear message was that corporatisation would protect the public health. As part of the mug's game into which the Deputy Leader of the National Party was duped, a set of regulations was attached to the coalition's corporatisation legislation. The honourable member should be able to work out that the statement he made at that time is linked to the question he has asked today. It clearly relates to the operational audit of Sydney Water in the preceding year; and in that context the letter he quoted in his question related to a period prior to the contamination outbreak.

### PROSPECT WATER FILTRATION PLANT CONTRACT

**Mrs BEAMER:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. What were the circumstances of the awarding of the Prospect water filtration plant contract in 1993?

**Mr KNOWLES:** This is a better question! Yesterday the Premier outlined the cover-up by the former Government of the contamination of the Sydney water supply. Failure to notify cryptosporidium levels of more than 58,000 oocysts per 100 litres of water constitutes a cover-up. On a motion of no confidence the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to give reasons for condemning the Government, but he could not present any. Honourable members are saying that his speech was the most appalling, lazy and incompetent presentation to the Parliament by any leader of the Opposition. Is it any wonder that the honourable member for Lane Cove, who is smiling to herself—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Ministers on the Government front bench and Opposition members will cease interjecting.

**Mr KNOWLES:** Is it any wonder the honourable member for Lane Cove was seen last night outside the entrance to the Strangers Dining Room berating a staff member of the Leader of the Opposition for the tactical failures of the Leader of the Opposition in question time and his appalling performance during debate on the no confidence motion. Yesterday it was a cover-up. During our search through the files for answers to the current set of problems we found more Opposition fingerprints.

A number of questions are raised. Why did the former Government knowingly choose the second-best option for the Prospect water filtration plant? Despite an alternative tender being ranked number one on technical merit, why was the contract

awarded to the proposal that came in second? Why did the former Government choose a system for Prospect that contains only a single filtration process whilst the preferred proposal contained dual filtering, which has been incorporated in the three smaller water filtration plants serving Sydney. Why did the coalition Government choose a second-ranked option for the filtration of more than 85 per cent of Sydney's water supply?

At that time the coalition said that the technical assessment of the various options for Prospect was only one consideration in the tender process. We were told that the final decision for the establishment of the water filtration plants was based on "economic and commercial considerations". Indeed, that view was confirmed in a letter dated 8 April 1994 from Paul Broad to the chairman of a parliamentary joint select committee, the honourable member for Manly. It is a fact that despite the successful tenderer, New South Wales Water Services—now Australian Water Services—meeting the specifications and being acceptable, there was a better technical proposal. The proposal by Wyuna Water was ranked first for all the technical evaluation criteria by an independent panel of experts.

Each expert ranked Wyuna Water first on environmental assessment, project delivery assessment, process assessment and operation assessment. The technical assessment of New South Wales Water Services and, indeed, the other tenderer, CRI Bechtel-American shared second and third place on the individual evaluation points.

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

*[Interruption]*

**Mr KNOWLES:** The dope from Davidson, who was also involved in the parliamentary inquiry asks, "How much extra were they?" That is a good question. The next question we asked was how significant were the economic and commercial considerations of Paul Broad and the chairman of the select committee. The files reveal that on a project estimated at that time to cost \$300 million the price differential between Wyuna Water and New South Wales Water Services was little more than \$25 million. That is a \$25 million variation on capital expenditure of \$300 million.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Davidson will cease interjecting. If he wants to ask a question, he may seek the call when the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has concluded his answer.

**Mr KNOWLES:** The honourable member for Davidson did not contribute much to the committee's deliberations. On a \$300 million capital spend the price variation between the two options was \$25 million—less than 10 per cent of the total cost. It is important to understand that the former Government gave an express commitment that each proposal should remove 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium and giardia, yet it failed to include in the contract a requirement to remove cryptosporidium and giardia.

These are 25-year contracts. They do not require the removal of giardia and cryptosporidium, despite the promises of the former Government, including the promise of Robert Webster, who, on 23 September 1992, said that the water treatment plants would "ensure that the residents of Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains will be assured of a safe and reliable water supply well into the next century". The Government already has asked Mr McClellan to urgently accelerate his assessment of any need to upgrade the Prospect treatment plant. I have today advised Mr McClellan that he will be receiving the files on this matter as well as yesterday's cryptosporidium reports.

#### PROSPECT WATER FILTRATION PLANT CONTRACT

**Mr HARTCHER:** I address a question to the Premier. Did the Premier, when Leader of the Opposition, say, before the Prospect treatment plant contract was signed, "The provision of private sector infrastructure for use by public utilities is an important feature of our policy approach. We would support this approach in Government as we do in Opposition. The Opposition is pleased to give this assurance to any financiers intending to give assistance to your development plans"?

**Mr CARR:** The answer, of course, is yes. But what an immaculate sense of timing. After the revelation by the Minister for Planning of the way the coalition went about implementing a perfectly valid principle, it remains only to say it is not a question of the validity of providing this service though the private sector, but the way it was done, the level of accountability, and whether we got the best deal from the best part of the private sector.

#### TUMUT INVESTMENT

**Ms NORI:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs. How is the Government helping to secure the economic future of Tumut?

**Mr WOODS:** The honourable member for Port Jackson has a deep commitment to the regions of New South Wales—

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

**Mr WOODS:** —as do all members of the New South Wales Government. This Government is hugely committed to working with individual regional centres, like Tumut, to secure their economic futures.

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

**Mr WOODS:** When Visy Paper Pty Ltd indicated it was interested in investing more than \$400 million in a kraft pulp and paper mill at Tumut, the State Government moved promptly to secure the investment for regional New South Wales.

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

**Mr WOODS:** We introduced special legislation to ensure resource security, put together an offer of payroll tax concessions and a training package for employees, and offered assistance with planning issues. Last month I announced a five-point plan for growth in Tumut through the country centres growth strategy. This plan will make sure that, when the Visy investment gets under way, there is an integrated approach to ensure infrastructure, training and social needs keep pace with growth in Tumut. It also will ensure that other opportunities for growth are maximised.

The Visy proposal means a lot to Tumut. It means that more than 400 direct new jobs will be created in the mill and in related activities. It also means import replacement. While the State Government has moved quickly and decisively to make sure that the Visy mill gets going, the Federal coalition Government has really dragged the chain. Visy has sought assistance from the Federal Government for help with road infrastructure, environmental technology, infrastructure tax offsets and transport equalisation assistance. For Visy, however, it has been a case of seek and you will not find. The Federal coalition has failed to deliver any assistance at all to ensure Visy gets under way.

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

**Mr WOODS:** What is the position of the Federal coalition on this subject? The former Minister for Regional Development and the National Party leading light of the time, John Sharp, promised "significant assistance" for Visy. But where is it? Is the absence of support from the Federal coalition yet further proof of John Sharp's stated belief that there is "no role" for the Commonwealth in regional development? The coalition does not care about regional New South Wales. Its readiness to abandon regional Australia stands in stark contrast to the approach of the New South Wales Government, which is committed to targeted and strategic intervention to ensure private sector investment goes ahead in country New South Wales. It is through investments like that proposed by Visy that economic growth and job security can be created for country centres. But one does not secure jobs growth and economic security by doing nothing. The Federal coalition to date has delivered nothing.

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

**Mr WOODS:** While the Federal coalition sits back, the State Government has developed a five-point action plan for Tumut. It sets out the action that the State Government will take to secure investment and make sure any potential impediments, like labour or land shortages, are identified and overcome. As a result of some months of work with Tumut shire and the people and industries of Tumut, we have come up with our action plan. It involves a real commitment to improving transport infrastructure. The State Government will provide \$60 million over the next 10 years for targeted improvements to the primary road network in the south-west slopes. A study will be conducted into the feasibility of reinstating rail links in the Tumut shire. Along with Visy, we have called on the Federal Government to make sure that the community gets the most it can from the Visy investment. Coalition members opposite do not even know who Visy is. The silence of the Federal Government and members opposite on this issue is profound. The State Government's plan includes direct help for Tumut shire to make sure the community gets the most it can from the Visy investment.

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

**Mr WOODS:** A local economic development officer is to be employed. In addition, opportunities for New South Wales producers and manufacturers that can and should flow from the Visy proposal

will be maximised, to ensure maximum benefit to the local area. A New South Wales industrial supplies officer will work closely with Visy to ensure New South Wales suppliers are given every opportunity to tender for work generated by the proposed Visy mill. The Government's action plan for Tumut includes help for fast-tracking the release of new industrial land, help to ensure the right training is available, and a strategy to make sure that human services keep up with growth.

This pro-active and interventionist approach of the State Government, through introducing special legislation for the Visy project as well as the development of the action plan, stands in stark contrast to the inaction of the Federal coalition. The State Government and local government have worked closely to secure a bright future for Tumut. It is about time the Federal coalition showed it is committed to job creation and investment in Tumut by delivering some of the infrastructure and other requirements that are a Federal responsibility.

#### **SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION**

**Mrs SKINNER:** I ask a question of the Minister for Health. Why is it that no public health alert was issued on 13 August, when 50 oocysts of cryptosporidium per 100 litres were detected in water samples, but an alert was issued three weeks earlier when parasite levels were less than half that amount? What is the Minister's definition of a safe level of cryptosporidium?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member for North Shore is aware of the Chair's attitude to questions containing a number of parts. I will allow the Minister to answer the question. However, if the member for North Shore asks a similar question in future, I will ask her to rephrase it.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** When 58,000 oocysts per 100 litres were found, the coalition did not issue a health alert. There were 58,000 oocysts in the water and the coalition did nothing but hide the results.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The whole of Sydney is concerned about this issue. The supply of water is important. The honourable member for Lane Cove has urged the Leader of the Opposition to make this issue a major change in political fortune. What did the honourable member for Lane Cove do? In the middle of all this, she went on the Kokoda Trail with Bronwyn Bishop! What was she doing there;

mobile phones would not work up there. We know how Bronnie gets when the phones do not work as the planes are going to land. She was with the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn! The honourable member for North Shore was sunning herself on Hamilton Island when this was going on. This conspiracy lot that want to do over the Leader of the Opposition not only started talking about the leadership challenge but also about the photo. Who will the members of the front bench be? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has gone. He is not here at the moment.

**Mrs Skinner:** On a point of order. My point of order relates to relevance. The Minister is making a mockery of a serious question about health risk to the people of this State. I ask you to demand that he return to the question.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will not be shadow treasurer; it will be the honourable member for Wakehurst. The honourable member for North Shore will not be shadow minister for health; that responsibility will go to a member of the upper House. One would think that a member of the upper House who is a doctor and has been a parliamentary secretary would be the shadow minister for health but he will not.

**Mrs Skinner:** On a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I anticipate the member's point of order, which I do not uphold. However, I ask the Minister to direct his answer to the substance of the question.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** It will not be the Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti who takes up the shadow health minister's responsibilities; it will be the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn.

**Mr Photios:** On a point of order. You asked the Minister to direct his answer to the substance of the question. I ask you to enforce your direction. As one who supports you, your office and your station in life, and as one who has often had to suffer because of your rulings, I ask you to direct the Minister to do as he is told.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Minister for Transport wants to know who will be his shadow; it will be the honourable member for Gosford! A protocol for health alerts was determined by an expert panel established by the Health Department. That protocol was examined by international experts, who happened to be in Sydney a week ago. It was

examined also by water experts from the National Health and Medical Research Council. Each one ticked it and said that the protocol was acceptable. No suggestions for changes were made, although in an urgent meeting we asked the NHMRC to consider water guidelines. We have followed the protocol each time. That involved the international expert panel and was ticked off by international experts and water experts in the NHMRC. We have done what we should have done, which is to tell the truth. The coalition did not. The coalition did not tell the public when 58,000 oocysts were in the water.

**Mrs SKINNER:** I ask a supplementary question. Given that the director-general informed me only last week that there were 12,000 oocysts of cryptosporidium in the water, and that only months before this scare the Minister told this House that monitoring was inappropriate, how does the Minister justify his answer?

**Mr Clough:** On a point of order. A supplementary question must refer to the answer.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I ask the honourable member for North Shore to repeat the question without the preliminary comments.

**Mrs SKINNER:** Given that the director-general told me last week that there were 12,000 oocysts of cryptosporidium in the water and that the Minister told the House that monitoring was inappropriate, how can the Minister justify his answer?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Although the question is in order, it has been drawn to my attention that under the standing orders only one supplementary question may be asked.

## HEAVY VEHICLE MASS LIMITS

**Mr ANDERSON:** What is the response of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads to the Commonwealth Government's failure to properly address rural concerns about the increase in load limits on heavy vehicles?

**Mr SCULLY:** I am pleased to report progress to the House: Chikarovski 14, Collins 14. Are the undecided for him or for her? I want to know why the honourable member for Ermington is upset with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Ron Phillips. He is all right; why is he being duded?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Chair has extended a degree of leniency to Ministers during

question time. I ask the Minister to answer the question he was asked.

**Mr SCULLY:** I thank the honourable member for his question about heavy vehicle mass limits. I had hoped that National Party members particularly would join the Government on this matter and share the concern. The Commonwealth proposes that the standard semitrailer should have its mass limit increased from 42½ tonnes to 45½ tonnes. For National Party members who are discovering their electorates, like the honourable member for Lachlan, who has just discovered the location of Lachlan, there are 12,000 bridges in New South Wales of which about 8,000 are in local government areas. New South Wales handles about 80 per cent of interstate truck movements.

**Mr Fraser:** That is historical. Tell us about the latest developments.

**Mr SCULLY:** The honourable member should be concerned, because if this mass limit comes into effect \$760 million will have to be invested in about 2,000 bridges across New South Wales to carry the extra weight of those trucks with a mass limit of 45.5 tonnes. Of that \$760 million, about \$470 million will be used to replace 1,037 bridges and to strengthen another 680, and \$290 million will be spent on State and national highway bridges. The State Government simply does not have those funds.

The Federal Government irresponsibly announced that it will unilaterally introduce heavy vehicle mass limits from 1 January, without giving details of any compensation package for State or local government. The Commonwealth does not have the capacity to monitor or enforce the necessary bridge upgrades. It does not have the capacity to monitor or enforce the conditions that operators must meet to get approval to carry higher mass limits.

I will not read those conditions for the benefit of the National Party, but I have received letters from more than 30 councils in country New South Wales supporting the position of the New South Wales Government—that is, to put firmly to the Federal Government that it has no problem with the mass limits in principle but that it expects the Federal Government to put money into bridges in rural areas. If these mass limits increase, \$760 million worth of damage will occur. Most of the benefit will go to industry and to the Federal Government through increased tax revenue. I ask the National Party to join with me and its councils in putting pressure on the Commonwealth Government to come good.

**Mr Souris:** We will march together arm in arm, hand in hand.

**Mr SCULLY:** The Deputy Leader of the National Party should know; he appreciated Belltrees Bridge. The honourable member has done all right out of this Government. Some other examples are Railway Parade bridge in Casino, Barrington River bridge in Gloucester, Kiamma Creek bridge at Crookwell, Martins bridge in Murray, and Goan bridge at Dubbo. All those bridges will need to be replaced to cope with the increased mass limits. Will members of the National Party whose electorates cover those bridges join with the Government in putting pressure on the Federal Government to provide the necessary funds so that we can agree to the mass limits?

The Federal Government's decision has massive implications for regional New South Wales: \$165 million in northern New South Wales; \$143 million in the Hunter; \$32 million in southern New South Wales; and \$58 million in western Sydney. I hope the National Party does what it should do: represent its constituencies properly, realise that this proposal will result in significant damage to bridges in rural New South Wales and, for once, join with this Government in putting pressure on the Federal Government to obtain appropriate funding for regional roads in New South Wales.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

## NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT

### Motion of No Confidence

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr HAZZARD** (Wakehurst) [3.15 p.m.]: This extremely important motion makes it very clear that the New South Wales Government is despicable, that it lies, and that for some months it has been in the business of covering up rather than providing clean water. At the moment Sydney Water is in crisis and the Carr Government is obviously in crisis but, worse still, Sydney is in crisis. There is no longer any confidence in Sydney's water.

**Mr E. T. Page:** Why does that not show up in the polls?

**Mr HAZZARD:** That comment shows that all the Carr Government cares about is the polls. The Carr Government is a poll-driven, deceptive, despicable government.

**Mr E. T. Page:** Where is the evidence?

**Mr HAZZARD:** The Minister for Local Government has not even read the report from Mr McClellan, QC. The evidence is clear. The Minister for Local Government is lucky he is not in the position of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. He should keep quiet and pretend he is not here. He is also lucky he is not in the Premier's position. Both those Ministers are quite concerned. They are not concerned about Sydney Water or the people of Sydney; they are concerned about the polls. At the moment they are obviously quite happy. Their polls must show that nobody is worried about the water.

The reality is that in the community even little children are concerned about the water. When local schoolchildren cannot drink from bubblers, when they are dragged off to the principal's office to have it explained to them why they can no longer drink the water in this city, we have a crisis. The Minister and his trivial mates on the Labor Party benches, who are interested only in polls, are the cause of the problem. Until they focus on trying to get Sydney's water clean rather than playing the blame game, Sydney will not have clean water. Unfortunately the Minister may not have read the article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 August which stated, "End of an era for safe water". Perhaps he was busy looking at the polls.

**Mr E. T. Page:** The honourable member cannot even read it, and it is in large print.

**Mr HAZZARD:** The level of that interjection is a real worry. I read somewhere that the Minister has a degree, but I do not know where it was handed out.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will address his remarks through the Chair and not indulge in conversation across the table with the Minister. I ask the honourable member to return to the substance of the motion.

**Mr HAZZARD:** Many decisions from the Chair have indicated that the honourable member speaking can respond to interjections. The Minister is making inane interjections that reflect his intellectual capacity, but he needs to get his mind around the fact that we no longer have safe, reliable water. That is a huge problem.

**Mr E. T. Page:** That was your third try; it was an improvement.

**Mr HAZZARD:** I do not know whether to express frustration with the Minister or to say that in

only another 198 days we will not have to worry about him or others of his ilk. He is practising walking out of the Chamber. He will do that again in 198 days—permanently, I hope. Sydney Water is in crisis and honourable members should consider how that has come about, where we are today and what is going to happen. What is the Carr Government doing about the problem? What has it done from the moment its scientific testing showed unacceptable levels of giardia and cryptosporidium? For some hours it did not do anything. Apparently members sat in their offices trying to work out a strategy to deceive the people of Sydney and hope that the problem would disappear. Unfortunately they did not achieve anything other than to expose people to a health risk.

The Government got round to doing something on 29 July. It immediately moved into defence mode. The Minister for Local Government said that what drives the Labor Party right wing makes the Bob Carrs, the Paul Keatings, the Graham Richardsons, the group of the whatever-it-takes mentality. The Government got one of its mates, David Hill, whom it had appointed to Sydney Water, to issue a press release that underlines just how despicable the Government's reaction has been. The press release finally received a public airing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 3 September. It is unbelievable that a man who had been appointed as Chairman of Sydney Water—the major public utility in that it provides one of the most needed commodities for life, water—was prepared to effectively fix a press release.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 3 September details changes made to a draft press release. The draft press release was headed "URGENT PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT". One would think that to be an entirely reasonable heading. If the Government were interested in transparency, if it were in a partnership with the public and if it were keen to make sure that the public was protected from the dangers resulting from an increase in the levels of cryptosporidium and giardia, the word "urgent" would have remained in the press release title. However, that word was deleted. The little pen restructuring job—line out, line out, line out—was done by none other than Federal candidate David Hill. At that time Mr Hill occupied the paid position of Chairman of Sydney Water and was also Chairman of Soccer Australia—and it would appear that he was not doing a particularly good job for soccer either.

David Hill, Federal candidate, was more interested in ensuring that there was no reflection upon the Labor Party by what had become a public disaster. He took out his pen—probably the same



pen used by Graham Richardson to write his book *Whatever it Takes*—and followed the philosophy that whatever it takes is okay. He chose to delete the word "urgent". The heading now read, "PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT", indicating a fairly mild-mannered announcement. David Hill had not finished with his whatever-it-takes pen. Before he altered the draft press release the first paragraph read:

Extensive testing by Sydney Water Corporation has identified the presence of the microorganisms Giardia and Cryptosporidium in parts of Sydney's water supply.

Mr Hill, Federal Labor Party candidate, right-wing mate, the Premier's mate, made a few alterations. First, he chopped the "s" off the word "microorganisms", so that the press release referred to a singular micro-organism, the less dangerous of the two organisms. He then deleted the words "and Cryptosporidium". Anyone reading the amended introductory paragraph of the press release would have decided that the issue was not so serious, because it read:

Extensive testing by Sydney Water Corporation has identified the presence of the microorganism Giardia in parts of Sydney's water supply.

The issue was downgraded probably from a concern of scale 10 to one of scale 1—something that might slip by in the outfield, a mate's way of approaching management of a crisis. Mr Hill could not stop there. The second paragraph as drafted read:

A batch of water containing these organisms in the Eastern Sydney CBD was identified late last week.

The press release was amended to refer to a singular organism. Mr Hill then moved on to the third paragraph. The old mate's right-wing pen was again put to use. The third paragraph as drafted read:

A second batch has now been identified which could affect a much wider area.

In other words, people outside the eastern Sydney central business district were being put on alert to be careful because the problem could extend to a much wider area. David Hill, Federal candidate, a man of the people, a man who wants to be elected by the people—and if he is elected then he should never be trusted because after this little effort he cannot be trusted—took out his right-wing Graham Richardson pen and deleted the words, "which could affect a much wider area." On the morning the press release was issued people living in the eastern suburbs would have realised there was a problem, but those living in areas such as Cabramatta, Parramatta, Fairfield, the northern suburbs and Kogarah were the

subject of a deliberate attempt at deception. An attempt was made to deceive those who lived in a vast part of Sydney, areas of marginal seats, at a time not distant from either the Federal election or the State election.

Alteration of the draft press release was a gross abuse of power. It was an attempt to make sure that residents in areas such as Parramatta, Penrith and the Blue Mountains were completely deceived. People living in Kogarah and areas in Sydney's south-west knew absolutely nothing about the dangers facing them. The same attitude extended to the northern suburbs area, in which my electorate is located. On the morning of the press release I remember hearing on the radio that the eastern suburbs drinking water supply was contaminated by traces of giardia. I recall Alan Jones interviewing Chris Pollett. At that stage Alan Jones already had a fair grip on the issue and I remember him asking, "What are these bureaucrats, the idiots, actually doing?" He did not then know that the action was coming right from the top, that this was a David Hill exercise and that one of the Labor Party mates was effectively doing a knee-capping job on the public.

David Hill is a great mate of Graham Richardson, of Paul Keating—and we know about Paul Keating's attitude to the people and to the Parliament—and of the Premier of New South Wales. I challenge the Premier to tell the House about the conversations he has had with David Hill. In this public forum, in this first and oldest of the Australian parliaments, we want to know what part the Premier had to play in the actions that have taken place in Sydney Water from the word go. Was the Premier up to his eyeballs, along with David Hill? Has he been involved since the beginning? Did he really want this information to go out to the public, or was he dragged to the party kicking and screaming?

Honourable members should think of some of the promises made by the Carr administration that have been broken under the direct auspices of the Premier. We were promised that hospital waiting lists would be halved within 12 months. Thank heavens the Premier has not told us that the level of cryptosporidium will be halved within 12 months; now he is just saying that he does not know, although initially we were to have a nil reading within a week or so. What about the tollway promise? Premier Carr has delivered a series of broken promises, deceptions and lies. Regrettably, he is a man branded in this Parliament as someone who does not tell the truth. I am interested to know what part the Premier played in this issue. If he had conversations with David Hill about the press

release then there is no rock under which he can hide, there is no place safe for him, and he should not be in this place until 27 March 1999—which will be his last day as Premier—but should go from here very soon.

If the Premier had some part in the David Hill press release revamp—the Graham Richardson deletion of urgency, warnings of cryptosporidium existence and the area potentially affected by the parasites—then his days are numbered. I know that the Premier will be listening to this debate and I issue a challenge to him to come into the Chamber and say to the people of New South Wales, "I had no part in any of the revamping of what was said by David Hill, Sydney Water or the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning." Thus far the Premier has not issued such a clear statement, yet we are now two months into the crisis. Until the Premier makes such a statement, the people of New South Wales can safely assume that there is a good chance that the Premier may well have known much more than he should have known about what was going on with a cover-up.

What did the Ministers know about the water problem? Since the outbreak the Government has provided no constructive direction about how the problem will be addressed. The Government, with the benefit of hindsight, but lacking any reasonable person's foresight, offered the stupid solution that for one week, then for two weeks, or at least until advice is received that the problem is fixed, water should be boiled. David Hill, the Premier, and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning give Sydneysiders a sense that New South Wales is being governed by the three stooges. I do not know which would be Mo, Larry or Curly. I suppose the Premier would be Curly because he likes to twist curly issues around the people of New South Wales and not tell them what is really going on. The three stooges have put Sydney in a despicable position. Little children, people who are ill and people with immune deficiencies are exposed to real danger.

**Mr Debnam:** The frail aged.

**Mr HAZZARD:** The honourable member for Vacluse says the frail aged.

**Mr Debnam:** Does Bob Carr care? No.

**Mr HAZZARD:** Bob Carr does not seem to care.

**Mr Debnam:** He does not care about anybody.

**Mr HAZZARD:** As the Minister for Local Government, who was in the chair a few minutes ago, said, the Government cares about the polls.

**Ms Seaton:** Have you ever tried to stop a two-year-old from drinking bathwater?

**Mr HAZZARD:** The honourable member for Southern Highlands asked whether I have ever tried to stop a two-year-old from drinking bathwater.

**Mr Face:** On a point of order. This is a wide ranging debate. The honourable member is trifling with the House. I am loath to take points of order but he has erred in relation to four matters in this debate.

**Mr HAZZARD:** What is the point of order?

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is explaining his point of order.

**Mr HAZZARD:** He had better get to it.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I will make that decision.

**Mr HAZZARD:** If that is the way the House is going to be run—

**Mr Face:** He has alleged that the law has been broken.

**Mr HAZZARD:** That is part of the debate. If you want to take part in the debate—

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear the Minister explaining his point of order while the member is interjecting.

**Mr Face:** The honourable member has already erred on several occasions in relation to what should be a substantive motion. He has already widened the debate by referring to certain people. There is a longstanding tradition in regard to those who have no voice in this Parliament. The honourable member is perilously close to earning the censure of the House.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The debate may continue. However, I ask the member for Wakehurst to return to the substance of the debate. I agree with the Minister that it is dangerous to reflect on those who are not members of this House. In future the member for Wakehurst should avoid doing so.

**Mr HAZZARD:** Mr Deputy-Speaker, you and the Minister have to get a bit serious.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wakehurst will not reflect on the Chair.

**Mr HAZZARD:** Last night the Minister for the Environment went hammer and tongs against Bob Wilson. Do not tell me that I cannot reflect on people who are relevant to this debate. Before the Minister for Gaming and Racing interrupted I was trying to talk about the frail and elderly and people with immune deficiencies.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! If the member for Wakehurst continues in that vein I will direct him to resume his seat. I have ruled that he should not reflect on the Chair. I was not the occupant of the chair when the issue to which he has referred was raised. I ask him to return to the substance of the debate.

**Mr HAZZARD:** I remind the honourable Minister that this is a wide ranging debate, the terms of which have been largely extended by the Government. If the Minister had been in the Chamber and had listened to what happened late night, he would know that.

**Mr Face:** I ask that you bring him back to the debate.

**Mr HAZZARD:** This motion of no confidence in the Government is about as serious as it gets. The Minister has to listen to all the evidence that is presented in substantiation of that motion, but he does not want to hear all the evidence.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I again ask the member for Wakehurst to return to the substance of the debate.

**Mr HAZZARD:** Not one of the children in the gallery can drink from the bubblers at school. The Minister cannot tell me that that is not a serious problem. The Minister for Local Government said that this matter is only about polls. At every school throughout Sydney either the bubblers are turned off or plastic bags have been put over them. Each time a child wants to have a drink he or she cannot because of dangerous water laden with cryptosporidium, giardia and other bugs. The Government has done nothing for two months except to play the blame game—blame the coalition and everybody. It has not fixed the problem.

**Mrs Beamer:** You would not even tell the 58,600 reading.

**Mr HAZZARD:** I cannot believe that the honourable member for Badgery's Creek who has six children, can attack me in this Chamber.

**Mrs Beamer:** You did not tell us years ago when the whole problem came to a head.

**Mr HAZZARD:** The honourable member for Badgery's Creek is a mother and a member of the right wing—another right-wing-mate out of the Graham Richardson mould, from the Paul Keating and Premier faction. I do not think the honourable member for Badgery's Creek is mentioned in the book—she is not that bad—although quite a few other honourable members are mentioned.

The right-wing faction, the Carr Labor Government, the Paul Keating clones, the Graham Richardson duplicates, triplicates and quadruplicates all use deception and lies to make sure they get through any problem. Today nobody in the Government wants to address what needs to be done to clean up Sydney's water. I have talked about the press releases and the moving-words-around game indulged in by David Hill. I hope that at midnight on polling day, 3 October, David Hill will know he is no longer even a Federal Labor candidate.

Mr Hill should not be the candidate for the Federal seat in which he is standing because he has been despicable in that he has lied to the people of New South Wales. Unfortunately, the Government, quite apart from fiddling the books and dudding the community, has condoned his behaviour. There can be only one explanation for the Government deliberately cooking the books. David Hill started the process and the Premier has continued it. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has issued instructions for his boys to go to Sydney Water and find something in the books about the coalition five or six years ago to take the focus away from the Government's problem which it cannot sort out?

The Government has a lot to hide. The Government has done nothing to fix today's problem. Today no-one will drink the water, children cannot drink from bubblers, and people in hospitals are being given bottles of water; that did not happen five or six years ago. The community of New South Wales expects action. Every time the Minister sends his bureaucrats to look through the files, or his backbenchers to create havoc in the Parliament by pretending that it is not today's problem but a problem from five years ago, he is really saying that the Government does not know what to do and should move into full blame-game mode, not worry about sorting out the problem but just blame the other side.

Even little kids are saying, "This is a joke, this is dumb." About a week and a half ago we were told for the third time that we could not drink the water. I said to my 10-year-old son, "Andrew, don't drink the water." When he asked, "Why, Dad?" I answered, "Because, unfortunately, the Government has not been able to fix the problem." He said, "That's dumb", and I replied, "Yes, that is certainly true, Andrew, it is." The problem is that even little kids know that this is dumb but the Labor Government does not seem to realise that; it is simply playing the blame game. The Government has to adopt some of the measures put up by the Opposition in its 10-point plan.

The Leader of the Opposition has made those points clear and I do not propose to go over them, except to say that some of them are natural progressions from what the former Government had commenced before it was forced out of government in 1995. At that time, although 52 per cent of the people still wanted the coalition to govern, the other 48 per cent managed to get the Labor party into government. Next time round, compliments of special arrangements by the Government reducing the number of electorates from 99 to 92, with a bit of luck the election will be more equitable and the coalition will return to government. The kindergarten Ministers of the Labor Party, who are more interested in moving pieces around a chess board, or a blame-game board, will be out. They will be protecting their right-wing mates and will have four years to think about how they can work new strategies to protect their mates.

In the rush to blame the Opposition it has been forgotten that there were 12 long years of Labor government from 1976 to 1988. Regrettably almost nothing was done in that time to fix and maintain the quality of water for the burgeoning city. When the coalition came to government in 1988 it started programs designed to address clean water needs. I remind the Premier and the Labor Party that the former coalition Government moved towards the concept of catchment management. Do honourable members recall that catchment management committees were set up around New South Wales to try to get people at grassroots level involved in achieving clean water? That meant local industries, schools, businesses and individuals had to be educated about how to make sure that the water supply was not accepting pollutants and contaminants, and that those various bodies and persons were not contributing to the input of contaminants. The coalition sought to do that.

That most effective program continues today, but, unfortunately, under this Government it has not

been given the necessary resources or support. The upgrading of mains and the implementation of four water treatment plants were initiatives of this Government. Those water treatment plants worked well until the pressures imposed on them in the past few months. They now need further work. The Government cannot hide from the fact that the coalition implemented those measures. The Government has an obligation to provide water that is suitable for drinking, what the lawyers call merchantable quality.

What a joke the \$15 rebate is! If a person bought a jumper that was not of merchantable quality, he could return it and get his money back. The Premier and the Minister should ensure that no-one will lose what they have spent on water during the past two months. The Government should pay for the bottled water that people have had to buy, for the inconvenience, and for the electricity and gas needed to boil water. Hopefully the Government will come up with a solution to this problem. If not, it should look at the coalition's 10-point plan to help it on its way.

**Mr DEBNAM** (Vaucluse) [3.45 p.m.]: I support this motion, as does the community. It is interesting to note that at quarter to four in the afternoon the public gallery is full. That usually occurs only during question time, and reflects community concern about Sydney's water problems. This issue could lead to the downfall of the Carr Government next week if members of the Labor Party decide that they have had enough and cross the floor to vote with the Opposition on this motion. The motion is all about the Government's accountability and about the people of Sydney not being able to drink the water. What the people in the public gallery are seeing and what we saw last night and what we will see tonight is all about bringing the Government to account.

This Government has run roughshod over New South Wales for 3½ years and because it has gone too far the community wants it brought to account. Most members of the community would agree that the Carr Government is good at theatrics but is pathetic on management and policy. In March 1995 the Government did not even expect to win the election, and therefore did not plan to win. As a result, for 3½ years it has been stumbling, and will continue to stumble until 27 March 1999. This issue arose because of another stumble by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning in October 1996. The community wants four questions answered in relation to the motion of no confidence in the Government. First, for the past 3½ years did the Government know about the parasites? Second, did

the Government have power to take any action on Sydney's water? Third, did the Government take any action? Fourth, does the New South Wales community have any confidence in the Carr Government?

We all know that the answer to the last question is that it has no confidence in the Carr Government whatsoever. On the question of whether the Government knew about the parasites for 3½ years, speaker after speaker in this debate has confirmed that the Carr Government knew all about those parasites but did nothing about them. On the question of whether the Carr Government had any power to take action in the past 3½ years in relation to Sydney Water's practices, assets and investments, yes, it did, and I will outline the reasons it had that power. The answer to the question whether the Carr Government took any action is that it did not, as we have heard from both Government and Opposition speakers.

Does the New South Wales community have confidence in the Carr Government? The answer to that question is none at all, certainly no confidence in the Carr Government or in its Labor mates. On the question of why the Government did not take action, to some extent the Minister gave an answer to that yesterday when he indicated that he was not going to take what he called knee-jerk or expensive action. I have provided a small insight into what the Labor Government has done for 3½ years. This is the first Government that has blown its budget every single year that it has been in office. It has done that for three years and will do so in its fourth year.

Unfortunately, the figures for the Government's fourth budget will not be available until after it leaves office. The Government has had budget blues throughout its 3½ years in office, and it has simply blown its budget. The mismanagement of Sydney Water is all about debt and dividends in government trading enterprises. It is not about water quality or services and the quality of those services. It has not been about those matters for 3½ years. The priorities of the Labor Party will become apparent when I refer to a speech made by the Premier in mid-1995. As Opposition members have said, the Treasurer has been working with Ministers on the Government front bench to extract more money for their mad spending sprees not on water quality but on various other things.

For 3½ years the Government's only action in relation to water has been to provide jobs for the boys, as the House has heard from a number of speakers. Indeed, the Minister for Gaming and

Racing got very upset when one of his mates was mentioned. For 3½ years the Carr Government has been about jobs for Labor mates and jobs for the right wing. I might add that very few jobs have been provided for the left wing of the Labor Party, which caused it to produce a document entitled *Abuse of Power* in 1995 or 1996. That is no surprise to the Opposition as traditionally Labor governments have been about Labor interests and abuse.

The people currently in the public gallery who were lucky enough to watch the performance of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning last night and, indeed, during question time today would know that there is no substance whatever in the response from the Government front bench to the water crisis. All we have heard is personal abuse. I turn now to the question of whether the Government knew about the parasites. On 22 October 1996, in answer to a Dorothy Dixier, a pre-arranged question, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, who has been responsible for Sydney Water for the past 3½ years, said:

To make it clear, I said I was aware of reports on the front page and on page 6 of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. As I said earlier it must have been a very slow news day. Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

The Minister made that speech in October 1996. Two years ago the Minister responsible for Sydney Water said that anyone who raised the issue of cryptosporidium in Sydney's water supply was simply scaremongering. Indeed, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning was a member of the parliamentary committee that reviewed Sydney Water in the early 1990s. He has been involved with the issue for about six years. For 3½ years he has been the Minister responsible for Sydney Water but in the past 24 hours he has had the hide to stand up and accept no responsibility. However, he has sacked a couple of his mates whom he appointed to the board of Sydney Water. The House should remember that the Labor Party is not about management but about jobs for Labor mates. On 22 October 1996 the Minister further said:

However, let us be clear about this. Since 1992, when the first tests were conducted, no further unacceptably high levels have been found.

Anyone who has followed the debate over the past 24 hours will find that statement interesting when compared to what the Premier said in the House yesterday.

**Mr O'Farrell:** He lied.

**Mr DEBNAM:** He lied. I remember a poster that was circulated in Sydney and, indeed, in New South Wales about a year ago which displayed the words "Liar, liar".

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I prefer the honourable member not to use that word.

**Mr DEBNAM:** The Premier is totally untrustworthy. I reiterate that in October 1996 the Minister responsible for Sydney Water said:

Let us be clear about this. Since 1992, when the first tests were conducted, no further unacceptably high levels have been found.

However, the Premier contradicted that statement in the past few hours with a story. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning further said:

Our water supply is getting better. Four water filtration plants, representing an investment of \$3.5 billion, are now coming on line. I can report to the House that those water filtration plants are currently going through their commissioning phase. The good news is that all the plants are either meeting their performance standards or they are performing in excess of design criteria, which will effectively remove cryptosporidium.

Two years ago the Minister accepted total ownership of the water problem. He further said:

This matter received the attention of the present Government when it was in opposition and it received the attention of the previous Government . . . As I said earlier, the cryptosporidium story usually does the rounds at least twice a year.

Although the Minister knew about the problem two years ago he did nothing. He concluded by saying:

I assure honourable members that residents of Sydney can be confident they are drinking water of the best quality provided anywhere in the world.

People who have doubts that the Minister has known about the matter for six years should read *Hansard* of 22 October 1996. If they want further night reading I suggest they read the report of the select committee that inquired into Sydney Water in the early 1990s, which shows the Minister's involvement in the matter. The Minister knew about the problem and he knew what action he could take to correct it. However, he failed to take any action. At about the same time, October 1996, the Water Board issued its annual report. For the information of the people in the gallery who may not be familiar with the process, the annual report is sent to the Minister, who frequently makes public comments on it.

The 1996 Sydney Water annual report identified cryptosporidium as an emerging issue. The

Minister already knew that cryptosporidium was an emerging issue because he had been involved in the matter for a number of years. However, in October 1996 he decided that it was simply scaremongering to do anything about the emerging issue. In July 1996 the shadow minister for health, understandably alarmed at the Government's attitude to these parasites, asked the Minister for Health whether testing should be undertaken. The Minister scoffed and said that routine monitoring for cryptosporidium was simply not appropriate. Two years ago senior Ministers in the Carr Government scoffed at the suggestion that action should be taken in relation to these parasites. I shall refer later to the Minister's arrogance for the people of Sydney.

I turn now to whether the Carr Government had the power to take action on the water issue. That raises the issue of the corporatisation of Sydney Water. It is unfortunate for the people of New South Wales that when the Carr Government was sworn into office I had been a member of Parliament for only 11 months. One of the first debates to which I made a contribution in 1995 was the debate on the State Owned Corporations (Amendment) Bill. Those who have listened to the Minister and the Premier lie about their involvement in this matter and to their talk about the corporatisation of Sydney Water and what they will do to fix the problem and bring Sydney Water to heel should consider what the Premier said on 23 May 1995, more than three years ago, during his second reading speech on the State Owned Corporations (Amendment) Bill. The Premier, who had been in office less than two months and who was already out of date, said:

The bill will ensure that this Government is accountable for the operations of a statutory State owned corporation.

**Mr O'Farrell:** Can you repeat that?

**Mr DEBNAM:** On 23 May 1995, more than three years ago, the Premier told the New South Wales Parliament that the State Owned Corporations (Amendment) Bill will ensure that the Government is accountable for the operations of a statutory State-owned corporation. Some people may question whether the Premier understood that Sydney Water is a State-owned corporation. As he spends most of his spare time in Europe I understand that he probably did not know what the legislation was all about. I had my doubts, when I read the Premier's speech, whether he knew what the issue was all about. I turned to the speech—which, understandably, is very short because he has no understanding of policy and no interest in the economics or reform of New South Wales—to find

that, after brief comment on the accountability of the Government, the Premier went on to say:

... the two existing State-owned corporations—namely, the Hunter Water Corporation and the Sydney Water Corporation—will be maintained.

So, in that same speech, he named Sydney Water. On page 1 he said:

The bill will ensure that this Government is accountable for the operations of a statutory State-owned corporation.

From the previous comment, one can therefore read into the latter "the operations of Sydney Water".

**Mr O'Farrell:** If he were a director, he would have to resign.

**Mr DEBNAM:** If he were a director, he definitely would have to resign, and he would probably speak to the Federal authorities. The last paragraph of the Premier's speech says:

At the same time, I believe that the public also expects that these bodies should be obliged to display a sense of social responsibility in the conduct of their commercial activities, and should be accountable for their actions. The Government is committed to ensuring that these public expectations are fulfilled.

The Premier sacked his mates at Sydney Water, but he absolutely refuses to sack his other little mate, Minister Knowles. In fact, on his own words, the Premier should resign. Clearly, he is accountable on this issue. He has been involved in it up to his eyeballs since David Hill messed up the first few hours of management of the crisis. The Premier dived into the water and has been involved in the management of this issue from day one. He has been involved right through the three outbreaks, and undoubtedly will be through the next three outbreaks of cryptosporidium. I remind those in the public gallery that for the past 24 hours the Premier has been claiming that he is not accountable for the operations of Sydney Water and that in fact he will fix that by taking action to bring the water authorities under his control.

Sydney Water has been under the fingertip control of the Premier since May 1995. Despite that, the Premier refuses to accept his responsibilities, mainly because he has no interest in the people of New South Wales. I spoke in the debate on 7 June and drew the attention of the House to the fact that the State Owned Corporations Amendment Bill, which affected Sydney Water, one of the two State-owned corporations at the time, was defining legislation for the Carr Government. I had no idea at that time how prophetic my remarks would be. This

is an absolutely pathetic Government. The third paragraph of my speech contained this statement:

This legislation delivers power to Labor Ministers to interfere at will.

That summed up what that legislation was about. That bill, introduced by the Premier on 23 May 1995, allowed him to interfere at will in State-owned corporations. He has done so for 3½ years. He will continue to do so until he leaves office on 27 March. Those interested in this topic could look at that debate, in which some five members of the Opposition spoke, pointing out what a disaster it would be for the people of New South Wales. I might return to some of those comments later.

Question two was: Did the Carr Government have the power to take action? There is no doubt it did. The legislation is straightforward: Premier Carr can do whatever he likes. Minister Knowles, as responsible Minister, can do whatever he likes with the co-operation of Treasurer Egan. We know that Premier Carr, Treasurer Egan and a few others work very well together to manipulate various businesses in this State. In my speech on 7 June 1995 I warned what was about to happen with the Carr Government's reversion to the bad old days. What we have heard from the Premier in the past few days about decorporatisation of Sydney Water is simply theatrics. The Premier likes to prance around as if on stage, especially in the Parliament. The art of theatrics is all he is really interested in. He has always had the power to act in the interests of the people of New South Wales, but he simply never has.

My third question was: Did the Carr Government take any action? The answer is: none, other than appointing mates to the board of Sydney Water. Why did the Government appoint its mates to the board? Because that helps the Government in whatever its political objectives are. As I said in my speech on 7 June 1995, it is all about political expediency. It is not about good management of businesses or enterprises, and it is not in the interests of the people of New South Wales. It is simply about the interests of Bob Carr's mates. I return to an issue I mentioned only a short while ago. One Minister who delights in stretching the truth—usually making up what he calls the truth—is the Minister for Health. In 1996 the most senior health authority in this State was telling people not to be worried about cryptosporidium, forget it, it was not an issue. He was followed by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, who dismissed the issue in response to a Dorothy Dixier. They did a good job of telling the public it was not an issue.

**Mr Hazzard:** They deceived us.

**Mr DEBNAM:** They did indeed deceive the public. They have much to answer for on this issue. In question four I posed: Does the New South Wales community have confidence in the Carr Government? Hardly! It has no confidence whatsoever. The Opposition, which watches the Government day to day, is very concerned about what the Carr Government is doing to New South Wales, the people of New South Wales, the interests of the people of this State, and the view that overseas persons must be taking about New South Wales. This issue is news around the world. It is of concern to our tourism industry as well as to the residents of Sydney. The honourable member for Wakehurst addressed the issue of the frail aged, those with immune deficiency, those with illnesses, and our children.

**Mr Hazzard:** The Minister did not give a damn. He tried to shut me up.

**Mr DEBNAM:** The Minister did not give a damn. In fact, he tried to shut down the debate. The only time that the Minister became concerned and agitated was when he spoke on behalf of his Labor mates.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order.

**Mr Face:** If the honourable member for Wakehurst would take his tablets, we would not have as much trouble in this Parliament.

**Mr DEBNAM:** If you had given tablets to David Hill, we would not have so much trouble in this Parliament. If the people of New South Wales are asked what they think of the Carr Government—

**Mr O'Farrell:** There is a resounding answer.

**Mr DEBNAM:** Yes. If the people of New South Wales are asked about their thoughts on State politics at the moment, few would have any comment to make beyond the fact that they cannot stand Bob Carr, they do not trust Bob Carr, and they do not want Bob Carr. At the moment they want to talk about Federal issues. The reality is that people have not trusted Bob Carr since he became Opposition leader in 1988. The people of New South Wales have had more than four years of the Premier. They have had Bob Carr as Opposition leader for seven years and they have had him as Premier for 3½ years, and he has 200 days to go. By 27 March next year the people of New South

Wales will have had Bob Carr in damaging mode for 11 years of hard Labor.

**Mr Smith:** Three lifetimes.

**Mr DEBNAM:** It does seem like three lifetimes. This issue of water quality and the involvement in it of Bob Carr and Craig Knowles goes back years. Craig Knowles was involved with the review of Sydney Water in the early 1990s. I have no idea when Bob Carr became involved in the issue of Sydney's water quality. No doubt it was in the early 1990s when he was Leader of the Opposition, but in relation to the control of Sydney Water Bob Carr's involvement—

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! I remind the honourable member for Vaucluse that he should refer to both Government and Opposition members by their correct titles.

**Mr Hazzard:** The honourable despicable Premier.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the second time. If he makes any further remarks of that nature I will direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him from the Chamber.

**Mr DEBNAM:** In 1995 the Premier, Bob Carr, had his fingers right on this issue. I refer to my speech of 7 June 1995, when I said:

This legislation delivers power to Labor Ministers to interfere at will

... This bill will prove to be one of the defining pieces of legislation for this new Government—

being the Carr Government—

It sets the tone of this new Government and, if passed, will be a source of great concern to the people of New South Wales.

At that time the House was debating the Premier's control of State-owned corporations, specifically Sydney Water. I repeat my remarks of 7 June:

[This new legislation] sets the tone of this new Government and, if passed, will be a source of great concern to the people of New South Wales.

Everyone now understands that the legislation, combined with the absolute incompetence of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, is a source of great concern to the people of New South Wales. The Minister should have resigned months ago, and we have now clearly reached the point where the



Premier should resign. On 7 June 1995 I spoke about how political interference by previous Labor governments had disadvantaged the people of New South Wales and would do so again once the legislation took effect. At the time of the Premier's interference with State-owned corporations several financial commentators pointed out that corporatisation is all about getting it right without political interference. They drew the distinction between accountability and political interference. Does the New South Wales community have confidence in the Carr Government regarding the Sydney Water issue?

**Mr O'Farrell:** No.

**Mr DEBNAM:** Not at all. The rural community has no confidence in the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs and Sydney has no confidence in the Premier. The Carr Government is unfit, unsafe and untrustworthy. I support this no confidence motion, which is also supported by the community.

**Mr O'FARRELL** (Northcott) [4.15 p.m.]: The people in the public gallery might be surprised to learn that in relation to such an important issue as the safety of Sydney's water supply the Government is not following the usual procedure in this House of putting up a speaker to defend its case. That is not surprising because the Government does not have a leg to stand on. The case is indefensible. Every member in the gallery knows, as indeed every member in the House knows, that no-one can drink Sydney water. Under a coalition Government 3½ years ago people would not think twice about having a drink of water. Today in homes around Sydney parents like the honourable member for Port Jackson and I must ensure that our children take extreme care when using water for everyday tasks. The hardest thing with a 4½-year-old is to stop him drinking water when he gets in the bath.

The water problem is serious, yet the Labor Party refuses to defend its position and to explain its case to the electors of New South Wales, not only those of Sydney. It is disgraceful that members opposite do not take a serious interest in this issue. Instead they take an out-of-touch approach. Labor does not understand that families in the community are outraged, upset and angry about the administration of the New South Wales water system. The Labor Party apparently has a tradition of social justice, caring and compassion but members opposite do themselves little credit by not joining in this debate to express the concerns of their constituents. This issue is beyond politics. It is not only Liberal or Labor electorates that are

affected. All Sydney electorates represented in this Parliament are affected. It ill behoves Government members not to join in and to represent their constituents on this issue by making the points we all must make—points that were so eloquently made a few moments ago by the honourable member for Vaucluse and in his speech on 7 June 1995.

**Mr Debnam:** Copies are available in my office.

**Mr O'FARRELL:** Or, for the interest of members in the gallery, the speech is also available on the Internet. I am happy to acknowledge that throughout the water crisis the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has shown application, diligence, dedication and an appropriate degree of management and commitment to accountability. However, the crisis wracking Sydney should never have occurred, because he should have shown that application, diligence, commitment to accountability and demonstration of management skills, during the preceding 3½ years. As the Leader of the Opposition said last night, essentially we had a Minister and a Premier asleep at the wheel. Sydney residents now suffer the consequences of the crash that occurred because of their incompetence and negligence. If they were in charge of a vehicle on the road, they would be charged—

**Mr Debnam:** With criminal negligence.

**Mr O'FARRELL:** —and locked up for precisely the offence named by the honourable member for Vaucluse: criminal negligence. The honourable member for Vaucluse asked what I believe are four pertinent questions. When did the responsible Government Ministers first know there was a crisis? Did they have the power to deal with that crisis? Did they take action? What confidence can the New South Wales community have in those Ministers? Many thousands of words have been uttered since this motion came on for debate, but they are the four critical issues. I have found, as I travel around my electorate and in the community generally, that people have already made a decision about the last matter. The first three issues are critical. As the honourable member for Vaucluse reminded us, responsibility lies at the heart of this crisis, the heart of this issue that is affecting Sydneysiders and the many people who live throughout New South Wales who have family, friends and relatives living in Sydney.

The honourable member for Vaucluse drew our attention to one of the first actions of the Carr Government. That was to amend the State Owned

Corporations Act. For the benefit of the people in the gallery, State-owned corporations are essentially public authorities that are fully owned by the Government that have been restructured and set up along commercial lines to ensure greater efficiency and benefit for the taxpayers and consumers of the State. One of the concerns the Labor Party expressed in the last Parliament was that the corporatisation structure did not provide proper accountability. It did not allow Ministers to put social obligations into effect when they thought they overrode economic imperatives. One of the first actions of the Government was to amend the State Owned Corporations Act to give Ministers greater power to influence corporatised authorities in the State to take what Labor claimed was a better interest in their social obligations.

In relation to the first point of responsibility the Premier on 23 May 1995, within months of coming to office, committed himself to a structure that gave Ministers greater control over entities like Sydney Water. What has the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, been doing with that power for the past two years? Clearly, the answer is nothing. He has the responsibility. The Government changed the legislation to ensure he had the necessary powers and he has done absolutely nothing with them. So, today we find ourselves in the middle of an ongoing water crisis.

Did the Government know? We know, because it has been repeated in almost every contribution from this side of the House—and I have no doubt that if members on the Government side were taking part in this debate they would acknowledge it also—that in the 1996 annual report of the Sydney Water Corporation concern was expressed about cryptosporidium. Sydney Water's annual environmental report that year identified cryptosporidium as "an emerging issue in the field of water supply." Annual reports, as well as being reports to the public at large, are essentially reports to the responsible Minister. Who was the responsible Minister? The responsible Minister was the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. He received a report in 1996 that mentioned something called cryptosporidium being an emerging issue. One might have hoped that the odd alarm bell might have gone off, but not with the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. He was too busy trying to restructure Sydney and trying to get the ticker to take over the leadership some day. Two years ago the Minister received a report and he sat on his hands.

Another question raised by the honourable member for Vacluse was when the Government

knew about the problem and what it did about it. Did it have the power to act? As the honourable member for Vacluse and other honourable members have reminded the House, on 22 October 1996, in response to a question asked by a member on the Government side of the House, the Minister deliberately played down the threat to Sydneysiders from parasites. I am not talking here about the Carr Government; I am talking about parasites in the water supply. The Minister told Parliament that water treatment plants would remove 99 per cent of cryptosporidium. He said:

Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

Before I became a member of this House, I had dealings with Ministers who answered questions during question time. Those sorts of blanket safety statements, whether they related to transport or water, were never made by Ministers unless they were checked at the highest level. So, either the Minister has simply given a glib response or he has deliberately misled Parliament. The former is less likely when one remembers that the question is what is called a Dorothy Dixier, friendly fire from his good friend the honourable member for Liverpool. They are factional foes but close geographic friends in the Labor Party.

The Minister was responding in Parliament on 22 October 1996 to a concern about a cryptosporidium outbreak, and he played it down. Nevertheless, for two days in a row the Premier has said that every time the issue has been raised the Government has been open and has taken decisive action. It does not stack up. The people of Sydney will see through it. They have only to look at the time charts the newspapers are publishing about the unfolding of events to see that members on the Government side of the House talk with forked tongues. They are more interested in politics and the next election than they are in genuinely finding out how to solve the problem that is confronting Sydney.

A fourth point relates to a speech made by the Premier in 1996 when he opened a water filtration plant. He ascended to yet another level of verbosity and hyperbole in his speech at the opening. This speech was given on 30 October 1996, three weeks before the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning downplayed the issue in the House. At the opening the Premier said:

This facility is a triumph of modern engineering and technology and an example of the excellence which helped Sydney to win the 2000 Olympic Games.

The obvious response to that is if the former coalition Government had shown that sort of attention to such a fundamental issue in Sydney, the city would never have won the 2000 Olympic Games. If the coalition Government had gone into the bidding process with this sort of scandal around its neck, in 18 months time everyone would be going to Beijing and not looking forward to the Olympics in Sydney. The Premier went on:

While Sydney's water supply is amongst the best in the world today, we have taken action to guarantee the quality of Sydney's water for future generations.

Regrettably, those future generations were born between 1 October 1996 and August 1998, because from this point on the problem is here and the Government is doing absolutely nothing to address its root cause. The Premier, carried away by hyperbole, erudition and verbosity, went on to say:

The process of filtration has been introduced to replace the settling period and guarantee the quality of water to meet future demand.

Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting.

I do not know what water the Premier drinks—I suspect it is probably Perrier or Evian—but I am sure it is not locally brewed. It would never come from Neverfail, those marvellous bottlers of spring water from the electorate of Northcott. A company, given this crisis, could not have chosen a better name—Neverfail. One can always rely on it. I have relied on Neverfail for water supplies in my electorate office since March 1995 and I look forward to continuing to use Neverfail supplies when my electoral office moves down the road slightly after the next election. Neverfail is a famous name in the Northcott electorate. That is not a title that could ever be applied to Government members. "Everfail" would be an appropriate name for Government members, because whatever they touch turns to dross.

I was interested to discover that one does not need to examine an annual report, read newspaper reports or be an expert on water quality to be concerned about cryptosporidium. A 74-year-old gentleman by the name of Robert Young lives in the Wetherill Park suburb in the electorate of our good friend the honourable member for Fairfield, the man who knows most about unseating sitting members—although I am sure that he is upstairs at the moment giving the honourable member for Hurstville and the honourable member for St Marys a little advice. Mr Young has been calling on the Government to implement an urgent impact study on giardia and cryptosporidium in the Sydney water supplies. In the

past two years Mr Young has written to the Minister for the Environment; the Minister for Health; the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning; the Minister for Transport, the whizz-kid of the Government—the man who, hopefully, by about the year 2010 will have enough experience to be deputy leader—and the Premier to express his concern about giardia and cryptosporidium in water supplies.

**Mr Fraser:** What response has he received?

**Mr O'FARRELL:** On 5 May the Minister for Health responded by saying that monitoring for cryptosporidium and giardia is very costly and that "widespread monitoring is not currently advocated in NSW." A 74-year-old from the heart of Labor territory has been warning all those Ministers of the Carr Government about this issue. What was their response? Was it openness, accountability, or an approach to the media to acknowledge that there is a problem and say that the Government was going to resolve it? Did the Government say, "Hang the cost, we will spend whatever it takes"? No, the Government responded to 74-year-old Mr Young by saying that testing for the organisms is too costly and that widespread monitoring is not currently advocated in this State. What a cop-out, what an example of just how out of touch the Government is.

That story demonstrates yet another reason that Government members do not dare show their faces in this debate. Government members do not dare to contribute to the debate or attempt to defend the indefensible. There have been years of neglect. I do not know what the Cabinet in this State does, but it is clear that it does not attempt to run New South Wales. Redistributions, pre-selections and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association trips—who from the Illawarra will go next?—are obviously the issues that preoccupy Government members, because they simply do not address the real issues.

Today I received a message through my electorate office from a woman whose son last year obtained a degree in bioprocess engineering from the University of New South Wales. That subject covers water testing, water quality and related issues. The young man, who comes from my electorate and is fairly up-front and not afraid to knock on doors, approached Sydney Water for a job. He thought that Sydney Water would be a terrific employer and would be interested in his degree, and he thought it would be a great start for his career. Sydney Water responded by telling him that it was not interested in employing him—it was not interested in water testing or water quality.

My constituent, the young man's mother, asks why it is that Sydney Water has to bring in overseas experts when our home-grown experts who have been trying for work at Sydney Water for years—last year at least, as evidenced by this example—are turned away by an authority that apparently was not concerned. That young man is now working in Melbourne. Many derogatory remarks are made about Melbourne and the Victorian Government but it must be said that the Victorian Government does not take these issues for granted and that it puts consumers, regulation and the benefits for and protection of consumers at the forefront of its corporatisation and privatisation processes.

It is a great pity that in the six weeks that this has been an issue all we have had from the Government is an attempt to play what others have described as the blame game. The Government has blamed the media for beating up the issue and has said that people should not worry. It has attempted to blame Chris Pollett, the chief executive of Sydney Water. It has certainly laid blame at the feet of its one-time friend David Hill. When David Hill was appointed as Chairman of Sydney Water I was reported as calling upon him to resign. I did that for two reasons. First, I deeply resent the fact that the Labor Party has its snout so firmly in the public trough in this State that it dares to fund an election campaign for a Federal candidate through New South Wales taxpayers.

Second, I recognise that whether the person in such a position is a Liberal Party or a Labor Party supporter, if one does not step down once one becomes a political candidate then one opens oneself up for public attack and decisions may then be taken for political reasons rather than in the best interests of New South Wales taxpayers or consumers, given the various bodies involved. The Government has engaged in playing the blame game by attempting to blame the former Government and trying to blame the current Opposition. Under the Westminster system there is no more powerless bunch than an opposition. Nevertheless, Opposition members are today, by our actions, being blamed for this crisis. Everything, including foxes, dogs, the odd horse and bats, is being blamed for this crisis. Everything except flying pigs is being blamed for the crisis.

**Mr Fraser:** What about septic tanks?

**Mr O'FARRELL:** Yes, and septic tanks. Next we will have an oyster crisis. The Sydney community is sick of the blame game that is currently being engaged in by those on the other side of politics. Regrettably, at times that is characteristic of all sides of politics. The community

wants a commitment from us as its representatives, as its putative leaders, that when problems such as this arise we will show leadership, put aside our political differences and do what we can to have the problem fixed. What more fundamental problem can there be than one with the water upon which we all have to rely every day? For the past six weeks the community has wanted a clear commitment from the Government that the problem will be fixed. It has not wanted the political shenanigans that have been engaged in, it has not wanted public servants to be sacked and it has not wanted great political debate on the issue. The community wants guarantees about current and future water supplies in Sydney and it wants a long-term commitment to the management of water assets in this State.

I am pleased that the Minister for Regional Development is present. Opposition members realise that a crisis is about to occur in the Goulburn, Mittagong and Camden areas. I do not wish to tread on territory that may be covered by the honourable member for Southern Highlands, but I point out that Opposition members know that the lack of weight of the Minister for Regional Development at the Cabinet table has meant that necessary funding for projects in regional New South Wales has not materialised and that necessary water and sewerage projects have been deferred. That is precisely the situation that has led to Sydney being in such a mess. God forbid that Goulburn and other major regional and rural centres should suffer the sort of inconvenience, worry and distress that has been visited upon Sydney residents in the past six weeks.

I would be delighted if the Minister for Regional Development were to speak in this debate to defend his Government on this water issue, accept his portfolio responsibilities and respond to the concerns being expressed about regional and rural New South Wales. I would be happy to offer my bipartisan support to this Government if it got serious about solving the problems affecting Sydneysiders. The Leader of the Opposition has presented a plan to solve those problems—a positive, pro-active plan which will be a terrific start to solving the problems that have been visited upon Sydney. It is the sort of plan that should have been presented by the Government six weeks ago. It is the sort of plan that, had it been presented by the Government six weeks ago, would have been fully embraced and totally supported by the Opposition. I am pleased to support this motion.

**Mr J. H. TURNER** (Myall Lakes) [4.40 p.m.]: There can be no greater event in parliamentary life than the moving of a motion of no confidence in a government. Such a motion is not

moved lightly, and has not happened often during the 10 years in which I have been a member of this House. I cannot think of a better reason to move a motion of no confidence in this Government than its failure to produce water that the people of Sydney can safely drink. Australia is not a Third World country but a proud first world country, one which has prided itself on being able to excel in many areas.

A clear message must now be sent around the world that the people of Sydney, visitors to Sydney from country New South Wales, and visitors from interstate and overseas cannot safely drink the water. Overseas travellers are warned about Delhi belly and Bali belly. Regrettably, visitors to Sydney will now be so warned. That message will send shock waves through the tourist and conference industries, which are vital not only to Sydney but, more importantly, to country New South Wales. The Minister for Regional Development probably does not understand that Sydney is a gateway. People stay in Sydney for a few days and visit the harbour, the zoo and Sydney generally, then they travel to wonderful areas such as the Hunter Valley, the central coast, my beautiful electorate of Myall Lakes and the lower north coast.

**Mr Woods:** The far north coast.

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** They travel to other areas such as the far north coast, the west of New South Wales into Monaro, and all parts of New South Wales. That is what they used to do, but now they will not come here. We have already heard that conferences have been cancelled. Conferences are worth enormous amounts of money to New South Wales, not only to Sydney. People who come to Sydney for a three- or four-day conference do not fly halfway around the world only to catch a plane and return home. They visit the areas I have referred to. But if going through the gateway of Sydney means they may become sick they will take that into consideration.

If people with young children have a choice between visiting a country in which no risk is involved in drinking the water or one in which a possible risk exists, they will not take the risk. There is no doubt that this no confidence motion is a significant motion, for binding reasons. The cost to the New South Wales economy will be dramatic, the cost of the confidence of the people of Sydney is dramatic, and the cost right across the spectrum, both in money and in emotions, is significant. That must be taken into account when this matter is voted on.

The Government has shown its arrogance in the way it has treated this no confidence motion. Not one Government member has defended the Government or the Premier in his handling of this matter. That is an indictment of the condemnation that Government members feel towards the Premier, his Cabinet, and in particular the responsible Ministers, for the manner in which they have handled the matter. The Ministers have handled the matter with the arrogance and slackness that honourable members have come to know during the last 3½ years of the Carr Labor Government.

No confidence motions are at the peak of the Westminster system. Next down the line in the Westminster system is the concept of ministerial responsibility. The Minister responsible has thumbed his nose not only at this Parliament, by not being present and not answering questions properly, but also at the people of Sydney. The Minister asked to be made responsible for Sydney Water. Shortly after the coalition lost government in this State he moved the changes to the legislation that put him in charge. He wanted the responsibility then.

Now that he has the responsibility he wants nothing to do with the matter; it is somebody else's problem and somebody else's fault. As the honourable member for Northcott said, the Government is playing the blame game. I believe in the Westminster system, and when the coalition is on the other side of the House, its Ministers will have to be accountable. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has to be accountable for his lack of action in this crisis. His continuing lack of action has cast a pall across Sydney and indeed New South Wales.

Schoolchildren who visited the Parliament from Krambach an hour or so ago were totally puzzled that they can drink water in Krambach, a little village 37 kilometres west of Taree, but they cannot drink water in Sydney. Some years ago, while this Government was in office, I asked my secretary to come to Sydney to do some work for me. She hovered around and looked quite anxious. When I asked her what was wrong she said, "I want a drink of water but my mother said I should not drink the water in Sydney". She may have been prophetic.

Ministerial responsibility is vital to the integrity of any government or parliament. The lack of ministerial responsibility, as shown by this Minister and this Government as a collective, is to be condemned. That is an over-riding reason why a no confidence motion in this Government should be

moved successfully, although the Opposition knows that will not happen. The Labor Party and every Labor member who represents a Sydney electorate will vote as a block to protect the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Planning—the triumvirate—who are responsible for the worst emergency in Sydney that I can remember, at the risk of alienating every person in their electorates.

The honourable member for Port Jackson represents a Sydney seat, as do many honourable members in this House. Surely their responsibility is to constituencies. Whether their constituents voted Labor, Liberal-National or any other party, their prime responsibility under the Westminster system is to their constituencies, followed by a responsibility to the State of New South Wales. Yet Labor members will vote as a block to protect the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Planning, who have been responsible for their constituents having to endure the odium of boiling water, otherwise sterilising water or going out of their way to buy water they can drink. That is letting down the electorate, not just a few people from pressure groups who approach members when decisions have to be made and arguments have to be weighed up. It affects the 40,000-odd people in the electorate who are being inconvenienced by not being able to drink the water.

Government members will vote against the wishes of all 45,000 people in their electorate. I would like to see how they sell that message in their local communities and newspapers. They will vote for the continuation of appalling drinking conditions and health standards in the State of New South Wales. They will vote against the people who put their hands in their pockets to spend money on bottled water. They will vote to provide a system where health cannot be guaranteed in this State. That is an appalling indictment on the Labor Party's mentality towards this whole concept. Having said that, it does not come as a great surprise to me because during the Wallis Lake oyster scare in my electorate 18 months ago, the door was again shut after the horse had bolted.

It is interesting to note that a gag has been applied in this House against speaking about the Wallis Lake oyster scare. The first time I had ever heard such a thing was when the Speaker read a letter from the Attorney General cautioning members about discussing it. The Minister for the Environment, who is usually very garrulous, remained silent whenever she was goaded on the issue. Honourable members will probably see many issues unfolding in the future and will know why the

Minister for the Environment is so quiet. I will not breach the Attorney General's advice but I have a sneaking suspicion that the Council might be seen in a different light from that cast by the Minister for the Environment, and the Minister might be seen in a different light. I suspect that certain measures had not been taken at that time, although the Government knew about them before the announcement was made.

One thing I will do—and this is outside the advice given by the Attorney General and therefore is not sub judice—is to highlight the Government's cavalier attitude. Following the Wallis Lake scare I called on the Minister for Fisheries to provide funding for the acceleration of testing for viral infections in oysters. One problem associated with the Wallis Lake oyster scare was that people allegedly—and I emphasise the word "allegedly"—contracted hepatitis A from eating Wallis Lake oysters. The epidemiological studies and statistics lead one to question that allegation, but that is for another time and place.

I called for funding for that purpose because it is vitally important that viral testing of oysters is carried out. That testing is not done at present. Oysters can be bacterially tested but not virally tested. The reply I received from the Minister for Fisheries was that the Government did not have the money for that purpose, but he said that if another outbreak occurred it would apply funds after it had been informed of the outbreak. That attitude exists in relation to Sydney's water crisis and, frankly, it is not good enough. It is too late to shut the gate once the horse has bolted. The horse could be dead and floating down the river. That might have been the cause of the cryptosporidium outbreak; we do not know because we have not been told. It might have been a fox, a bat, or anything. We do know that this issue cannot be ignored.

This problem has to be fixed. The Government must be truthful and honest and face up to its responsibilities. Members of the Government get big money and cars because they have the responsibility and they should do something about it. The Opposition assumed responsibility with its well thought out 10-point plan. The Leader of the Opposition showed initiative and leadership, which has been sadly lacking in the Government for the past 3½ years. The Premier's penny-ante grandstanding has shown him to be a Premier who lacks confidence and responsibility, a man sailing under false colours. The coalition has an alternative Premier who is prepared to say that if the Government will not do something about this

problem, at least the Opposition will. It will propose a plan to address the problems faced by the people.

It is up to the Government to accept that it has got it wrong. If it has to eat humble pie—and the Minister for the Environment said she had to eat humble pie over the Wallis Lake affair—then it has to do so swiftly to ensure that Sydney's drinking water is back in the marketplace with a guarantee of purity and no risk to the health of the citizens. I refer now to the fair trading portfolio, for which I am the shadow minister. New South Wales has about 1.5 million people who rent premises. Let us assume that in Sydney there are approximately one million tenants, although I suspect there are many more than that. The Government proposes a \$15 rebate for those who are inconvenienced by this water problem.

That is a total insult. It is hard to believe that the Government should offer a \$15 rebate for water that must be boiled. Bear in mind that water has to be boiled for one minute. These days most jugs have automatic cut-out facilities, so people will have to hold down the cut-out button and thermostats will be ruined or burnt out. That will result in an added cost for the purchase of a new jug but, more importantly, could result in a electrical short in the jug and perhaps a fire. The Government has not thought about that. Some people have to buy water, but they will not buy water only during the scare. Newspapers have reported time and again that people have said they will never drink Sydney water again. People will incur a long-term cost that they had not budgeted for. Water in bottles is horrendously expensive.

**Mr MacCarthy:** As are filters.

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** Yes, as are filters, as the honourable member for Strathfield said. Many other artificial devices have been forced on people during this crisis, yet they will receive a paltry \$15 rebate. That is bad enough in the fair trading area but the Government has said, "This is our decision." If a trader—a person in the real world, which the Labor Party does not know about or has forgotten—took that attitude the department would take him before the Department of Fair Trading and he would be unmercifully crucified to ensure that proper compensation was paid to his consumers. The people of Sydney who drink Sydney water are consumers; they are no different from consumers who buy water from Coles or Woolworths. If water purchased from Coles or Woolworths was contaminated, consumers would be entitled to fair and proper compensation. But the \$15 rebate to be paid to Sydney Water consumers is not fair and proper compensation.

A \$15 rebate for one million tenants in Sydney amounts to a \$15 million payout. Who will get that payout? It will not be the tenants, who are still putting their hands in their pockets for bottled water, boiling water in jugs, or buying filters or various other devices to drink safe water. They will not get the money; the landlords will get the money. That is the unusual and perverse cavalier approach by the Government, which supposedly looks after workers. People rent for a variety of reasons, but it is fair to say that people starting out in life, before they buy their first homes, often start out in the rental market. Some people decide to rent forever. But by and large most people aspire to move through the rental market, through hard work, overtime, diligence, dedication and sacrifice, on to the ownership market.

That is not easy in Sydney, because of the huge costs. These are the people that the Labor Party purports to represent, yet those very people will not receive any assistance. The landlords will get the \$15 million windfall but the people who pay for water day after day will get nothing. Where is the Government's leadership on this issue? Where is its thought process for paying that \$15 to those who should receive it? Every household in Sydney is connected to electricity. It would be very simple to apply that rebate to electricity accounts. In that way the tenant would get the benefit of the \$15 rebate rather than the landlord. It is very simple.

My colleagues have told me that that rebate system has been used before and it is not hard to work out. But there is deafening silence on the other side about how to transfer that paltry \$15, which will not cover the costs involved, to those who should receive it. If the Government provides a rebate it should do so by way of electricity bills so that tenants may also get the benefit. That is not difficult to work out. However, the Labor Party cannot think past putting the blaming on someone else rather than taking action. Basically, this is about the Government not taking action but simply blaming someone else. The absence of Government members from the Chamber shows that they have accepted the blame and they are unable to defend their actions.

I turn now to the impact of the water crisis on the fishing industry. The attitude of the Minister for Health and the Premier to the scare before the last scare—there have been so many scares that I cannot keep up with them—about two weeks ago was appalling. They knew about the crisis about six to eight hours before the public was made aware that the problem had arisen again and that the water was unsafe to drink, because they had been briefed by departmental officials. While they were vacillating

about what to do and showing a lack of leadership and vision, the people of Sydney were going about their daily lives unaware of the new crisis. The people of Sydney were drinking water, cleaning their teeth and making normal use of the water that we take for granted because they did not know that they could possibly get sick.

The Premier and the Minister for Health knew that people could get sick if they drank the water and I bet they did not clean their teeth or drink a glass of water. Workers at the Sydney fish markets were unaware of the scare. Fishermen do not work from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., as do the Premier and the Minister for Health. They work when necessary to catch the fish and transport them to the markets in the early hours of the morning so that they can be sold to fishmongers, seafood restaurants and the general public to be prepared for lunches and dinners. The fish are also sold to others, who work equally hard, to be taken home and eaten by people who expect the product to be safe and sound.

The fishing industry is safe and sound. It is a wonderful industry and is a credit to all those involved. However, on one particular day people working at the fish markets did not hear about the problem until about six hours after the announcement had been made. It is not simply a matter of catching the fish and putting them on the dining table; a little work is involved in preparing the fish for sale. They must be gutted and cleaned, and that is done with tap water. The fishermen who cleaned their fish with Sydney water were unable to sell those fish. I emphasise that the fish could not be sold only because they had been contaminated by the water used to clean and gut them; there was nothing wrong with the fish. The fish were fresh, and were full of omega oils which are so vital to the health of the people of New South Wales. Indeed, the consumption of fish containing omega oils is currently being promoted.

Undoubtedly, fish is a wonderful product. There was nothing wrong with the fish caught that day until they were washed out with Sydney water and then had to be thrown out. It was disgraceful. There must be some merit in what I am saying because it is the first time I have seen the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries move so quickly to enter the Chamber and leer across the table. That is an indication of his attitude to the fishing industry and, indeed, the impurity of Sydney water and the problems associated with that.

**Mr Martin:** On a point of order. Mr Acting-Speaker, as the motion before the House is serious I ask you to bring the honourable member back to the

substance and spirit of it. The honourable member should not trivialise the debate by waving his hands and referring to irrelevant matters. I ask you to bring him back to the subject matter of the debate.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills):** Order! I remind the honourable member for Myall Lakes that the subject of the debate is Sydney's water crisis. He has made passing reference to the administration of the Minister for Fisheries, but he should now return to the subject matter of the debate.

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** I do not intend to trivialise the motion by reacting to the stupid point of order raised by the Minister. I was merely saying that the contamination of Sydney's water created a furore at the Sydney fish markets, and all this puerile Minister could do was raise a cheap point of order. Fishermen will be interested to read the Minister's point of order when we send them a copy of it, as we normally send them a copy of the Minister's speeches. Thousands of dollars worth of fish were thrown out, and the Minister's contribution to this debate, which he said was important, was to raise a stupid point of order.

**Mr MacCarthy:** Who is compensating them?

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** The honourable member for Strathfield rightly asks who is compensating the fishermen. As usual, they will not be compensated. The Minister said that this debate is important. If it is so important why has he not made a contribution? He has not made a contribution because he has been gagged by the Premier, as all his colleagues have been gagged on this no confidence motion. I shall finish my speech as I began: the most serious motion to be moved in a parliament that adopts the Westminster system is a no confidence motion. Government members will not defend themselves. They have been condemned for their lack of response, lack of action and lack of ministerial responsibility by the people of New South Wales, especially the people of Sydney who cannot drink the tap-water.

**Mr MacCARTHY (Strathfield) [5.06 p.m.]:** The Carr Government has lost the confidence of the people because of this ongoing crisis in the Sydney water system. It has risked the health of millions of citizens. It has inconvenienced people. As the honourable member for Myall Lakes said, the crisis has cost people money because they have had to buy bottled water and water filters, use extra electricity and so on. As has been pointed out, the Government has threatened the tourism industry in New South Wales and made Sydney a laughing-stock



internationally. It has presided over an attempted cover-up by ignoring the danger signs in the system. It has failed to keep the bureaucrats up to the mark. It has tried to blame everyone and everything for this crisis: dead dogs, bats, foxes, dead cows, catchment management, privatisation and the previous Government. Indeed, it has tried to blame everything but itself.

That is clearly the case because honourable members know any newspapers advertisements and the like containing good news always carry a Minister's name at the bottom, stating who is responsible for the exercise. However, since day one of the crisis there has been no name on the bottom of the advertisements saying who is accepting responsibility for this exercise. It is a fundamental role of government to protect the health and safety of its people, and by any measure the Government has failed. The lack of participation of Government members in this debate clearly shows that the Government's excuses do not stack up to analysis. Although the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning each spoke for a few minutes, there has been little since from members opposite. Having gone through the motions, they have simply clammed up. They do not want to respond because they know that their excuses do not add up.

One excuse for the water crisis is privatisation. Members opposite said that if elements of Sydney Water had not been privatised the crisis might not have arisen. One only needs to read, as has been read before in this debate, the letter written by former Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, and the shadow minister for the environment in 1992, now Minister for the Environment, to demonstrate that they were quite happy with privatisation. I will read the key elements of that letter, which thanked someone for briefing them on the proposal to tender for the Sydney Water Board's drinking water program and related build, own and operate projects. The letter states:

The briefing was most informative.

Last December the Opposition supported the Water Board (Amendment) Bill 1991 to facilitate such projects. During the debate the Opposition supported the concept of private sector involvement in new infrastructure developments for the Sydney Water Board.

I need not read all of that letter to demonstrate quite clearly that the Government has no justification in claiming that things would not have gone wrong if certain bodies had not been privatised. The Premier himself, when opening the Prospect treatment plant

on 1 October 1996, spoke about the plant as being "a model of successful partnership between the public and private sectors and an outstanding achievement which will supply Sydney with clean drinking water for generations to come." So it is abundantly clear that the Labor Party, in opposition and in government, signed off on the idea of private infrastructure.

Next, the Government tried to blame the corporatisation model. The Ministers who spoke in this debate said they were not happy with the corporatisation model for Sydney Water that the former Government introduced. The crucial point to be noted in relation to that is that Labor, in government, has not sought to change that structure. The Minister has power to give directions to Sydney Water as a State-owned corporation, as does the Minister for Health in relation to water. They have that power and they could have given directions. The only proviso on exercise of that power is that any directions given by the Ministers must be reported in an appropriate manner so that everyone will know that the Minister or Ministers have been involved in the operation. So, if the corporatised Sydney Water was so structured that it could not identify these problems, the Ministers had the power to give directions.

While the initial contract for the Prospect water treatment plant did not require the plant to treat for giardia and cryptosporidium, the parasites at the centre of this problem, Sydney Water had the power to renegotiate that contract at any time to add those two parasites to the list of parasites to be treated for. The Minister had the power to direct Sydney Water in that respect. So one cannot blame a past government for those sorts of sins. The Premier claimed that the previous Government knew about high readings of giardia and cryptosporidium in 1992, 1993 and 1994. He said so yesterday, and it is recorded in *Hansard*.

The Premier said that, in contrast to what he referred to as the wonderful record of the Government in this current crisis, the former coalition Government did not inform the public about those readings. I listened intently to what the Premier said, noting that he was careful not to say who was informed or when they were informed. I was interested to find out a little more about this. I found that the study to which the Premier referred was to "characterise the presence of the parasites in Sydney's water system". That was back in 1992. What does that mean? It is in plain English. The study was to find out where there might be a problem in the system. So it was looking for the presence of the parasites.

The results showed that cryptosporidium was in our major storages at levels at that stage similar to or greater than in locations in the United States of America or the United Kingdom. However, the authors said that comparisons with other locations were not valid in the context of that study. Most important is that samples taken from treated water at the outlets of water filtration plants showed no cryptosporidium. So, while in 1992 there was a level of cryptosporidium in water storage reservoirs, the study showed that there were none in the treated water. That was in 1992. The Premier said that the Government at that time should have been doing some notification. The advice to the Minister also said that in 1993, following a number of other samples being taken, higher counts were found in two samples. These are the magic samples that the Premier quoted. But the report went on to say:

As the samples were collected as part of a research project, they were not analysed for many weeks and have not been able to be validated.

Confronted with something like that, one has to ask, "If they were not analysed for many weeks, were they subject to contamination after the samples were taken?" More importantly, the samples having been analysed many weeks after they were taken—and the report does not say how many weeks, but assuming that to be so—and then those responsible trying to but being unable to validate the tests, there is not much point in issuing a public health alert. There is not much point in saying: we found something three months ago, so you had better boil your water today, even though the water today is clear. So it is fair to say, being charitable, that the Premier was less than honest with us yesterday.

The Milwaukee epidemic really brought this problem of cryptosporidium to attention in the world in 1993. At that time—the closing years of the Greiner and Fahey governments—not as much was known about the problem. Technology has improved since then, and so on. More importantly, I quote the Minister's response to a Dorothy Dix question asked of the Minister by one of his own party members. This was not a response given off the cuff: the Minister had a prepared answer and had the opportunity to have all his experts provide him with the answers. *Hansard* of 22 October 1996 records Minister Knowles as saying this about cryptosporidium:

However, let us be clear about this. Since 1992, when the first tests were conducted, no further unacceptably high levels have been found. Sydney's water remains one of the cleanest supplies in the world. Our water supply is getting better.

Someone was misleading the House. Was it the Minister in October 1996 or was it the Premier in September 1998? One of them was misleading the House. As has been pointed out ad nauseam by Opposition members, Sydney Water's annual report of 1995-96—the first full year in which this Labor Government was in control—identified giardia and cryptosporidium as an "emerging issue". From any proper consideration of that phrase it is obvious that if these parasites were an emerging issue in 1996, it was by no stretch a major issue in earlier years. It is clear from the report that was produced in 1995-96, and from the Minister's response in the House to a pre-arranged question from his own side, that the Minister has signed off on the performance of the Fahey and Greiner governments. That puts the problem that we face today clearly in the hands of the Labor Party and no-one else. We cannot blame former governments.

The report having identified giardia and cryptosporidium as an emerging issue in 1995-96—and that report comes to the Government from Sydney Water—the onus was on the Minister to ensure that the problem was monitored from that point on. If one does not know that there is a problem, one cannot be blamed for not asking questions about it. A wonderful scene in *Yes Minister* exemplified the point quite well. But by 1996 the problem had been brought to attention. The Carr Government has been in charge since that time. This Government, having become aware of the identification of the problem in 1996, had the responsibility to ask questions to make sure that the board of Sydney Water and its great mate David Hill, the chairman of the board, were addressing the issue, were having tests done, were getting the results of analyses, were gathering the appropriate data together, were making appropriate decisions, and were recommending changes if changes were necessary.

The Government stands condemned because it or its representatives tried to cover up this crisis. The second interim report of the McClellan inquiry makes clear that David Hill, the Labor appointee extraordinaire, tried to cover up the extent of the problem. On page 4 the executive summary of the report states how far the alert should have gone:

Nevertheless, a decision was taken to limit the alert to the Potts Hill system. This decision was significantly influenced by Hill. In my opinion, the decision did not reflect appropriate concern for public health.

As the shadow minister for health pointed out, there were cover-ups earlier this year. In May the honourable member for North Shore asked a question of the Minister for Health in which she

referred to claims by Dr McAnulty of the Health Department that cryptosporidium could be killed by high levels of chlorination. She asked:

. . . On what grounds does the Department base its claims?

(2) What, if any, methods have been employed by the Department of Health to provide adequate and accurate testing procedures for cryptosporidium?

(3) There is serious concern in the community that alarming levels of the cryptosporidium parasite have been found in New South Wales water mains. Are you able to assure the public that this is not the case?

The question asked only 3½ months ago was quite clear. The shadow minister was trying to find out if there was a problem and what the Minister was doing about it. The answer that was provided was typical of those from this Government. The Minister replied:

(1) I am advised that Dr McAnulty was quoting a reference in a scientific paper from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

(2) and (3) The 1996 Australian Drinking Water Guidelines state that "Routine monitoring for Cryptosporidium is not appropriate".

That clearly demonstrates that the Minister was saying that chlorination was an acceptable way of killing cryptosporidium, that there was not a problem and that we do not need to monitor for cryptosporidium in our water mains. That answer gave the clear impression to everyone in this House that there was no problem with our water mains as chlorination would kill cryptosporidium. The Minister was covering up and misled this House. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning criticised the coalition Government for corporatising Sydney Water with 1980 water standards that did not test for giardia and cryptosporidium, yet he admitted, as reported in *Hansard*, that even the 1996 standards of the National Health and Medical Research Council do not require testing for these parasites.

The coalition cannot be criticised for adopting in 1995 standards that did not require testing when the 1996 standards did not require testing. The Government still tries the blame game, meanwhile it rips out excessive dividends from Sydney Water that could be better used for management and monitoring. Employees that used to patrol catchments have been sacked. The Government made much of the coalition's use of filtration plants to protect the water supply. Labor pushed for catchment management, but now in government allows catchment management to decrease. A constituent visited my office on Monday and told

me that over the weekend he had taken some people to look at Warragamba Dam. He said that 100 metres from the dam wall the water was covered by a thick sludge with bottles and car tyres floating in it. A black and white photograph on the front page of a newspaper clearly showed the sludge.

At a time of concern about our international reputation, it would have been easy for rangers and patrollers to clean up that sludge. Perhaps treatment may have removed any pathogens at a later stage, but for the sake of our international appearance and reputation, proper catchment management may not have prevented that sludge but would have enabled it to be cleaned up quickly. This crisis has produced international headlines: the New Zealand *Herald*, "Sydney's Nice but Don't trust the Taps", the Singapore *Straits Times*, "No Safe Drinking Water in all Sydney", and from the South China *Morning Post* "Olympic City in Parasite Shame". I should like to paraphrase the great American comic writer Tom Lehrer, but without the calypso beat:

If you visit the Olympic City  
You will find it very pretty  
Just two things of which you must beware  
Don't drink the water and  
Don't breathe the air!

Pollution, Pollution  
You can use the latest toothpaste  
And then rinse your mouth with Industrial Waste.

I represent the Strathfield electorate, which is one of the most ethnically diverse electorates in New South Wales. What has the Government done for our ethnic communities regarding the water problem? On 31 July an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* said that the message had not reached some communities. It stated:

Many among Sydney's ethnic communities remained unaware yesterday about the contaminated water problem, continuing to drink tap water and brush their teeth with it.

SBS radio and television—along with mainstream media—were the only ethnic press sent the official health warning. . .

Things have changed a little with the issue of warnings, but problems still remain. On the Saturday morning when the morning papers reported that Sydney's water was clear but we heard a little later on the radio, "Sorry, everything in the newspapers is wrong. The scare is back on," how would the ethnic communities have managed? Those who speak English would have read it in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Daily Telegraph*, but what would those whose English is poor, particularly the elderly, have done?

Today that same advertisement to which I referred earlier does not contain a word of help for

anybody with a language problem. It contains a 1800 number to ring, but only at the end of the two-minute recorded message is the option available to push a button to speak to an operator. Certain numbers were available for people who cannot speak English, but the operator was unable to find them. How do our ethnic communities get information in the early hours of the morning when the information contained in the day's newspapers is changed during a radio broadcast, especially when the ethnic newspaper may not be available daily? I call on the Government to put more effort into trying to make sure that those whose English is not as good as ours have ways and means to be informed.

**Mr Fraser:** It should have been done already.

**Mr MacCARTHY:** It should have been done and things have moved a little further ahead than they were on 31 July. But more must be done to ensure that the whole community receives the necessary information. I call on the Government to make sure that the advertisements contain something to draw attention to telephone numbers for particular ethnic groups to obtain information.

**Mr Fraser:** The Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs should understand that requirement.

**Mr MacCARTHY:** The Minister is taking notes and I trust that is what he is noting. The final failure of the Government is that it has no plan. The Leader of the Opposition has outlined a 10-point plan to address the problem. Those 10 points include the appointment of a new water board based on expertise, not on political association. The Leader of the Opposition has foreshadowed the introduction of the Safe Drinking Water Bill, which is similar to legislation enacted by the Clinton administration. Consumers will be told whether their drinking water meets the necessary standards, what the contaminants may be, and so on. It is also intended to freeze the planned increase in water rates until the crisis is resolved; to establish an Internet site with up-to-date information; and to undertake regularly monitoring for the parasites that have emerged during this crisis. Most important is the redirection of the \$279 million dividend that has been siphoned off from Sydney Water. That will be used to improve the system, for monitoring and filtration equipment, and to provide a better rebate. As the honourable member for Myall Lakes said, the amount of \$15 is derisory.

I agree with the sensible suggestion made by the honourable member for Myall Lakes that the rebate should be paid via electricity bills to ensure

that consumers receive it. It is a simple process of paying \$15 to every domestic account from Sydney Water to Sydney Electricity or Integral Energy. They would be the only two organisations covering the Sydney metropolitan area. That would make sure that the renters, the battlers, get the money and that it is not paid in large amounts to landlords. I give that creative solution from the shadow minister my hearty support. It is a solution Parliament should push home to the Government.

The eighth point in the 10-point plan is to transfer the responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the public health unit of the Health Department. The Health Department ought to protect us in that regard by reassuring us, because Sydney Water, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning and the Minister for Health cannot be trusted. However, the State is now within 200 days of getting new Ministers. The ninth point is the tightening of access to water catchment areas like Warragamba Dam and the initiation of regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination. The final point is the imposition of statutory obligations to issue health warnings as soon as the relevant information is available.

Let me reiterate the point I made when I started. The Government has risked the health of Sydney's citizens and has inconvenienced millions of people. It has threatened the State's tourist industry. It has made New South Wales and Sydney an international laughing stock. It has tried to cover up. It has tried to play the blame game. It has no plan to fix the problem. By any measure the Government has failed and has lost the confidence of the people of New South Wales. This motion of no confidence should be carried by an overwhelming majority of members of this House.

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [5.32 p.m.]: I support this motion of no confidence in the Government. It is an historic motion and one that has not been moved lightly by the Opposition. The water crisis is the last straw for at least 3½ million people in Sydney and in my electorate. It is important to note that members like myself who represent regional and country communities regard the role of Sydney as being important. Sydney is the gateway to New South Wales and Australia. After visitors have seen Sydney they make a decision to visit places such as the southern highlands. Many people in my electorate commute to Sydney, if not every day, regularly throughout the week. The fact one lives in the southern highlands does not make one immune to Sydney's current water crisis.

The crisis is particularly important for my constituents because water sources in the

Wingecarribee, Mulwaree and Goulburn council areas all flow ultimately into the Sydney catchment one way or the other. A range of issues arising from the crisis affects my constituents and their confidence, not only in the quality of their water but in the long-term reliability of safe water sources in the event of a future drought. Everyone has recently experienced two or more years of drought, particularly those in rural New South Wales. Once the water sources dry up or are contaminated—and that happens from time to time with blue-green algae—there is no alternative to drink.

Another reason this motion has been moved is that the water crisis is the most recent in a string of crises, especially in regional New South Wales. I am thinking of the back-to-school allowance fiasco and the decrease in electricity supply service levels. The complaints I am receiving about the service supply by the two suppliers in my electorate is increasing. I am also thinking of people not being able to use the water in the dams on their properties. At the moment the water in many of the dams in my area is a great deal safer than the water in Prospect Reservoir. The present crisis is only another in a long string of crises that have eroded confidence in the Carr Government.

I have spent a great deal of time living and working in so-called developing countries. As an archaeologist I spent a lot of time living in village communities in countries like Jordan. I have travelled extensively in Egypt. In most of those places I have joined thousands of local people in drinking the local water and have done so with absolutely no ill effects. I hope many of the men and women of those countries will visit us during the Olympic Games or will compete as members of teams from those countries. Sadly, they will be doing so against a background of traveller alerts issued by their own countries telling them they had better stay away from the water in Sydney and they had better take precautions. That is a humiliation for me as a citizen of New South Wales. It is a farce, and, even worse, the Government has gone to extraordinary lengths to blame anybody except itself. It has also blamed my constituents, and that is not acceptable. It has blamed anyone it can think of upstream from the problem. It has blamed dead dogs, live dogs—

**Ms Ficarra:** Bureaucrats.

**Ms SEATON:** Bureaucrats. It has blamed farmers who dare to actually farm animals on land that happens to contribute to Sydney's catchment. It blames dairy farmers in particular, tourists, hikers, and people dependent on septic systems. One only

has to talk to the people of Picton and The Oaks to learn about that. I am sure my colleague the honourable member for Camden, who is also my neighbour, will have more to say about the Government's unconscionable delay in the delivery of a sewerage system to Picton, despite the funds being made available before 1995 as a result of her tireless campaigning. Of course, the people who still have septic systems in the Wingecarribee, Wollondilly and Mulwaree shire areas are being slugged an extra septic tax by this Government. The Minister for Local Government has tried to blame local government for this tax, but local government is not responsible.

The dissenting report written by members of the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board in 1994 is fascinating reading. I am sure members of the Carr Government would like to be reminded of what was said in it. Essentially, coalition members argued that the Australian Labor Party members were blinkered in their reliance on catchment management alone as a solution. ALP members believed catchment management would remove the need for water treatment plants to be built. I read from page 22 of that report:

Essentially, the majority report attempts to argue that health problems of concern to the Board are insignificant, and that they "arise from 'run off' problems" in Water Board catchment areas. It suggests that the expenditure of sums of money as low as "\$1.732 million a year" on catchment management programs "would eliminate the need for extra and expensive filtration processes".

I am the world's greatest supporter of catchment management committees and Landcare, and I agree that land care can dramatically improve what runs out of catchment area and into waterways. Only last week I attended the inaugural meeting of the Moss Vale Landcare group, and I wish Cliff Reece, the inaugural chairman, best wishes for the future. I will give that group as much support as I possibly can. I also congratulate John Clem of the Wollondilly catchment management group; Chris Neale, who has done some great work in that organisation, and also Tony Ross of the upper Nepean catchment committee, whom I met in Camden recently. They all perform great and necessary work. The naivety of ALP members in regard to this matter reveals that they do not know what goes on in catchment areas, despite the best attempts by many people in our communities to manage them as well as they possibly can.

The State has recently experienced heavy rains and floods. One Government member referred to the one in 300 year flood, if that is what this recent flood was. Such rainfall events cannot ever be

managed to guarantee pristine outputs. As country members will attest, animals die in the bush. Farms have animals, and what goes into a cow ultimately comes out the back end, and there is not a great deal one can do to stop that. I should like the Minister for the Environment to tell us exactly how she would control what comes out of the back end of these creatures. After nearly 200 years of European land use, our catchment committees are catching up. Not all of our land use has been appropriate to our fragile environment. An annual expenditure of \$1.732 million will go nowhere near fixing the deforestation and soil erosion that must occur if catchment management alone is to ensure the standard needed. Catchment management must be part of a balanced approach that includes water treatment systems. That point was made clearly at page 23 of the dissenting report of coalition members of the Joint Select Committee on the Sydney Water Board, where it is stated:

The Board's ability to provide a consistently safe, reliable water supply depends on the performance of the whole system. Treatment plants are only one element of the water management system. The Board acts on the principle that the high quality water from catchments into dams reduces the need for expensive treatment later in the delivery process.

There is no argument whatsoever about that statement. It is also stated:

Prospect Reservoir management is currently under stress—settling times are near their limits. Prospect Reservoir was designed in the 1880s to detain water in storage for 180 days . . . but today water is detained for approximately two days. It has been estimated that at least two months detention is recommended for minimal standards of turbidity settlement. The third element in the strategy, treatment, is now necessary, and the Board has to maintain a clean distribution system. No single element of itself can be expected to deliver safe and secure water to the customer.

Those statements are reinforced at page 25 of the report, where it is stated:

Extra demand means that the consequences of natural events cannot be ameliorated, as in the past, by a settling period in Board storages. It is not realistic to expect to improve raw water quality above the 25-year levels by catchment management practices alone.

That is the Minister's measure of understanding of the issues. Most people, even city dwellers, would now be aware of Wingecarribee Dam. The dam is an ancient peat swamp, home to a particular species of dragonfly and a huge natural filter. The swamp is not entirely in my electorate; it is also in the Kiama electorate. Sydney Water actually got it right and recommended to the recent mining warden's inquiry on the proposal to extend peat mining operations that the swamp's value as a filter was greater than its

economic value as a mine. There has been little local dissent from that view, although I acknowledge that it was the cause of some debate amongst those who had previously earned their income from the peat mine. On balance, most of the community acknowledges the great value of the natural qualities of the swamp.

Most of the dairy farmers I have spoken to who farm near the swamp were pleased when the interim conservation order was introduced and when peat mining finally ceased. I congratulate members of the Robertson environment protection society—particularly Larry Whipper, David and Helen Tranter and others who were pivotal in that outcome—on their hard work over at least two years that I know of. On 9 August a disaster struck Wingecarribee Dam as a result of eight inches of torrential rain and flooding. People in my area are literally in mourning for the swamp and what we have lost. People are expressing the grief experienced when one loses a family member. They are writing poems about it. This occurrence has resulted in an enormous emotional outpouring in my community.

The peat bed lifted and fractured into big floating platelets and debris. It is an unmitigated environmental disaster. At a more practical level, the disaster presents major concerns about Wingecarribee's long-term water supply. The people of Wingecarribee, who have just been through a very severe drought, in which the dam was a vital part of the water supply, can no longer rely on the Wingecarribee Reservoir, and we do not know how long that situation will continue. The Wingecarribee Reservoir is just downstream from the large natural peat swamp, a natural filter, which has been mined for several decades. Because of residents' concerns, green pressure and concerns expressed by Sydney Water, as well as the application from Emerald Peat to extend the mining area, the mining warden last year conducted an inquiry which resulted in an interim conservation order being granted in the middle of this year.

Wingecarribee Dam is the responsibility of Sydney Water. Sydney Water supplies some of the dam's content to Wingecarribee Shire Council via a bulk water supply agreement. The rest goes to Sydney's catchment. The water supplied to Wingecarribee Shire Council is raw. The council has its own treatment plant at the side of the reservoir to purify the water. Tenders have recently been let to upgrade the plant. Normally the plant can cope with turbidity of seven to 10 units in the raw water, when water is taken into the treatment plant intake. At present turbidity is approximately 35 units at the least disturbed area and approximately 400 units at

the most disturbed area. At the point of intake turbidity is approximately 120 units. Clearly, there is no possibility that the treatment plant can be activated in the near future.

Wingecarribee residents are forced to rely on two smaller dams in other parts of the shire. As at Monday of this week turbidity at offtake stood at a level of approximately 120 units. A steering committee which includes the mayor, the general manager of the Wingecarribee Shire Council and representatives of Sydney Water has been established and it held its second meeting yesterday. It is proposed that another meeting, involving landowners, will occur at Ranelagh House in the next few days. I hope that the views of farmers, particularly dairy farmers, beef cattle farmers and those who operate horse-related industries, and the views of residents are taken on board.

The real problem being faced by Wingecarribee ratepayers at present relates to the price being charged for the water, which is now useless in any case. Since the Wingecarribee Shire Council gave the dam to Sydney Water 25 years ago the council has had in place an agreement under which it received a certain amount of water at no cost and paid approximately 7¢ per kilolitre for water above that level. That agreement ended late last year and Sydney Water told the council that it was renegotiating the price of water, would now allow no free water and would charge 44¢ a kilolitre for all water—that is seven times the amount ratepayers were previously paying for their water. The price has greatly increased from 7¢ to 44¢.

At the moment all that is academic because it is not possible to use the water. Water cannot enter the water treatment plant until the turbidity problem has been solved. This is a time for Sydney Water to positively consider the case being put by Wingecarribee Shire Council and to provide help not only to keep the water at an affordable price that provides value for money but also to develop as soon as possible a remediation plan for long-term water supply and to try to restore the peat swamp to some level of ecological balance to maintain the species it used to support.

The McClellan report identified that a contributing factor to Sydney's water crisis might be sewage overflows in the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly areas, where recent natural rainfall events have been too much for most septic systems and some local sewage treatment plants. Wingecarribee Shire Council has worked hard with available resources to upgrade local sewerage facilities. The facility at Moss Vale was upgraded

recently, the plant at New Berrima is new, the facility at Bowral is soon to be upgraded, as is the plant at Robertson, and a brand-new plant at Braemar is about to replace the ancient plant at Mittagong—one of the oldest of the treatment plants—which facility will also allow the northern villages to link into the sewage system.

It is vital that the State Government accelerates the provision of the sewerage infrastructure that is required in both Wollondilly and Wingecarribee, because, as many speakers have said in this debate, everything that happens in the southern highlands, in the Mulwaree shire, in Goulburn and in Wollondilly ultimately affects the quality of Sydney's drinking water. Until that is done the reliance of the Australian Labor Party on catchment management alone, as evidenced in the report by the then Opposition members of the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board, is misplaced. Until those areas have proper sewerage infrastructure there will be no hope of ever guaranteeing the quality of the run-off into the catchment.

It is useful also to look at the recent herculean efforts of Mulwaree Shire Council to get some sense out of both the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Public Works and Services in relation to two important projects undertaken by Mulwaree Shire Council in the town of Marulan. One is a water treatment plant and the other is a sewage treatment plant. Plans were drawn up for the Marulan water treatment plant. The estimate from the Department of Public Works and Services to put the Marulan water treatment plant in place was \$2.7 million. Mulwaree Shire Council wanted to take the advice of Memtec to locate a plant near the village of Marulan. The Department of Public Works and Services said it had to be located 13 miles away; 13 miles of pipes had to be built. There were months of delay and changing the goal posts by all the relevant authorities. For months the EPA and the Department of Public Works and Services came up with more fanciful requirements that bore absolutely no relation to the real circumstances of Marulan.

Eventually the mayor had had enough and said that the council would go it alone. I am pleased to say that Marulan now has a state-of-the-art water treatment plant supplied and designed by Memtec to local specifications at the cost of about \$745,000. That should be compared with the \$2.7 million estimated by the Department of Public Works and Services to solve the problem. In addition, unlike the Sydney Water system at the moment, the water treatment plant selected by Mulwaree Shire Council for Marulan takes out cryptosporidium, giardia and blue-green algae. For less than one-third of the cost

the people of Marulan now have an even better system, thanks to the leadership of Mulwaree Shire Council. New South Wales taxpayers have been saved \$1 million and the people of Marulan and the ratepayers of Mulwaree shire have been saved \$1 million.

If the EPA and the Department of Public Works and Services had their way the people of Marulan would probably now and in the future be boiling their water as the people of Sydney are doing at the moment. I congratulate Mayor Paul Stephenson on the good sense and local management that has prevailed. But there is no such good news for the sewage treatment plant that is so necessary for Marulan and which the Mulwaree Shire Council has to construct in a 50 per cent partnership with the Department of Public Works and Services and the EPA. Honourable members should remember that a sewage treatment plant in Marulan will help to improve the quality of Sydney's drinking water.

Again, our old friends at the EPA and the Department of Public Works and Services could not resist claiming to be the experts. As a result of their efforts, and again because of the movement of goal posts, increasing costs and the changing of minds every time council was near a solution, Mulwaree still does not have a sewage treatment plant. Raw sewage has been a problem at Marulan for some time. This is one of the worst cases of bureaucratic intransigence and frustration. Mulwaree council does not have a great deal of money to spend. It has about 6,000 ratepayers, not a large financial base from which to work. It would appear that the EPA is stuck in a mind-set of wanting to prescribe effluent disposal in country areas.

They call it the efficient re-use of effluent, which basically means the spraying of sewage effluent over paddocks on which either stock graze or crops are grown. That is hardly a solution designed to cope with any growth that might occur. Every time more people use the system it has to be enlarged and more land needs to be captured close to that area, so it is not a sensible long-term solution. As many may know, Goulburn City Council sprays its effluent along the river flats of Wollondilly River. That is fine if conditions are absolutely perfect. In cases of heavy rain the run-off drains into the Wollondilly River and into Sydney's catchment as well, but no doubt the EPA believes that is the right way to go.

Both the EPA and the Department of Public Works and Services are trying to persuade Mulwaree shire to sign up for a sewage treatment plant that will cost thousands of dollars more than Mulwaree

Shire Council estimates it should cost. The council is correctly digging in its heels and saying, "No". The mayor would like to access some new, more affordable filtration technology that is available. He believes the council may possibly be able to afford to install some of that technology to produce drinkable water that will go back into the watercourses. That sounds good to most people but the EPA and Department of Public Works and Services say they will do it differently.

I may be wrong but I believe I have heard the Minister for the Environment talk many times in this place about the importance of environmental flows and of putting more water back into watercourses to get them flowing again. Even though Mulwaree Shire Council has a solution that would help assist in achieving that objective the EPA says that the council—I hope the House will forgive me—has to keep spraying the poo all over the place. When the council asked the EPA to examine the idea of putting the treated water back into the watercourse the EPA said an environmental impact statement had to be carried out.

The council might have to spend \$400,000 on an EIS. That is obviously impossible and absolutely unrealistic. The EPA also admitted to council that even a truckload of Perrier or distilled water could not be put into the watercourse. In the past three weeks the EPA has changed the discharge standards mid-stream yet again. It is important to note the comments of the general manager, who said that the EPA proposes to impose conditions which cannot be achieved with existing technology for discharge to the creek. However, it still supports partial treatment and spray irrigation within the catchment. Partial treatment would produce effluent of very poor quality.

There are conflicting messages coming from the EPA. The council has come up against one or two other problems. I am told that the EPA decided that it needed to divert a creek and build a dam. The Department of Public Works and Services had already put a power pole in the place where the EPA decided to put the dam. The cost of moving that pole was \$49,000. I am also told that the Department of Public Works and Services received a quote for \$80,000 for electrical work. The council experts who looked at the project thought they could probably do exactly the same thing for \$16,000.

The Department of Public Works and Services came up with a particular specification for the design of a flange nut to hold pipes together. One can purchase nuts at any hardware store to hold pipes together but the Department of Public Works



and Services designed a particularly unique nut that will cost more than any other nut in history. One can understand why Mulwaree Shire Council is frustrated by bureaucracy. I am sure that bureaucracy is not founded on anything other than strict adherence to mind-sets and specifications. Suggestions that come from experienced people who know the local landscape and environment and who are absolutely determined to do the right thing by their ratepayers must be considered.

I sympathise with people who live in Sydney who are frail aged, homeless or those who exist on low incomes. It is all very well to tell people to boil water but people are not always at home. If people on low incomes have to pay \$1.50 or \$2 for every bottle of water the total soon adds up. Homeless people do not always read newspapers and do not always hear the radio. There are electricity costs involved in boiling water. The magic rebate will not go to tenants but to property owners. Tenants have to rely on the property owners to pass the rebate on to them.

I also sympathise with members of the ethnic community who do not necessarily read English or have ready access to publications in their community languages, as referred to by the honourable member for Strathfield, and those who are immune deficient and are particularly at risk. As many of my colleagues who have small children have said, it is virtually impossible to stop a two- or three-year-old child from drinking the bathwater. We can look forward to six more months of this problem. Sydney's problems also apply to the southern highlands. We do not want to be the scapegoat for the Premier's problems. We want to be sure that Sydney Water will work with us to ensure that we have a reliable and safe drought-proof water supply in the future. We want to see the Government face up to its responsibilities and adopt the coalition's 10-point plan, which will restore confidence in the water of the flagship city of Australia. There is no confidence in the Carr Government on this or any other issue it has dealt with in the past 3½ years. I support the motion.

[*Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Gaudry) left the chair at 6.00 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.*]

**Dr KERNOHAN** (Camden) [7.30 p.m.]: In the interim report on the Sydney Water inquiry entitled "Possible Causes of Contaminants" published in August, Mr Peter McClellan, QC, suggested some factors pertaining to the catchment area that may be responsible for contamination. These included raw water turbidity events associated with rainfall, septic systems in The Oaks draining

into the dam via Werriberri Creek, scouring of the Upper Canal during an environmental flow test, dead dogs and foxes found in the Upper Canal—when later tested these were negative for giardia and cryptosporidium—and extraction of water from the lower levels of Warragamba Dam demonstrating high levels of giardia and cryptosporidium.

On Tuesday, 8 September, the Director-General of the Health Department, Mick Reid, was quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* as having said, "There is significant contamination in Warragamba [Dam]". It is now generally accepted that Warragamba Dam is the source of the organisms. The questions that must be answered are how did they get there and why did a massive concentration suddenly appear? For years sewage has been flowing from broken or overflowing septic tanks at The Oaks into Werriberri Creek, which was formerly known as Monkey Creek. Thence the sewage flowed into Warragamba Dam. On 30 June the town had a population of 2,366, living in 729 dwellings which rely on septic tanks with pump-out services, adsorption trenches or the newer aerated water treatment systems—AWTS. When there is heavy rain many of these septic systems overload, and that allows overflows and ultimate pollution of the creek. A sign erected by Wollondilly Shire Council beside the creek, as featured in the *Daily Telegraph* last Tuesday, says it all. It states in huge letters:

#### WARNING

Water is unfit for drinking by humans or animals. Any contact with river water should be avoided. Contact may cause skin and eye irritation.

The sign contains five red circles with a red bar across each showing a person swimming, a horse drinking, a man drinking bottled water, a dog, and a man fishing. In other words, keep away from that creek! Werriberri Creek covers a distance of 34.5 kilometres from The Oaks to Warragamba Dam, where it disperses 4.25 kilometres from the dam wall. A constituent, Allyn Varlow, a former Water Board employee, told me that the final kilometre of the original Monkey Creek is steep and normally forms part of the dam's storage area. Any sediment deposited in it during dry times would be flushed into the upper levels of the dam's stored water.

At full capacity the depth of water at the dam wall is 310 feet, or 116 metres. Yet the stirring up of dam sediment by heavy rainfall has been considered a possible cause of the contamination. Mr Varlow told me that in 1964, 30-odd years ago, Werriberri Creek was recognised as an inflow that needed to be policed by frequent sampling, particularly after heavy rainfall such as we recently

experienced. The only way to solve this problem is to sewer The Oaks township. This has been requested by local members and mayors for many years. In October 1995, relatively recently but still a while ago, a report entitled, "Stakeholders Report for the Warragamba Special Area" stated:

Cryptosporidium and giardia and dangerous faecal bacteria have been recorded in The Oaks township stormwater drains . . . The impact of these lands on water quality is a cause for concern. A major risk is the contamination of catchment waterways with pathogenic micro-organisms.

That was almost three years ago, yet it was only in May that the Carr Government announced its priority sewerage program, which includes The Oaks, Oakdale and Bellimba Park, and other systems for townships in the Warragamba catchment area. The Carr Government is very slow when it comes to providing necessary sewerage. Construction of the Picton sewerage scheme was planned to start in 1995, after the last election, but the Labor Government moved the goalposts and the \$80 million project has still not commenced. Yet it is due to be completed in July 1999. Six tenderers finalised their submissions in March and the successful tender was meant to be announced in July. It is now September.

I am told that the matter is still with Treasury. Why? Has the Government spent the money, or is it not game to announce the successful tenderer for a system that might not be politically acceptable to a public suffering a water crisis? This scheme will not affect the quality of water in Warragamba, but I mention it to highlight Labor's poor record on providing essential sewerage as quickly as possible. It takes approximately five years from the production of an environmental impact statement to the completion of a sewerage system. Hence, sewage pollution from The Oaks will be running into our water supply for at least the next five years. Faeces from domestic animals grazing in Sydney Water's catchment areas have been considered a possible source of cryptosporidium. However, there have been no signs of ill health or poor condition in those animals.

One of my constituents, Dr Rod Chevis, who has a PhD in veterinary parasitology and who has worked in this field all his working life, has suggested another possible source of the latest cryptosporidium outbreak. This intestinal parasite is not host-specific and its oocysts, which are only four to 4.5 microns in size—approximately half the size of a red blood cell—can be found in the faeces of any animal. Sydney Water's catchment is home to thousands of kangaroos and wallabies and an unknown number of feral pigs. During the drought

these animals probably graze close to the edges of Warragamba Dam and any other waterway where the only green vegetation in the area would be found. Massive bushfires last Christmas greatly reduced the area on which these animals could graze. In his facsimile to me Dr Chevis stated:

As grazing animals defecate while grazing, faecal pellets will be deposited close to the waters edge and thus will be readily washed into the water when rain falls. As there is no host specificity Crypto. could and probably has infected 'Roos and Wallabies which have been present in large numbers in the Burragorang Valley in recent time. Furthermore it is an established fact that immunity to intestinal parasites wanes during periods of poor nutrition and from all accounts 'Roos and Wallabies in the valley have been in very poor condition so would be open to infection or re-infection with Crypto. and could pass very large numbers of infective oocysts in faeces.

The infective stage (oocysts) must be passed in faeces since by the time a carcass has rotted sufficiently to liberate them the process of putrefaction would most probably have killed them.

While Weriberi Creek has been shown to be contaminated with Crypto., and this may have been the source of the first contamination of Sydney's water, the second massive upsurge is most likely to have come from an alternative source because the creek had a good flush out in the first rains.

To explain more fully, Dr Chevis said that the subsequent torrential rains raised the levels of the dam and broke the creek banks, thus covering the previous feeding grounds, which had been contaminated with faeces from the native animals, and that the water then drained into the dam. Dr Chevis further said:

Until all the facts of this matter are actively researched and properly evaluated we cannot design a control strategy which can be expected to work, but a good starting point would be a proper filtration mechanism which can be relied upon to remove such small oocysts.

That has been agreed to by everyone and, of course, it is part of the coalition's policy on this matter. Dr Chevis further said:

It also worries me that no parasitologist with some knowledge of the life cycles and epidemiology of intestinal parasites has, so far, been included in the expert committee.

I have not seen the list of people comprising the expert committee but if Dr Chevis' statement is correct then that ridiculous situation must be rectified immediately. I call on the Carr Government to investigate fully Dr Chevis' theory of contamination to ascertain if our native animals contribute to the water problem in Warragamba Dam. If that is not done, I can see Sydney Water's exclusion with respect to the innermost catchment area being extended to outlying areas, greatly affecting my constituents who graze their animals in

the area. This would not only cause great personal damage to individuals but also affect the economy of our district.

Although the source of Sydney's water problem, Warragamba Dam, is part of the Camden electorate, my constituents are lucky that their water supply comes from other sources. The Macarthur water filtration plant at Appin provides water for Camden and Campbelltown and is sourced from any one of four dams: Cataract Dam, Nepean Dam, Cordeaux Dam and occasionally Avon Dam. Although many of my constituents work in Sydney and, therefore, have the same problems as those who live in Sydney, they can take safe water from their homes when they travel to Sydney so their problem is reduced. One of my constituents, Anne Whiteman of Camden, has a very big problem. She is quartermaster supply for the biannual girl guide jamboree to be held at Silverdale—the post code is 2752 and is affected by the water crisis—from 27 September. As well as organising all other supplies, she must ensure that safe drinking water is available for approximately 1,500 members of the Girl Guide Association for one week, both on site and during excursions off site.

The piped water that is available at the camp site can and will be boiled. How to distribute the cooled boiled water throughout the camp area is the problem. At least 20 15-litre plastic containers, which can be lifted and carried by women, are needed for placement around the camp. These would be returnable after the jamboree. Also, 1,500 empty plastic drinking bottles with sports pop tops are needed for the participants to take on excursions. Anne has asked Sydney Water for help. I hope that the Minister responsible might suggest to Sydney Water that supplying these containers would be an excellent public relations exercise for Sydney Water, which certainly needs excellent public relations at the moment. Hopefully, Anne will get her water containers and the guides, aged 10 to 15 years, who come from throughout New South Wales, will have a safe and healthy jamboree. Unfortunately, other visitors to Sydney might not be so lucky unless the Labor Government ensures that no expense is spared in determining the cause of our water contamination and rectifying it as soon as possible.

**Mr FRASER** (Coffs Harbour) [7.45 p.m.]: I draw the attention of honourable members to the motion before the House, which states:

That, in view of its mismanagement of Sydney's water crisis, this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House.

Members representing Sydney electorates may suggest that constituents in country areas do not have the same problems as constituents in Sydney electorates and therefore members representing country electorates do not have the right to participate in this debate. However, the water crisis is affecting not only the people of Sydney but also the people of country New South Wales. I shall give an example. At present residents of country areas who visit Sydney cannot drink water from the bubblers. The bubblers in the Domain and the botanic gardens have signs on them stating, "Do not drink the water". Visitors must buy bottled water; they cannot drink the water as usual.

Whilst the problem may seem minuscule, there is an added cost for the people of regional New South Wales. The effect of the water crisis on tourism is also an added cost. For example, some Japanese students, who did not speak English or understand English to any great extent, were visiting my electorate when the scare first arose in Sydney. During their goodwill visit to my electorate office I gave them a kangaroo pin and a few bits and pieces from the local area. One funny aspect of their visit was that the interpreter accompanying them asked me whether the water in Coffs Harbour was safe to drink. When I asked him why he asked that question he said that he had flown into Sydney in the middle of a water crisis. These people were visiting a part of New South Wales that is a one-hour plane flight from Sydney but they were frightened that the water in Coffs Harbour may be contaminated.

Luckily Coffs Harbour has a laboratory that has been approved by the National Association of Testing Authorities. That laboratory regularly tests our water supply for the presence of giardia and cryptosporidium; the water is safe. At the end of the day the Government has handled the crisis appallingly. The way it has handled the crisis has not given confidence to the people of Sydney, the people of New South Wales or the international community. As other honourable members have said in this debate, Government members have consistently tried to lay the blame for the crisis on the board of Sydney Water and said that heads will roll, and that the Government would do this or that. At the end of the day, no matter how many people are sacked, the crux of the problem is management.

The motion reflects the lack of confidence of the people of New South Wales in the Premier, his Cabinet and his Government, based on their mismanagement of the crisis. Instead of apportioning blame, as Ministers have done, they should be attacking the problem. I draw the attention of the House to an article on page 1 of the *Sydney*

*Morning Herald* of Tuesday, 8 September, entitled "Heat turned up on Carr over water". In five dot points the article set out how the Government would minimise the effect of this crisis—and it is a crisis. In the second of those points it was reported:

The Premier said Sydney Water would be instructed to identify private land within catchments for acquisition.

The first was that:

Cabinet agreed to plan an independent Catchment Commission to protect the water supply, and possible on-the-spot fines for people entering restricted catchment areas.

I illustrate to the House the naivety of the Government in announcing those strategies. At page 2 of that same newspaper appears an article entitled "Bugs spread in sludge in catchment areas". How pleased I am that the Minister for the Environment is in the Chamber.

**Ms Allan:** He is always pleased to see me, especially in his home town.

**Mr FRASER:** As the Minister said, I am pleased to see her come into my electorate, for every time she visits and announces, or does not announce, something, I win votes. I do not have to say anything, I let the Minister put her foot in her mouth, and welcome the votes that come my way. The page 2 article states:

Sydney Water's human waste sludge containing the parasites giardia and cryptosporidium is being spread at the rate of 550 tonnes a day on golf courses, agricultural properties, mines, forests and public gardens in the Sydney water supply catchment and other catchments throughout the State in contravention of international standards.

The sludge is being trucked each day to 17 local government areas including Wingecarribee, Goulburn, and the Blue Mountains for deposit at rates up to 120 tonnes a hectare as part of an aggressive Sydney Water marketing campaign designed to increase the demand for biosolids in areas including agriculture, forestry, composting and land rehabilitation.

The Minister for the Environment has given the people of Coffs Harbour a wonderful opportunity: a \$220 million solution to the disposal of effluent within the Coffs Harbour local government area. In government, the coalition had what I believe was a good scheme. Effluent was treated to the highest possible standard, then discharged to the ocean—a saline solution into a saline solution. Sludge was cured properly, as it had been for 35 years, then re-used on playing fields. The Minister for the Environment, however, decided that was not good enough. She wanted a feel-good solution: identify a problem in the city, fix it by transferring the waste

to the bush, and then apply the cost to the people in the bush so that she could feel good.

Unfortunately, not only the Minister has fallen for this trick. Successive governments over the years have recognised some on the green fringe who promote composting toilets and opportunities for the re-use of effluent in more forms than one. The problem is that the effluent that is now being disposed of in the catchment of Sydney Water is not being cured to a standard that any of us would expect. It is not cured to the standard that Coffs Harbour City Council treats its effluent, or the standard that Coffs Harbour Shire Council treated its effluent over 35 years. According to the newspaper article, the sludge now being re-used is cured to a minimal standard. The article states:

The United States requires pasteurisation (heating at 70 degrees for an hour) for top-grade sludge—a viewpoint shared by Britain's Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, the magazine said.

In the Sydney Water catchment, pelleted sludge and other sludge is put in forest areas and on farms. The photograph accompanying the article shows great mounds of sludge. We all know what happens when it rains in such circumstances. The sludge is dissolved into the water and runs into our waterways. In legislation passed by this House last year, the Protection of the Environment Operations Bill, the Minister incorporated the Clean Waters Act of 1970. That Act provides that it is an offence if any waste, whether liquid, solid or gaseous, is placed in a position from which it may be washed, blown or percolated into a waterway.

The Act provides also for agricultural pursuits to now be designated pursuits which have to be licensed by the Environment Protection Authority. A farmer conducting a dairy or piggery must be licensed, at a huge cost, before any animal or farm waste can be disposed of anywhere near a catchment. At the same time, Sydney Water is disposing of human waste—which carries heavy metals and bacteria, and, as the *Sydney Morning Herald* article states, is not being tested for cryptosporidium or giardia—that is being washed, blown or percolated into Sydney's water catchment. That is the problem.

Get rid of the extreme green view, and forget those who tell us to re-use this waste on our fields without proper curing. This material could be cured properly and re-used. In fact, Sydney Water will tell us that re-used water can be used only once every five years because we have a problem with heavy metals and bacteria. The cryptosporidium parasite can live in water for up to 176 days. Given a moist

soil base, I am sure it will live a lot longer. It is a known fact that the polio virus can live in the ground for 190 days. The former coalition Government considered this issue.

Contrary to reports, Rouse Hill at the moment is putting fresh water through its dual reticulation system because it knows the danger of re-used water and that people will not use it. As I often say to people in Coffs Harbour, "I do not mind drinking mine, but I don't want to drink yours, because I know that what was in mine has not killed me yet and I will probably survive if I drink it again. But, if we are going to mix it all into a syrup and share it around, we will end up with problems." Cryptosporidium and giardia may not affect the many people whose bodily systems combat those parasites. But the elderly, the infirm, those with problems such as leukaemia and other diseases taxing the immune system are at serious risk. That is why we have this public problem at the moment: giardia and cryptosporidium can attack and kill such people. Chlorine does not destroy the parasites. In response to a question on notice asked on 25 June by the shadow minister for health and Aboriginal affairs, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning said:

The Australian drinking water guidelines state that routine monitoring for cryptosporidium is not appropriate.

Not appropriate? To the contrary, it is most appropriate. If the Government had been doing its job instead of saying, "It is costly, we cannot do this, we will not do that, we will not test, and it is not really a problem," we would not have this crisis today. People are afraid. I am afraid to drink water that is not bottled or boiled, or even to clean my teeth with it. I have to buy my water when I am in Sydney. I can afford it, but many cannot. The fact that the Government is forcing sludge re-use within a catchment that supplies water to Sydney, a city of more than five million people, is an absolute disgrace.

One major source of cryptosporidium and giardia bacteria in our water supply is re-used sludge. Further, in 1993 Sydney mains pipes were found to have so much algal build-up that they had become home to bacteria which actually ate chlorine. When the bacteria ate the chlorine out of the pipes, the giardia could survive. Giardia, chlorine-resistant, can be killed by a superdose of chlorine. Sydney Water's answer was to continue chlorination. The real trick would have been to replace the pipes or clean the pipes.

What has the Government done? The AWS was carrying out reviews of environmental factors in

regard to that problem in late 1994 or early 1995. What happened? Did the Government get a bill? Did someone offer the Government a solution costing \$100 million to \$200 million? I suggest that probably did happen, and that the Government then wanted to bring back the \$278 million that was ripped out in 1998 and earlier years, in order to balance the budget of an incompetent Treasurer that had blown out with new taxes and other increases. The Government needed the money, but decided to pull the program as there had been no outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis or giardiasis.

Expenditure of \$200 million would clean those pipes out. The shadow minister for health this evening quoted areas within the CBD and other areas of Sydney where there are high levels of giardia and cryptosporidium. The treatment process might be thought to be inadequate, but it really is state-of-the-art. The Minister and the Premier, and other members, both in government and now in opposition, studied the treatment process and found that it was good enough to remove bacteria. If the pipes are being cleaned out properly, and if the bacteria comes into Prospect reservoir in sludge, why are they reappearing further down the line. The crud and the algae in the pipes are sheltering the bacteria, one type being chlorine resistant, the other remaining unaffected.

The bacteria breed in the pipes and pass through them to the people of Sydney. Sludge presents a major problem, yet the Government has failed to advise people, "Yes, we have an algae problem in the pipes. We will attend to it. We will be pro-active instead of shifting the blame, and we will ensure that this problem does not continue." I am pleased that the Minister for Gaming and Racing is present in the Chamber so that he can listen to my comments on an appalling health danger in Coffs Harbour. What really frightens me is that a document called "On Tap" has been circulated by a committee set up by the Minister responsible for water.

The title of that document suggest that its subject matter is water. However, "On Tap" is a community newsletter for the Coffs Harbour sewerage strategy group. That group wants Coffs Harbour to re-use our effluent by means of a \$220 million scheme. They want us to re-use it not just on farming blocks and playing fields. Volume 3 of "On Tap" states that they want to see us utilising our effluent. I turn to the heading of "Re-use Potential":

This package provides the necessary infrastructure to maximise opportunities for the use of reclaimed water . . .

"On Tap" goes on to say:

... to treat effluent to potable standard and return it to the town water supply.

That group wants us to put effluent in the town water supply. That is a disgrace. The Government cannot handle Sydney's drinking water supply but supports efforts to force us to put re-used effluent back into our water supply. That is unacceptable. The long-term cost for the Government or any other government will be litigation. Such litigation will cost this State billions. On top of that, the group wants us to put it on our playing fields. The Health Department and other authorities are saying that is okay, but it cannot be treated to the highest possible standard and then pumped it into the ocean.

The Government should check with the Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for Fisheries, who came up to Coffs Harbour a fortnight ago and said he would not support a deep water ocean outfall, part and parcel of this strategy, because it may affect the marine reserve. The Government should forget the marine reserve. What about the people of Coffs Harbour? They are the ones who will be affected. People are not allowed to swim in it, even when it is diluted billions to one, but in concentrated form it can be applied to a playing field. My 12-year-old son, who plays sport every weekend, is at risk of picking up some dastardly bacterial disease still in that effluent, but it cannot be dropped out in the ocean. That is absolute lunacy.

It is high time that the green ratbags of this State and Australia were told that we do not want to eat or roll in our effluent. We want it disposed of by proper sanitary methods. We want it put where it causes the least amount of harm. One argument, which neither the Minister in charge of water nor his Government have put forward, is that effluent, treated to proper standard, with heavy metals and sludges removed and cured, is actually beneficial to the marine environment because it is high in phosphates and nitrates. The argument further suggests that effluent will promote algal growth. We use the marine environment and take fish out of it. Algal growth feeds fish, and it is part of the food chain. Volume 1 of "On Tap" states:

The goals we aim to achieve through sewerage strategy are to satisfy stringent environmental safeguards in any reuse or release of treated effluent.

The experience of Sydney Water and what has happened in Sydney means that no guarantees can be given. Water safety cannot be guaranteed. I do not want my constituents to become guinea pigs in

circumstances similar to the Sydney water crisis. I do not want the elderly, the young and the infirm in my electorate dying from viruses or being infected by viruses because of what this Government has done. Our health system is not geared to take it. The Minister for Health, the Deputy Premier, has ripped the money out, yet he is defending this nonsense. But his strategy is going to place extra pressure on our health system, especially on the new hospital we were supposed to get but never received.

They want effluent to be re-used in native forests, recreational areas, banana plantations, horticultural activities and forestry. One suggestion is that it be put on bananas. What will Queensland banana growers do? If I were a Queensland banana grower—an industry in Coffs Harbour worth somewhere between \$50 million and \$100 million, and we are always competing with Queensland, which has better growing conditions—I would put "Shit-free bananas" on the side of my banana boxes before sending them down to the markets in Sydney or Melbourne. Consumers could choose not to buy Coffs Harbour bananas.

The Government cannot give that guarantee, yet has forced them into a re-use program. One or two growers might take advantage of the offer because they are getting the effluent for nothing. But, because of Professor Hilmer, at some stage someone is going to demand payment. Once growers are fixed into the arrangement they will not be able to afford to use effluent, and they will walk away from it. What will the Minister do with it next? Will he stick it in Bucca Creek? I live at Bucca Creek, as the Minister knows. But the fact is that Bucca Creek runs into the Orara River, from which the Coffs Harbour town water supply is taken.

It then flows into the Nymboida River from which the Clarence takes its water. Effluent will be sent to the electorate of the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs. His constituents do not want to give us water they claim as theirs even though it comes from Dorrigo. That community should be asked if it would like to have a bit of body in its water, because that is what it will get. Coffs Harbour cannot continue to use effluent for irrigation without striking high rainfall, as is happening now, which prevents the effluent from being re-used. At a local council meeting I asked what would happen to that effluent and was told it would be pumped into the creek, because that is what happened to the excess. That is not an acceptable practice. Presently on my property I have 30,000 gallons of water.

**Mr Chappell:** Be careful of the water you're drinking here.

**Mr FRASER:** I shall be careful of the water. I will leave this bottle of water on the table for the honourable member for Northern Tablelands to use when he makes his contribution to the debate because I am not sure whether the carafes have just been filled with Sydney water. At the end of the day we cannot afford to push the re-use of effluent into Coffs Harbour and other catchments as happens in Sydney. If the Government is responsible it will determine how much cryptosporidium and giardia and other diseases are washed into the water supply from the re-use program of biosolids from Sydney water. Those biosolids are not treated to the standard they should be or even to the standard adopted in Coffs Harbour over the past 35 years. Coffs Harbour does not have industrial waste in its sewerage system, therefore the effluent biosolids do not contain helium. The treatment cured the biosolids, which were used in landfill and then top dressed with clean soil. Coffs Harbour was able to utilise that safe process. I do not want my constituents to drink, play in or roll in effluent, as suggested by the group being paid by the Government. Water for human consumption should be treated to the highest standard.

Sydney has spent \$400 million to build a pipeline from Lane Cove to North Head for primary treatment of effluent before it is pumped out to sea and the sludge is moved west into the Sydney Water catchment. That is not good enough. If the sludge problem and algae and crud problems in the pipes are fixed, the giardia and cryptosporidium problems will be solved along with any future problems. The Government will have the support of the people of Sydney and the coalition if it explains what will be done to resolve the problem. The motion of the Leader of the Opposition states that in view of the Government's mismanagement of Sydney's water crisis this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House. Whilst the Government plays ostrich and sticks its head in the sand pretending it is someone else's problem, or sacks David Hill or does anything else, the problem will remain.

The Government should be pro-active like the Leader of the Opposition was in issuing a 10-point plan, introducing legislation and attacking the problem. If the Government does the right thing the people will have confidence in it. This water crisis is a major issue. I support the motion. I commend the Government to answer some of the questions I have raised, to eliminate the issues causing the problem and to gain the confidence of this House and the people of New South Wales. The coalition knows the Government will win on this motion along party

lines, but the ballot on 27 March 1999 will show that the Government does not have the confidence of the people of New South Wales.

**Ms MOORE** (Bligh) [8.14 p.m.]: This is a most important debate. It is an indictment on successive governments that our water is not suitable for drinking and no resolution to the problem is in sight. This problem creates hardship for the elderly, the ill, for those with low immune systems and for the homeless, and creates inconvenience for everyone else. I agree that this crisis is sending a shocking message overseas. Economic repercussions will result, if they have not already done so, and tourism will suffer seriously. What does this say about our green Games? I am seriously concerned at the Government's failure to implement a public transport policy for all Olympic sites, including the inner city. At present the city faces the prospect of 800 private cars being parked on Rushcutters Bay Park and 25 containers on Yarranabbe Park. I fear private cars will cover the remainder of Moore Park. The foreshore parklands will be desecrated by cars and our drinking water will be contaminated—great green Games!

I should like to make some general points and then address specific problems. I agree with the spokespeople from environment groups that the long-term solution is to protect catchment areas rather than to rely only on technical solutions. The inquiry into the water problem should run its course without political interference. I oppose the issuing of refund cheques, which was blatantly and politically targeted by the Leader of the Opposition. The majority of the Sydney community would rather that revenue be ploughed back into Sydney Water to overcome contamination in the short and long term. Throughout the 1990s Sydney Water was treated as a revenue generator rather than a provider of an essential community service.

Clearly, the policy was not based on standards of excellence in the provision of water; rather it was based on the size of the dividend to the Government. There must be a balance between infrastructure renewal, filtration and revenue required by government. We certainly have not had that balance and now we are paying the price. The Premier said in his speech yesterday, "As soon as the Government identified the problem with Sydney Water we told the public about it." That is not true. On 30 July I wrote to the Managing Director of Sydney Water, to the Minister for Health and to the Minister responsible for Sydney water expressing my concern that five days had passed before information about water contamination in eastern Sydney was available to the public.

That small region of Sydney includes dense high-rise residential development, a large number of cafes, restaurants, hotels and other businesses that potentially affect my constituents and many other Sydney residents and visitors. This region includes also a large number of people living with HIV and AIDS, for whom delayed notification about the contamination could have proved fatal due to their depressed immune systems. The problem was identified on the Friday, but it was not until the following Wednesday that the health alert was publicised. When the second alert was given I called upon the Government on 27 August to implement a system to provide timely and accurate information for those most affected by contaminated water, such as people living with HIV and AIDS, so that they were aware exactly of the risks.

Residents in my electorate saw Sydney water being flushed out in Darlinghurst on the afternoon of Tuesday, 25 August, but the Government did not inform the public until late Tuesday evening. It is important that, until we know the water is truly safe, people with suppressed immune systems drink boiled water at all times rather than risk being told too late about a renewed contamination. I have also been informed that the community should be cautious of the Health Department's advice about the length of time water needs to be boiled. Apparently World Health Organisation guidelines call for contaminated water to be boiled for much longer—between five and 20 minutes.

The Government should provide safe water for those at risk who cannot afford to buy drinking water. The Government should establish water depots to provide treated water for those who cannot afford it. It should be given to hostels and other support services to provide clean, safe water for the homeless and people on low incomes. This is a very serious issue in my electorate. I probably have the largest number of people with HIV and AIDS, and homeless people and people living on the street who have no access to boiled water and who do not have the income to buy bottled water.

That is why tonight I specifically call on the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, as the eradication of giardia and cryptosporidium may be a long-term project, to provide filtered water or tap water filters free or at low cost to people with low immunity, such as the elderly, the ill and people living with HIV and AIDS. I ask him to make that same provision to the homeless and to set up water banks and hostels for the homeless and services for people living on low incomes. This contamination could go on for months and it is a serious life and death issue for those people.

I refer to a draft submission that people living with AIDS are preparing to present to the Sydney Water inquiry secretariat. They point out that they have been concerned for more than two years about the impact of contamination of Sydney's water on people with HIV and AIDS. They maintain that over that period their submissions to the Health Department have been ignored and consistently both Sydney Water and New South Wales Health have provided misinformation to this group of people who have low immune systems. They maintain:

The scope of the impact of cryptosporidium in Sydney is shown in figures recorded by the national centre for HIV epidemiology clinical research amongst PLWHAs. These figures are similar to those found in US cities which have acknowledged problems with water contamination.

They believe that water has not been filtered for patients treated by the New South Wales Health Department in hospitals. They believe that New South Wales Health has not given them correct information and they too are calling on the New South Wales Government to provide tap water filters free or at low cost for people in this category. They sum up their concerns in this way:

We believe that Sydney has been very lucky to have escaped dealing with an outbreak in which people living with HIV and AIDS and others at risk could have died, similar to the outbreaks in Milwaukee and Las Vegas. We are concerned that complacency on this issue will mean that there will no change to the consideration of the impact on people living with HIV and AIDS. Our past experience suggests that this group will not be considered or consulted about any changes. We require change and a public statement by Sydney Water and New South Wales Health acknowledging our concerns and committing themselves to addressing them.

I call upon the Government to address the concerns not only of that particular group but also the elderly, the ill and the homeless, particularly in my electorate but also in other electorates throughout Sydney. I refer to some of the contributions made by other honourable members, in particular by the honourable member for Manly. His contribution last night gave a very clear picture of the crisis we are facing and why we are facing it. He is a very credible contributor to this debate. He has been involved in this issue since the mid-1980s. He came into Parliament concerned with this issue, with a medical background, and he is the former chairman of the Joint Select Committee upon the Sydney Water Board.

I recommend that Opposition members have a good look at his contribution and use it as the basis for their questions in question time rather than their pathetic performance over the past two days. I support his calling upon the Government and the Parliament to support the McClellan inquiry and to



call for another interim report over the next month, to decide whether legislation needs to be amended or the regulatory framework needs to be dealt with; whether the role of the independent licence regulators should be extended to enable them to conduct their own reviews; and whether Sydney Water's operating licence should be amended to set standards for giardia and cryptosporidium. I refer particularly to what the honourable member said regarding the involvement of both the Government and the Opposition. He said:

The case against the Government is compelling. At least two Ministers served on the committee that knew of the shortcomings of the water treatment plants and supported recommendations that they be proceeded with. In 1994 a Minister admitted in the House that the choice that had been made was the wrong choice, as was disclosed by information provided to the Parliament.

He believes that the Government has been fully aware of shortcomings and misgivings with regard to the water treatment plants and the likely impact on the management of catchments above treatment plants. Those likely impacts have transpired. The Government has now been in office for 3½ years and Sydney is faced with a public health crisis. He also says that there is blood on the hands of both the coalition and the Government. Sydney Water has been a monolithic, unaccountable, lazy organisation, and he points out that we are in the middle of a very serious public health crisis. The honourable member for Manly has summed up the situation the community of Sydney is facing and I strongly support the position he has taken and presented so ably to this House.

**Ms FICARRA** (Georges River) [8.26 p.m.]: This is not an insignificant motion. These types of motions do not occur too often. It has occurred because of the huge amount of public concern on this issue. The issue has continued to alarm Sydneysiders and all Australians. International attention is focused on Sydney and what has happened with Sydney's poor water standard under the Carr Government. This State has been reduced virtually to Third World status in the eyes not only of Sydneysiders but also Australiawide and internationally. As late as a month ago the Minister for Health said:

Routine monitoring for cryptosporidium is not appropriate.

It is extraordinary for a Minister of Health, given today's knowledge of these parasites, to say such a thing. It shows that he is very ill-informed by his advisers and not on top of his portfolio to have made a comment such as this. The current crisis makes a mockery of the Minister responsible for

Sydney water. In a statement in October 1996 the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning said:

Sydney residents are supplied with the cleanest drinking water in the world.

As the honourable member for Bligh just said, Ministers and senior bureaucrats have been aware of the risks for some time, and to make statements like that is damning and irresponsible. I have had many letters and phone calls from constituents, and many e-mails, but one in particular came from a Mr Denis McDonald from Hurstville. On 31 July, when the scare just started, he wrote:

Premier Bob Carr said last night on television that heads will roll. His should be the first to go as he as Premier is responsible. Sydney Water should be disbanded and the old Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board reinstated as it previously existed with the regular cyclical and preventative maintenance carried out by board employees. For some reason beyond my comprehension all the inspection services we used to enjoy have been dismantled. Why?

Mr McDonald concludes with these few words:

I have tried to express my anger. To think that our water is advertised as good enough to bottle.

Although I am not supporting a return to the old Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, I understand what Mr McDonald is saying: that all of those safety guards that were there and the personnel who used to check our catchment management areas and in the field have been reduced in numbers, and we have suffered from cost-cutting measures for some time. This shock has made Sydney Water officials, bureaucrats and Ministers sit up and take notice of what has been going on and think about ways in which the problems can be fixed.

It is not long ago that Sydney residents believed that their tap water was good enough to bottle, yet today they are too frightened to even brush their teeth with it. The long-term damage that is being caused by the intense news media coverage of the water crisis will take generations to repair. Some say that the days of drinking Sydney's tap water are over, no matter how safe any government may say the water is. That is because, frankly, people just do not trust governments any more. Many recent news media reports are noteworthy. Sarah Harris, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 6 September, expressed the feelings of many Sydneysiders. Her article stated:

Sydneysiders could be forgiven for feeling like they're living the script of the movie *Groundhog Day*.

Let's face it—it's a nightmare. You wake up every morning to the radio alarm blaring: "Warning, warning, alien

approaching . . . do not drink the water, boil first. This has been a community health announcement . . . and now, for a Walk in the Black Forest.

The article also stated:

Inside the [New South Wales Health] conference room—against an unflattering crimson backdrop that proclaimed "Caring for Health"—the Minister for aqua mort, Craig Knowles, and NSW Health director-general Michael Reid looked suitably grim.

It was all as clear as mud, really.

It seems we must boil our water for two weeks. If no one is sick, then it was all for nothing.

But if someone gets sick (and maybe even dies) the levels of cryptosporidium and giardia are too high, and we may have to keep both boiling and being extremely cross indefinitely.

The Government, Mr Knowles assured the press corps, shared the public's frustration, but frankly didn't know if, when or indeed how—

**Mr Lynch:** On a point of order. I draw your attention to the fact that the honourable member for Georges River appears to be slavishly reading from a document in front of her, rather than delivering her speech in an appropriate manner.

**Ms FICARRA:** I am quoting from an article.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! It appears to me that the honourable member is reading from copious notes.

**Ms FICARRA:** As I said in my speech, I was quoting from a particular article that I wish to have recorded in *Hansard*. I noted that I was quoting from the article.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! I will not argue with the member. I suggest that she refer to copious notes. The standing orders prohibit the reading of speeches in the House.

**Ms FICARRA:** Does that include quoting media reports for inclusion in *Hansard*?

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! I have ruled on the point of order and I expect the honourable member to comply with the ruling.

**Ms FICARRA:** Government members are deeply concerned because they do not like hearing about the news media reports. This issue is the most damning condemnation of the Government. Although the honourable member for Liverpool sits back smiling, he knows that if the Labor Party were to conduct private polls on this basic service delivery—as the coalition is conducting polls—they

would show a record of management incompetence. I realise that Government members may not wish me to read this article onto the record, but I have already quoted the majority of it.

Murray Hogarth reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 29 August that secret letters from inside the Sydney Water Corporation give a detailed knowledge of the workings and the power plays of Sydney Water. Sydney Water has been politicised by the Labor Government with Labor Party stooges who have no scientific expertise. Letters reveal deep factional divisions at high levels of the \$14 billion corporation charged with making sure that Sydney's water supply is safe. They portray an organisation beset with a crisis it cannot cope with. The Government is not coping with the water crisis. I quote:

Senior management lacks the wherewithal to understand even basic physical, chemical and microbiological concepts because they lack appropriate expertise in the sciences. The public health area dealing with drinking water is poorly resourced and overworked.

The letter from which I have quoted was found in a Sydney Water envelope. The Government's response has been interesting. The latest appointment to the board has been Mr Michael Costa, Secretary of the New South Wales Labor Council. His expertise is as a numbers man. Has his appointment given the public any sense of security? No, it is just more of the same. The actions of the Carr Labor Government in crisis have been to sack David Hill and Chris Pollett, to put on Michael Costa and to pray and hope that something breaks. The Government should have learnt from all its previous disastrous political appointments—and I shall speak about the appointment of David Hill in a moment.

Let us consider the value that Sydneysiders get for their water rates. Average residential bills have increased dramatically by 4.7 per cent to \$554 in 1995-96 and by 3.6 per cent to \$574 in 1997-98. Meanwhile, the consumer price index increased by only 1.4 per cent and 0.1 per cent in those years. Last April, in a mid-term review of Sydney Water prices, the tribunal expressed its concern that the decrease in Sydney Water's capital expenditure may harm repair and maintenance levels. What was the Government's response? Sydney Water's gross capital expenditure decreased from \$447 million in 1994-95 to a low \$228 million in the following year and decreased further to \$187 million in 1996-97.

The Carr Government has been milking Sydney Water to prop up its ailing State budget year after year, and this city's third water contamination scare has arisen because of the running down of the

Sydney Water Corporation. A sum of \$530 million has been ripped off Sydney Water in two years. Where has that money gone? It certainly has not gone towards the maintenance of Sydney's water supply, checking the filtration plant or containing catchment areas. We are being told that Sydney's water crisis could last another six months, even if there is no new contamination of Warragamba Dam. Indeed, this crisis could continue up to next State election in March 1999.

If the dam's catchment receives above average summer rainfall, as the latest forecasts would suggest, the city may face a string of boil-water alerts for the next year. We have been told that higher levels of cryptosporidium could indicate pollution by animal faeces—most likely cattle—while elevated giardia levels may indicate human sewage. Sydney Water experts say that the current levels of both parasites mean that Warragamba Dam will be suspect until March next year. The Director-General of Health, Mr Michael Reid, has confirmed that the number of cryptosporidium oocysts is up to 10,000 per 100 litres.

Sydney Water sources admit that there is no way of knowing how badly Warragamba Dam, Sydney's main water storage, has been contaminated by the recent rains that filled it to capacity. No-one really knows how bad the situation is and no-one has any answers on what to do about it. Infectious oocysts of the potentially fatal cryptosporidium parasite could remain alive in the dam for hundreds of days. Recent research has shown that those oocysts can live for 176 days in water between 16 and 20 degrees—the range of temperature in the surface in Warragamba Dam, according to Dr Judi Hansen of Sydney Water Corporation.

My constituents have put forward a number of suggestions. The people of the Georges River electorate are sick of having to boil their water. Mr Graham Blewett of Peakhurst has put to me, and I have since put to the Minister, the suggestion that the Penshurst reservoir be filled from Woronora Dam, thus giving more people access to water free of parasites originating in Warragamba Dam. As Mr Blewett has pointed out, there is a pipe that goes over the old Como railway bridge. Why not bring clean water from the Sutherland area to St George? The honourable member for Sutherland is in the Chamber at the moment and she is fortunate that her electorate has such a clean water supply. We in the St George area would love to have the same water supply. It would be very easy to reconnect the Penshurst reservoir.

Who are the Sydneysiders most at risk? They are the elderly, infants, those with depressed

immune systems, cancer sufferers, those with the human immunodeficiency virus, those undergoing ray therapy or chemotherapy and those with chronic heart, lung and kidney disorders. Hundreds of Sydneysiders are at risk. What of the future? Sydney Water says that dam water and sediments are unlikely to settle until late spring, although more heavy rain could cause them to mix up again to add even more uncertainty to the process. I quote small, short excerpts from a *Sydney Morning Herald* article on 7 September, which states:

The longer the Sydney drinking water crisis continues, the greater the uncertainty—about its underlying causes, its actual seriousness and how it might have been avoided. Instead of ending uncertainty quickly, the Carr Government, since the first signs of trouble more than six weeks ago, has managed to add to it. The Premier must now take the responsibility he should have assumed at the outset.

The prospect now is for further "boil-water" restrictions, continuously or intermittently, until Christmas or perhaps several months after that. Even then, it is not certain that the public eventually will be told much more than it already has been. That is, in essence, that tests show high readings of potentially dangerous cryptosporidium and giardia. These indications of contamination have prompted repeated "boil-water" alerts since July 27. But the more time that passes the less confidence there is in the nature and quality of these readings and the greater the need for further explanation and accountability.

That is criticism of the Premier, whose posture during the crisis has been to complain about the failings of others. The Premier must now assume greater responsibility. His first task should be to establish a more powerful inquiry to establish the truth, to remove the uncertainty and to restore public confidence. Peter McClellan, QC, has confirmed what everyone in New South Wales suspected: the handling of the Sydney water crisis was botched. It is disturbing that more than one month after the initial contamination outbreak, the source of the problem is still not known and there is no guarantee that it will not happen again.

A rebate of \$15 is a joke. How can \$15 possibly compensate residents for the inconvenience of having to boil water indefinitely? The report highlights problems with the management of the contamination scare, including delays in issuing public warnings. At the end of the day the Carr Government cannot say what caused the contamination or explain how the Government will prevent the problem from happening again. By contrast the Leader of the Opposition has introduced a 10-point plan as part of the Safe Drinking Water Bill. It is hoped that the Government will realise that residents want the parties to work together on this major problem, which is too important to politicise. The ideas from each party should be considered.

The 10-point plan of the Leader of the Opposition is extremely far-sighted, reasonable and responsible. It is directed at minimising future scares and restoring public confidence in Sydney water. The 10-point plan involves a number of matters, such as the appointment of a new Sydney Water board based on expertise, not political association; the introduction of a Safe Drinking Water Bill similar to the legislation enacted by the Clinton Administration; the freezing of the planned increase in water rates until the crisis is resolved; the establishing of an Internet site with up-to-date information on water quality; and regular monitoring for cryptosporidium, giardia and other parasites which have emerged during the past two to three years as a significant threat to the Sydney water supply.

The plan also involves redirecting money from this year's predicted \$279 million government dividend to improve the monitoring and filtration system treatments such as microfiltration and improved membrane technology. In fact, tonight the coalition was given the benefit of expertise from the head of the chemical engineering department at the University of New South Wales, Professor Tony Fane, who is a leading expert. The coalition's plan provides for a \$40 rebate to ratepayers in their next water bill. That amount may be reviewed as the crisis continues. The 10-point plan will also transfer the responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the public health unit of the Department of Health.

The plan will tighten access to water catchment areas such as Warragamba Dam, initiate regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination, and impose statutory obligations on the Minister and the department to issue health warnings as soon as relevant information is made available to them. They are all sensible and reasonable points. Two years ago Dr George Rubin, New South Wales Chief Health Officer, apparently warned the Sydney Water Corporation that giardia and cryptosporidium posed a unique threat to the safety of the drinking water. Dr Rubin sought rapid action in assessing those risks. In 1996 in a letter Dr Rubin warned:

The magnitude of this potential risk and the concerns about the adequacy of the current controls demands some prompt action from Sydney Water Corporation to ameliorate this risk.

Dr Rubin specified elements for the action plan, which were:

- An assessment of the risks of contamination and the likelihood of system failure in the field of Sydney Water's operations which may result in outbreaks of cryptosporidium;

- An analysis and early publication of the results of all cryptosporidium surveillance done so far by Sydney Water;
- The development of best practice guidelines to minimise the risk of cryptosporidium.

What was the reaction of the Government? There was no outcome. Dr Rubin should be asked who in the Department of Health or Sydney Water took notice of anything he said. The former managing director of Sydney Water, Mr Paul Broad, replied, assuring Dr Rubin that Sydney Water had world's best practice management procedures as the first line of defence. He said that the catchment and treatment plants would intercept as much as 99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium. However, other documents show that experts from Sydney Water advised that the treatment plants would need to achieve greater than 99.9 per cent removal to reach acceptable international risk levels. Mr Broad also responded that Sydney Water had commissioned research by the University of New South Wales to develop an online surrogate measurement for cryptosporidium at water treatment plants. Mr Broad said:

In the unlikely event of a "breakthrough", the results of this research will allow the corporation to take immediate effective action to prevent contamination of the drinking water supply.

However, that has not eventuated. The warnings were there all the way along. What was David Hill's part in the fiasco? He is a typical political appointee with no experience in water management—some would say no experience in soccer management, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the State Rail Authority. Peter McClellan, QC, found that on 29 July Mr Hill, who was then the Chairman of Sydney Water, significantly influenced a decision to limit a public health warning to parts of Sydney, despite evidence that contamination could be more widespread. Mr McClellan said:

In my opinion, the decision did not reflect appropriate concern for public health.

The report also gave accounts of a heated telephone exchange between Mr Hill and a New South Wales Health medical officer, who claimed that Mr Hill shouted, yelled and screamed at her, and threatened her with the sack. Mr Hill said that while he could have done without the report, he did not believe it would harm his chances of winning the electorate of Hughes for the Australian Labor Party. I have got news for David Hill! He is dead in his Sydney water and no amount of boiling and keeping the button pressed down for one minute will save him.

Mr McClellan said in his report that, after deciding to issue a limited warning on July 29,

Sydney Water officials discovered New South Wales Health had already issued a Sydney-wide alert. Thank goodness for New South Wales Health! Sydney Water had moved to kill that alert, with Mr Hill engaging in a heated exchange with NSW Health media officer Shari Armistead, who had issued the full alert on the instructions of department head Mick Reid. Mr McClellan said that while there were conflicting accounts about what was said, he was satisfied that Mr Hill did not tell Ms Armistead, "I will sack you," although Mr Hill accepted he may have used words to the effect of "You'll be sacked." Mr Hill's account of the conversation had been:

**Hill:** This [the press release] is irresponsible. It's unauthorised and inaccurate.

**Armistead:** You people should have put the release out earlier. That's why we put it out.

**Hill:** You're in enough s.... already. Don't argue. Just retract the bloody thing and get Mick Reid to ring me.

And this person wants to stand as a Federal member of Parliament! The people of the electorate of Hughes will give him a clear message on 3 October. He has already stuffed up enough government organisations and he definitely will not ruin the lives of the people of Hughes. He is a joke. Senior officers of Sydney Water had informed the Minister of the risks involved and the maintenance required, but we still hear farcical dorothy dixers in this House. The honourable member for Liverpool was part of the farce. On 22 October 1996 he asked a dorothy dixer; he asked the Minister to report on the dangerous bug in Sydney's water supply. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning assured honourable members that he was on top of it all. He said:

Sydney's residents are supplied with the cleanest drinking water in the world . . . Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

He then tried to imply that this was related to the commercial activities of those who wanted to sell more water filtration plants and that the matter was totally under control. He said:

In the circumstances, given an attempt to bring about a public health scare, I would have thought Opposition members would have appreciated an assurance from the Government that our water supply was clean and was meeting health standards. As I said earlier, the water treatment plants are performing.

What a joke! Who could trust any of them? Nine months ago the Carr Government put its political stamp on the board of the \$14 billion Sydney Water Corporation. This State-owned corporation is second

only to the power companies as a money-spinner for the Treasury coffers. A new chairman was appointed from the right of the New South Wales ALP—that mastermind, that right-wing stalwart, David Hill. In addition, three other new directors on the board of eight were appointed. Within a month Mr Hill and his new board had appointed Mr Chris Pollett, one of three short-listed candidates from inside Sydney Water, as managing director on a salary of \$350,000 a year.

An international executive search firm had been retained to find a replacement because the position of managing director was so important. However, none of the outsiders ever made it to the final interviews, despite the job involving control of one of the largest water utilities in the world with greater assets than most of the nation's share-listed corporations and a massive responsibility for public health and the environment. What happened at the board's job interviews is not known because the minutes are commercial in confidence. But from there on Sydney Water's new hierarchy was put together. Mr Pollett reported to the board and Mr Hill reported to the Government. The three billion shares in Sydney Water were held by five State Ministers on a non-beneficial basis on behalf of the people. When David Hill was appointed the key shareholders were two of his factional colleagues on the right: the Treasurer, Michael Egan, and the former Minister for Fair Trading, Brian Langton, who has since stepped down following the infamous ICAC inquiry.

David Hill, a former ALP appointee as managing director of the ABC and State Rail, has since become our wonderful hapless candidate in the Federal seat of Hughes. David Hill was the man who earlier this year had great news for his ALP mates in this State: record dividends when the Carr Government was desperate to balance its final budget before the March election. Last year \$250 million was paid to the Government and almost \$280 million is expected this financial year. The people of Sydney say to Premier Carr, "Hand it back, put it where it should be, solve the problem and do whatever is necessary to improve our water supply. It is just not good enough."

The Carr Government's shame will escalate if it cannot deal with Sydney's water problem. The words that the Premier uttered at the opening of the Prospect water plant in October 1996 will haunt the Government into Opposition. He said that Sydney now has fresh filtered water—crystal clear, healthy and great tasting. That is all that the people of Sydney ever wanted from the Carr Government. The Government must spend the \$278 million dividend

from Sydney Water to fix the problem. If it costs more, the Government must find the additional funds. The people of Sydney demand it and will judge the Government's actions at the ballot box. The Opposition hopes to work in a spirit of bipartisan co-operation because this should not be a political bunfight. Opposition members make that statement on behalf of their constituents, who would expect this to be the first issue to be debated. [*Time expired.*]

[*Debate interrupted.*]

## STANDING ORDERS

### Variation of Standing Order 122

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [8.58 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That Standing Order 122(8) be varied to provide that the House resume at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 10 September 1998.

Earlier today I indicated to the House that Standing Order 122 was drafted in the circumstances that applied in 1994, circumstances which are different to those that now exist in this House. The standing order was not written by the former Government but under the heavy hand of the charter of reform. I know the honourable member for Gosford is also a strong supporter of them. Those circumstances do not now exist. The standing order has complicated what is the most serious and important motion that can be moved by any member, namely, a vote of no confidence in the Government. The minutiae of the standing order make no sense, particularly when one looks at the time for finishing and starting, namely, that debates are to conclude at 10.30 p.m. and start again at 9.00 the following morning.

Members on all sides have made arrangements tomorrow morning for Cabinet and party meetings. Therefore, it has been agreed between the Opposition and the Government that at 10.30 p.m. the Speaker will leave the chair until 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning, rather than 9.00 a.m. The debate will continue, if necessary, until 10.30 p.m. tomorrow and the Government will then have to make the decision about when the House will sit again to conclude the debate. Standing Order 122 makes no allowance for any other business of the House, including notices of motions for Government business, notices of motions by Opposition members or question time. For those reasons the standing order will be reviewed.

**Mr HARTCHER** (Gosford) [8.59 p.m.]: The Opposition has no objection to the amendment to the standing order. I note the comments of the Leader of the House in respect of the circumstances in which that standing order was drafted. In fact, the Leader of the House was a member of the Standing Orders and Procedure Committee and enjoyed and expressed great pleasure at the drafting of the standing order, in anticipation that sooner or later he would move a motion of no confidence in the Fahey Government. That did not eventuate, but we now have a standing order which was drafted for a specific circumstance. That circumstance has been rendered inoperative by the passage of time.

Accordingly, while this is the most important business that the House can determine, it is nonetheless important that the ordinary business of Parliament should at some stage resume. I anticipate that this debate will probably conclude tomorrow. I note the assurance by the Leader of the House that question time will proceed at 2.15 p.m. tomorrow and also note the ruling of Mr Speaker given today that question time does not preclude questions on Sydney Water if at that stage the motion of no confidence in the Government has not been determined. However, as I said, I anticipate it probably will be determined before 2.15 p.m. tomorrow. I thank the Leader of the House for consulting me about the matter.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! The honourable member for Gosford has asked about the type of questions that will be allowed during question time tomorrow. Will that again be a decision for Mr Speaker?

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [9.01 p.m.]: It will. Again, this runs contrary to all the precedents in this Parliament in relation to anticipation of debate. It is one of the unfortunate consequences of the existence of the standing order. Mr Speaker made it clear that it is an exclusive area, and the standing orders committee will have to look at how this problem was overcome in the past. As Mr Speaker rightly pointed out, every question can be peppered in view of what you said in the debate yesterday, which would mean that the Parliament would never deal with the matters before it and question time would never really be question time; it would simply be a question time about what members and Ministers have said in Parliament. The matter has arisen suddenly and unexpectedly. I understand that there is a problem about it, but the Government will resolve it.

**Motion agreed to.**

## NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT

## Motion of No Confidence

[*Debate resumed.*]

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [9.02 p.m.]: The cry of most people in Sydney is, "Water water everywhere nor any drop to drink." Fortunately, the people of the Sutherland shire have clean water. There is not much wrong in the State that cannot be fixed by what is right in Cronulla. Of course, I wish that everyone was in the same position with regard to water as the people in the electorate of Cronulla.

**Mr McBride:** What about Cronulla workers club?

**Mr KERR:** I am reminded about Cronulla workers club. I will come to that—which is more than the dividend holders can do. How did we get into the position of Sydney being given the status of a Third World capital? It is a very sorry saga, and the people involved deserve some mention. One must start with the present Government and the exercise of ministerial control. For the benefit of the Government, I indicate that under the State Owned Corporations Act 1989 the Minister responsible for Sydney Water had the power at his disposal to intervene and give direction to Sydney Water at any time during the crisis. The Government's recent call to increase ministerial control through legislation does nothing except return Sydney to the old days of the Water Board, and will give the Minister no more power than he already has.

In effect, it will remove the ministerial direction from the scrutiny of Parliament. Under the Public Health Act the Minister for Health also had the power to take action or give directions in order to prevent the use of water which was unfit for drinking or suspected of being a risk to public health. It is a situation that this Government had full knowledge of. Two years ago Sydney Water was warned of the potential threat of giardia and cryptosporidium to the safety of Sydney's water supply. Correspondence between the Health Department and Sydney Water reveals that they were aware of the threat two years ago and chose to ignore it.

The managing director of Sydney Water assured the Carr Government that there was no such threat and that treatment plants would intercept up to 99.9 per cent of the cryptosporidium. The managing director gave an assurance, against the advice of Sydney Water's experts, that the acceptable risk level required treatment plants to remove more than

99.9 per cent of cryptosporidium. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning failed to heed the Sydney Water Corporation's 1995-96 annual report warning that cryptosporidium was an emerging issue.

I wish to examine the role of David Hill in this matter. As the Labor candidate, David Hill is seeking to represent the Federal electorate of Hughes, which is in the Sutherland shire. When it comes to diplomacy, anyone who has witnessed the performance of David Hill as chairman of the board would regard him as the Castlereagh of Como. I understand that he has recently acquired a residence in Como. Just as Lord Castlereagh's political career came to a violent end, the political career of David Hill has also come to an end because of what has happened with Sydney Water as a direct result of his actions.

As the honourable member for Georges River told the House, it was the intervention of David Hill that prevented many people in Sydney from appreciating the risks that they were taking in drinking the water. It was David Hill's irresponsible action that was commented upon by Mr McClellan, QC, in his report. In fact, it was David Hill who wanted to set up an alternative inquiry by the Water Board. The Premier talked about bristling egos in the Water Board, but the Water Board was going to hold its own inquiry. It could well give new meaning to the expression "Who guards the guardians?" In fact, those guardians may well be responsible for the contamination that has occurred in Sydney's water.

At least the present Government was not prepared to countenance the alternative inquiry. When he proposed that alternative inquiry, David Hill was enjoying his \$73,000 a year income. He won ALP preselection against a well-known local councillor, Ken McDonell. As a councillor on Sutherland Shire Council, Ken McDonell would at least have been able to give his full time as the Labor candidate for Hughes. However, Mr Hill decided that he wanted to keep his job. When observations were made about this he said, "You would expect the Liberals to make these calls but it is a silly proposition."

The Premier would be surprised to learn that he had joined the Liberal Party, because he was the one who wanted David Hill to leave. The Premier said, "I would like him to go earlier but he opted to stay on." He has opted to stay on in Hughes and on 3 October he will be told by the voters to move on—and not before time. When even the Premier, a pseudo-Liberal, told him to move on he said, "It

may have been politically more opportunistic for me to go earlier but I believe any chairman of a board of directors when an organisation is in trouble should see it through." I have news for Mr Hill: that board of directors and that organisation are still in trouble. By his own lights he should have remained there. What will happen when he gets into trouble as member for Hughes? Will he move on?

**Mr Brogden:** I hope so.

**Mr KERR:** I do not think it will arise so we will never find out.

**Mr McManus:** It will arise all right, my friend.

**Mr KERR:** That may give a whole new meaning to the expression "pushing water uphill". The political career of David Hill will never rise again. The matter does not end there. Unlike the Cronulla Workers Club, the former Water Board was able to provide plenty of dividends. Under the chairmanship of David Hill record dividends were paid to the Labor Government.

**Mr McManus:** What were you doing in 1993? What was your Government doing in 1993?

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! The honourable member for Bulli may seek the call when the honourable member for Cronulla has concluded his contribution.

**Mr KERR:** It is the first time I have been asked for a date in this House and I am rather surprised. To return to the motion before the House, we still do not know who is responsible, what happened or why the people of Sydney have been unable to drink the water. It was the Premier who took personal charge of this matter some weeks ago and it is important to uncover the Premier's role in this whole exercise. It was the Premier who cancelled visits to Murwillumbah and Lismore and turned his aircraft around to return to Sydney. It was the Premier who said that the Government had a responsibility to provide clean water for Sydney—a responsibility that has not as yet been discharged.

**Mr Merton:** Terry Rumble has gone looking for water.

**Mr KERR:** The honourable member for Illawarra is not game to come back.

**Mr Merton:** He might become Lasseter looking for water.

**Mr KERR:** Yes. He may strike a reef.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Cronulla may well appreciate the assistance of the honourable member for Baulkham Hills but he will probably conclude his contribution more rapidly without it.

**Mr KERR:** The Government cannot perform the most fundamental task of government. The speech given by the Minister for the Environment in relation to the corporatisation of the water board shows her view of the role of government and water. The memorandum of understanding between the Sydney Water Board and the Environment Protection Authority has not been complied with. The inquiry that has been set up does not have the powers required. In opposition Labor was keen to call for royal commissions, basically on anything that moved. Whenever there was a perceived problem in public administration the solution put forward was a royal commission. It is strange that, having attained government, Labor is not suggesting that there should now be a royal commission. First, the Labor appointee said that the Water Board should handle it. That would be great: a let the guardians take care of the guardians situation! Then it was suggested that an inquiry should be headed by David Harley.

**Mr Smith:** David Hill would be better.

**Mr KERR:** That could have occurred.

**Mr Smith:** He would know less about it.

**Mr KERR:** Yes. The Government, having suggested David Harley, decided that there was a potential conflict of interest. So once again there was a knee-jerk reaction. Then Peter McClellan, QC, was appointed. The reports from him so far have been very good. David Hill may not like them but the evidence has been presented in a straightforward fashion. For all Peter McClellan's admirable qualities, he does not have the powers of a royal commission. They are what is required.

**Mr Smith:** So you are formally calling for a royal commission?

**Mr KERR:** Yes.

**Mr Amery:** Oh, God! This is getting serious!

**Mr KERR:** Yes. It has taken some weeks but the Government has finally said that it is getting serious. That is a good call. The people of Sydney are entitled to far better than what we have seen to date.

**Mr Amery:** Your system is not to tell anyone, to keep it a secret. That is Liberal policy.



**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will have the opportunity to take part in the debate at the appropriate time.

**Mr KERR:** The Minister and other Government members have had the opportunity to speak in the debate but they have chosen not to avail themselves of that opportunity.

**Mr McBride:** Whose side is he on?

**Mr KERR:** We are beginning to wonder which side the Minister is on. By drawing attention to the fact—

**Mr Amery:** To the fact that you covered up.

**Mr KERR:** There was no cover-up.

**Mr Amery:** You just didn't tell anybody.

**Mr KERR:** If you have a look at what was produced you will see when the results were taken and the fact that those results—

**Mr Amery:** Table the press release.

**Mr Merton:** Don't drink the water.

**Mr KERR:** At great personal risk—

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Cronulla will ignore interjections and continue his speech.

**Mr KERR:** The Government chose, over two years, to ignore the repeated warnings. The Minister answered questions in the House.

**Mr Amery:** Very well too.

**Mr KERR:** Very well and very comprehensively, in denying that there was any risk from these parasites. If you want to talk about keeping State secrets, you are on the record as not only keeping silent but going out of your way to persuade people that there is no danger in the water. That is on the public record. Nobody in Sydney could have confidence in this Government because of its record of deception and failure. It is an absolute disgrace that Sydney finds itself in this situation; Sydney has become an international laughing-stock. Tonight we do not know how long this crisis will continue, or what has caused it, or when relief will be in sight. If ever there was a motion of no confidence before this House which deserves support by all members, it is this one.

**Mr BROGDEN** (Pittwater) [9.20 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues, in particular the Leader of the Opposition, in supporting this motion. This is the first occasion on which I have had an opportunity to speak to a motion of such importance. It strikes at the very core of the Government. In view of its mismanagement of the Sydney Water crisis this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House. One could put up a scoreboard to test the competency of the Government; what it gets wrong and what it gets right. It is bad enough that the Government cannot get the Dog Act right; it is even worse that the Government's poor management of Sydney Water ensures that people cannot drink water in Sydney.

On the date of the first water scare I greeted my wife, who was returning from a business trip to the United States of America, at Sydney Airport with a container of bottled water and a copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald* that carried the headline "Boil Water". I welcomed her back to third world Australia, where she is unable to drink water from a tap. Never in my life have I known a State government to be so incompetent. The management by the Government of Sydney's water supply is at such a low level that we can no longer be confident of the quality of the water that comes out of our taps. It is the big city nightmare: we cannot drink water from the tap, we cannot brush our teeth using tap water, we cannot even gargle under the shower because we have to keep our mouth closed for fear of drinking contaminated water.

I have been fascinated by the cowardly political tactics of the Government throughout the past two water scares. It has sought, with limited success, to put itself in opposition to its departments. During the first water scare the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning denied any responsibility and took a position in opposition to that of his own department. Sadly, that line was accepted by the media. He was able to get away with it for a couple of days, but no longer. He used the line, "Ever since this came to my attention I have taken charge of this problem". He has been in charge of Sydney's water supply for the past 3½ years yet he has chosen to do nothing about the problem.

When he took charge of his department when the water crisis hit Sydney he decided to issue a warning to residents to boil their water. As time went on he offered up scapegoats to the media and to the public. Who were the great scapegoats? They were the faceless men and women of Sydney Water. When the media got sick of that line the Minister offered them names. When the media got sick of

tactics he offered them the managing director. When it became apparent that the media needed a bigger name and a greater scalp the Minister happily provided David Hill, one of his great Labor mates, on a platter. Ironically, at the exact time that David Hill decided to become actively involved as the Labor candidate for the Federal electorate of Hughes his career, based purely and solely on patronage, has fallen to pieces. The voters in the electorate of Hughes will seal his fate in a few weeks time when they deliver their verdict on his chairmanship of Sydney Water. The tactic of the Minister began to wear thin when, at the time of the second water alert on 25 August, it was obvious that the problem was greater than first suggested by Sydney Water. In that regard I wish to concentrate on its impact on the electorate of Pittwater, which is at the very end of the water filtration system. For that reason some of the highest readings of giardia and cryptosporidium samples were recorded in that electorate. The first water scare, Sydneywide, was announced when readings in Palm Beach were above safety levels. At the time of the second scare, readings in Palm Beach were five times above acceptable drinking water standards.

At 12.05 a.m. on 25 August water in Palm Beach was found to contain cryptosporidium at 1,050 and giardia at 347. Interestingly, at the time of those readings the Minister had personally taken charge of the issue. The joint announcement of the Minister and the Premier to residents to boil their water was made at 10.30 p.m. that night—almost 24 hours after the Government had tested the water on the northern beaches at the very tip of the northern peninsula. What does the Minister have to say to the people of the northern beaches of Sydney, who had been drinking highly contaminated water for almost a full day? His Government did not have the courage to make an announcement when the testing was taking place, instructing people to boil water.

That leads me to talk about the system that the Government has put in place, a system that the Premier and the Minister beat their chests about on a daily basis. They say they are proud of the systems that they have put in place for testing and of the fact that they have alerted the public to the need to boil water. Why did the people of the electorate that I represent have to wait almost 24 hours after the testing to be informed that the water was not fit to drink? We are waiting for an answer to that question. I doubt that we will ever get an answer, certainly not from this Government. The answer will come from the independent commission that has been established to investigate these matters.

I reiterate the Opposition's concern that the terms of reference formulated by the Government are not sufficiently wide to permit a full and proper investigation of the real reasons for the Government's inactivity and unwillingness to address this issue. The Opposition takes much comfort from the Government's inability to deal with this issue. Interestingly, at the same time as the people of Pittwater were boiling water they were also coping with EnergyAustralia's inefficient and poor infrastructure. The former Mackellar County Council, which covers the northern beaches, has some of the worst infrastructure of all the electricity areas covered by EnergyAustralia. At the same time as people were boiling water the EnergyAustralia system was failing, which resulted in blackouts. That meant that people could not even boil water. I was waiting for the sewers in Pittwater to back up, together with the undrinkable water and lights that could not be switched on.

**Mr Tripodi:** Go to your electorate office.

**Mr BROGDEN:** The honourable member for Fairfield has challenged me to do something. When he is in opposition in six months time he will understand the difficulties of being in opposition. A coalition government would be better because it would give the people of New South Wales a better and fairer hearing than this Government has given the people of New South Wales who are not represented by Labor members. It is difficult for local members to break through the Sussex Street control of the Government to get basic services for their constituents. I find it difficult, and it is disgusting for the people of Pittwater. I note the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Liverpool. In 1996 the honourable member asked the following dorothy dixer of the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning:

What is the Government's reaction to a report today of a dangerous bug in Sydney's water supply?

The Minister replied in part that Sydney residents are supplied with the cleanest drinking water in the world.

**Mr Amery:** That's true.

**Mr BROGDEN:** The Minister says that that is true. Clearly he is unaware that Sydney is an international embarrassment in terms of water quality, that without a shadow of a doubt the crisis will affect tourism in New South Wales, and that it has had, and will continue to have, detrimental effects on the New South Wales economy. The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning said:

Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

Who is doing the scaremongering two years later? The scaremongering is being done by this Government which has used its authority to cover-up the real issues over a period. In recent days we have witnessed some stunning hypocrisy in the Chamber as Government members have made poor attempts to shift the blame. They have even had the gall to stand with their hands on their hearts and say, "We do not want any politics in this; we are simply here to fix the problem." The Government has refused to indicate how long people will have to boil their water, what has caused the crisis and how it will fix the problem.

We are living the big city nightmare. Sydney is a beautiful city with a population of more than four million people. I was born in Sydney and I am proud to live in Sydney. However, the people of Sydney cannot drink the tap-water. The Government has continued to distance itself from Sydney Water and is finally being seen as nothing more than a sham. In the doctrine of responsible government how can the Minister responsible for Sydney Water possibly decide that he will oppose his department? The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has been responsible for Sydney Water for about 3½ years. He has intimated through his media commentary that there is a problem with the private filtration plant, despite the comments on the record by the Premier and the Minister in support of that form of private sector infrastructure funding and despite attempts to attack the Sydney Water board which the Minister claims is responsible for the issue.

The Minister has failed to meet the basic and fundamental responsibility of any Minister in our parliamentary system, that is, to accept responsibility for this type of disaster. If he had any honour he would resign. He would not force the Premier to sack him; he would resign. However, it is clear that he has decided to dig in and see the crisis through to the end. He has provided the Government with some angst. Despite the bravado of Government members, it is clear to the Opposition that they are hurting, and will continue to hurt, as a consequence of this crisis. How do Government members answer the people in their electorates who ask when they will be able to drink the water? Members opposite have no answer, and it is beginning to hurt them in real terms in their electorates.

The initial outbreak of cryptosporidium and giardia was indicated during a warning issued on Monday, 27 July 1998. On Saturday, 25 July,

Sydney Water tested the water. Those tests, conducted two days before the Government announced that people had to boil the water, indicated that the water was contaminated. The Government's initial response was to stonewall, to lie to the people of New South Wales and to hope that the problem would go away. I am referring to the first scare in July, during which the people of Sydney had to boil the water. The first warning related only to a specific section of Sydney but was then extended to the whole of Sydney on Thursday, 30 July, when tests conducted at Palm Beach in my electorate of Pittwater clearly showed high readings.

On Tuesday, 4 August, all water supplies were cleared for drinking. It is fair to say that the people of Sydney might have thought that the problem was small and could be solved, and that they might be willing to co-operate with the authorities for some time. However, people awoke on the morning of 26 August to the news that at 10.30 p.m. on 25 August the Government had announced that they had to boil the water again. That is when people realised that the problem was greater than first thought. It must be remembered that many people went to bed on the evening of 25 August without knowing that the water could not be consumed. However, after waking the next morning they had a shower, brushed their teeth and had a glass of water, only to discover by listening to the radio in their cars on their way to work that they could not drink the water. Because the Government delayed for 24 hours the announcement about boiling the water, many people had already been drinking it. Perhaps we should be grateful that the Government delayed for only 24 hours the announcement about the second scare, because it did not respond to the first scare for 48 hours.

**Mr McBride:** I can't stand this.

**Mr BROGDEN:** The honourable member for The Entrance says that he cannot stand it. The people in his electorate of The Entrance do not have this problem. The pathetic attempts of the honourable member to provide an argument in support of his Government's actions are embarrassing.

**Mr McBride:** I live on the beautiful central coast.

**Mr BROGDEN:** People do not think the honourable member is beautiful. Government members are unwilling to admit that their management of Sydney Water has failed. The dividend of \$279 million that the Government will rip out of Sydney Water will be poured into

consolidated revenue. I would prefer the Government to pour the money into a safe, clean and healthy filtration plant, one on which we can rely and which delivers water that we can drink daily without the need to boil it. The \$279 million dividend that Sydney Water must pay demonstrates the Government's inability to move beyond economic management, the rampant management and style of the Treasurer in the other place, and to realise that there is more to the game than simply ripping money out of Government-owned enterprises if they cannot deliver basic requirements. In this case the basic requirement is to provide safe, clean drinking water to four million residents of Sydney.

It is clear that the Government is unwilling to act. Why? Earlier this year it delivered a budget that was framed by the Treasurer, in a Machiavellian sense, to force the process of electricity privatisation to see the budget through. Now that the Government has backed away from privatisation of electricity and must forgo the funds that that would have provided to the Government, it finds itself in a difficult budgetary circumstance. The Government desperately needs the \$279 million that it reaps from Sydney Water. In fact, it would be seeking to extract more if it could. But the spotlight is now focussed and those tens of millions of dollars will have to be taken from consolidated revenue rather than going to consolidated revenue, through this dividend, to fix Sydney's water system.

At the same time the Government moved bravely forward to increase the charges that we residents pay, without any guarantee for the safety of our water. Under considerable pressure, in the end the Government decided to put a freeze on the proposed increases. I hope, for the sake of the community, we will soon see the end of this problem. But as an elected representative I cannot guarantee an end to this crisis in the foreseeable future. I cannot guarantee any solution or any surety that we will not be boiling our water for some weeks or months to come.

It would appear that international experts brought here by Sydney Water confirm that the Sydney water system is failing. It seems there is no hope held out or end in sight or surety about resolution of our problems. It is a matter of great pride that we live in a city that is not only a great tourist destination today but in just over two years will be the focus of attention of the entire world. It is a matter of some embarrassment that we have a Government that cannot guarantee that in the long term we will be able to drink our tap water. It is with some disappointment that I join my coalition colleagues in expressing a lack of confidence in the

Government over this matter. I believe this issue will be the nail in the coffin of the Carr Government. In March those Labor members who have not resigned or walked away will look back in time from the Opposition benches in this House and realise that their inability to deliver safe, clean drinking water to the community was the issue that consigned them to opposition.

**Mrs STONE** (Sutherland) [9.42 p.m.]: I am pleased to be able to speak to the motion of no confidence in the Government. This is a most important and significant debate. These vital issues have been well documented by my colleagues throughout this debate, and for that reason I will not reiterate the many aspects of this disgraceful story. It is shameful that a Government has presided over a confused and disjointed picture for such an important service. Surely, for our community clean, safe drinking water should not be an unattainable expectation.

The continuing Sydney water crisis is unprecedented. The long history of faith in public administration in this city has been damaged in such a way as never before. This is especially distressful for all those who have been working so hard for so long to deliver a successful Olympics in Sydney. This is indeed a state of emergency—a state of emergency not only for Sydney and a threat to the health and wellbeing of its people, but a state for emergency for Australia's reputation internationally. The undoubted impact on tourism is yet to be measured. But the immediate problem is harmful to the general health of our community, with special concerns for our young, our elderly and the disadvantaged in our community.

The litany of dramatic events, or should I say bungles, has left the people of Sydney wondering who is in charge, who is responsible. At the very least is there some semblance of leadership that would produce somebody, anybody or even a collective everybody who might have the courage, but more importantly the intestinal fortitude, to acknowledge that if one assumes the trappings of high office, either in Parliament or as a Government appointee, once accepts the concomitant responsibilities and accountabilities that go with that position.

Unfortunately, the reality has been quite the opposite: confusion, conflicting advice, uncertainty, lack of ownership of the problem, anxiety and an ever increasing suspicion that those to whom the community looks to manage such issues have performed poorly. In fact, as the days go by there seems to be increasing evidence that those in

positions of authority have been incapable of giving co-ordinated views, let alone relieving the real health concerns that prevail among the people of Sydney. We had the crisis on 30 July, then again on 25 August, and yet again as recently as 5 September.

The absolutely unacceptable fact associated with this whole matter is that the Carr Government is looking for someone else to blame. There have been some resignations, with full benefits, just short of dismissal. Surely it could not be suggested that anyone in this fiasco who is "shown the door" would have the audacity to claim unfair dismissal. That wonderful, much-used adage regarding where the buck stops really sums up the current position. Here we have the Premier huffing and puffing better than the big bad wolf ever did in the story of the three little pigs. In between three separate warnings Premier Carr has continued to huff and puff.

The people of Sydney demand accurate information on a regular basis—information that is co-ordinated and not conflicting. Mr Carr was slow to accept that it is on his desk where the proverbial buck ends. Parents often are attempting desperately, in the wake of much opposition in our society, to instil in their children the concept of responsibility and accountability, where action brings reaction and someone must be responsible. How must these same parents feel when faced with this crisis, which is impacting on our daily lives, and they see community leaders dodging and doing some pretty quick footwork to avoid accepting the responsibilities for this failure in public administration.

The leader of the coalition, the Hon. Peter Collins, said in his speech yesterday that he hoped that many of my coalition colleagues would speak in this debate about the plight of their constituents. Whilst I will not be referring to a specific case, I do wish to highlight some of the difficulties affecting what I will call my generic family. So, how does this problem affect the typical family? Let us find out by taking a close look at a couple of hours in the life of suburbia.

A young mother of four children has just finished shopping at the supermarket. The bill is a little higher this week because of the added expense of all the extra bottled water she has had to buy. It will probably mean that the family will have to forgo their Friday night take away, and it probably means spaghetti bolognese instead of steak. On the way home mother calls in at the local soccer oval to collect the 12-year old who has just had a training session for the forthcoming grand final. Imagine how horrified our young mother is to see her son,

hot and sweaty, coming off the soccer field and going and putting his head under the tap, splashing water all over his face and down his throat. He has forgotten. Mother is horrified. She just says a quiet little prayer and hopes that he will not become ill.

Home at last, and the family settles down to do the homework. Our young mother tells the nine-year-old, "You'd better get your book out of your bag, son, you have got to do your homework." Of course, during the water crisis the schools have been alerted. The kids have not been able to use the bubblers so they have been asked to take a bottle of water to school. The nine-year-old goes to his bag, and what does his mother find? He has not screwed the lid on the bottle of water, so it has gone all over the homework book and the library book. As she contains her frustration and cleans it up as best she can, mother knows that the library book will need replacing—another added expense.

Pressing on, the next matter at hand is bath time. She puts the three-year-old in the bath and, before the stressed mother realises it, the youngster is sucking the face cloth—certainly not something that we encourage, but this happens in the best of families. She hopes that she has evaded another disaster. Dinner preparations are the next thing on the agenda, but before that our young mother has to make up the baby's bottle. She looks at the bottles of water that she has bought at great expense and then thinks of the water she has boiled herself. She thinks, "I do not think I will risk the bottled water. I think it is pure, but I know the water I have boiled is probably better. I think I will make that up for the baby's bottle."

After she has finished with the kids she uses the expensive bottled water to rinse the salad vegetables. She settles the baby and gets on with the dinner preparations. She has the salad ready and wonders how on earth the rest of Sydney is handling this crisis. She thinks, "What was that clever little jingle I heard? 'Mr Carr, I drink water and I also vote.'" As the mother of four children born within six years, I still have vivid memories of the pressure-packed hours between arriving home from school and getting all the kids to bed. As our young mother lies in bed that night having just cleaned her teeth and inadvertently having rinsed her mouth with tap water, she again mutters to herself, "Mr Carr, I drink water and I also vote."

This look at suburbia demonstrates quite clearly how the Government's failure to provide what any progressive city like Sydney should expect has not only interrupted the daily routine of countless families and threatened their health but, in

many cases, has caused considerable financial burden to families that would normally not have had to budget to buy their water. There is no doubt that this performance of the Carr Government is second rate. The lack of leadership has been the most noticeable issue apart from the traumatic presence of the parasites in our water. The Government's record is appalling in the management of this crisis. The drastic cutbacks in finance in past years have meant that important issues of maintenance, new equipment purchases, research and quality assurance programs have obviously been neglected.

The cost to business would be horrific and in some instances could mean the difference between making it financially or not making it. The poor current economic environment is bad enough for small business, but I ask honourable members to pause just long enough to consider the extra burden facing the proprietors of restaurants and take-away food outlets. The glossy annual reports and brochures that have been produced by Sydney Water must now be an absolute embarrassment to the Government, as the vision statement and strategic planning have failed to deliver the premium service they have espoused. Where are the issues of benchmarking and best practice? These have been lost in the reality of the contamination of Sydney's water.

Who is responsible for what has been one failure after another? The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing was assuring us that information would be available to the public, giving the public little comfort when he was reported to have said that there was no reason to believe that this would not happen again whilst the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was advising us that the water would be clear by last Sunday night. It probably is irrelevant at this stage as to which night he was referring to because I suspect that by now there are few people in metropolitan Sydney who have any faith in what they are being told anyway. In fact, a weekend paper ran a story that said people would still be boiling water by Christmas.

In the meantime, the former chairman, David Hill, seemed to assume that all responsibility was removed from him with his resignation. He was also reported in the local press as saying that "the McLellan report won't hurt me". The *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* of Thursday, 3 September, reported that Mr McLellan found that on 29 July Mr Hill, the then Chairman of Sydney Water, significantly influenced a decision to limit the public health warning to parts of Sydney, despite evidence of contamination that could be more widespread. Mr McLellan said:

In my opinion, the decision did not reflect appropriate concern for public health.

I am sure that the people who live in the Federal seat of Hughes noted that, and perhaps the outcome of the Federal election may prove that they have followed this issue very carefully and fully understand Mr Hill's involvement. Fortunately, the people of the Sutherland shire have been spared the trauma of the water crisis, but this is certainly no thanks to Mr Hill. Residents of the Sutherland shire were exempt from the alert because their water is supplied from a different source and filtration plant. The supporters of Danna Vale, my Liberal colleague in Hughes, have noted the arrogant statement of the Australian Labor Party candidate, who believes that this will not have any effect on his chances.

The real crisis, of course, is the presence of these life-threatening parasites in our drinking water. Almost equal to this is the crisis in the management process of informing the public. Whose job is it? I will illustrate the position quite graphically by telling a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was all Everybody's job. Everybody would not do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done. Perhaps Premier Carr; the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, and Minister for Housing Minister; the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; David Hill; and the former Managing Director, Chris Pollett, recognise themselves in that story.

The coalition cannot stand by and permit this most serious life-threatening situation to persist without public questioning and the seeking of some satisfactory answers from a Government that has shown nothing but incompetence in the management of this crisis. The adoption of the coalition's 10-point plan would be one way to help regain the shattered confidence of the people of Sydney, who face an escalating water crisis.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** (Hawkesbury) [10.00 p.m.]: A motion of no confidence in the Government is the most serious motion that can come before the House. The Opposition has treated the motion seriously and has endeavoured to address a wide range of matters which it believes are pertinent to the question of lack of confidence in the Government. I am surprised, after having put up those who are immediately responsible for the

conduct of this issue, there have been very few Government speakers. One wonders why that is the case. Why are the vast majority of Government members hiding in their offices instead of debating this most serious motion? Are they putting blind faith in the Ministers who have presided over what is one of the most bizarre incidents in the history of the administration of government in New South Wales? Are they are embarrassed and humiliated by the circumstances in which they now find themselves?

Who is to blame for the current debacle? We have heard the Government blaming the Opposition and, of course, we have heard the Opposition blaming the Government. I take a slightly different view. In a sense I am not particularly concerned as to who is to blame for the situation that has occurred and in a moment I will explain why I take that attitude. I am deeply concerned about what is being done to solve the problem and whether we can be confident the Government is able to solve the problem or, indeed, that it even knows what to do to solve the problem.

The reason I am not concerned about blaming someone for the situation is that an examination of the history, as it has been torturously drawn out over the last two days, will reveal that the Government is a victim of circumstance. If there had not been a change of government at the last election, almost the same scenario would have resulted and suddenly attention would have been drawn to levels of giardia and cryptosporidium that are now matters of public concern.

No-one has suggested that the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition or any other member of the Opposition are technical experts in these matters. None of those people have, nor should they be expected to have, the technical expertise to know what is happening in this complex matter. In such circumstances Ministers take advice from their departments. No doubt the previous Government took its decisions based on the advice of its public servants at that time. If this Government had been in opposition at that time, it would have taken exactly the same course. The Government changed at the election and we heard the Minister's famous statements in October 1996—I will not bore the House by going into details—to the effect that this giardia-cryptosporidium matter occurred periodically when someone needed to fill a space in a newspaper; that it was scaremongering; that there was no problem; and that there had been only two previous scares.

I have no doubt at the time the Minister acted on the advice of his department. Therefore, the situation would have been the same irrespective of which side was in government at the time. Up to that point I have no criticism of this Government because I believe that when the Minister gave his famous reply in this House to a question by the honourable member for Liverpool he was reading from advice prepared by his public servant—Sydney Water. I have no doubt he believed at the time they were the facts. From the text of his answer it was obvious he was confident in his remarks. He could not have envisaged those words would come back to haunt him.

To some extent the Government has been caught in the cultural attitude between public departments and their Ministers. I am interested in the current problem. I am distressed that Sydney people are suffering the most tedious and rather shameful circumstance of not being able to drink water straight from the tap, as they have done traditionally, and that we are told we cannot or should not drink it straight from the tap. The community is confused and somewhat incredulous that it must follow those instructions, but nonetheless do so to play it safe. Those circumstances are bad, but I am further saddened to hear of overseas reports about the concern of other countries about the condition of Sydney water.

When countries with water that no-one will drink because it is lousy hear that people cannot drink Sydney water, they believe that Sydney water is like their water. People in those countries will conjure up pictures of the water that flowed down the Tel Aviv river that was the site of the tragic accident which involved Australian athletes. Other countries will not view this problem in its true light, that is, that perfectly safe water flows through Sydney's taps all the time. The question mark is over that element of safety. People are now ringing Sydney hotels and saying, "I know we have booked in and we really would like to come to Australia, but we are not prepared to come." I do not travel overseas regularly these days and certainly I do not take extended holidays like the honourable member for Illawarra, who travels regularly to parts unknown.

**Mr McManus:** When you wore the wig and gown you approved those CPA trips.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** Very few were approved in my time compared with those that are approved these days. That is why they called me stingy. Friends of mine who have travelled overseas

recently have told me that of all the news items that appear in overseas newspapers, which normally do not contain anything about Australia, the Sydney water problem is the main focus. Why? Sydney features worldwide as the Olympic city for the year 2000. This is one of the worst things that could happen to Sydney at this time. Unless the problem is solved quickly it will become increasingly distressing and will cost this city dearly.

Are the giardia and cryptosporidium levels dangerous? The evidence that has been publicly admitted reveals that there has been no recognisable outbreak of the symptoms of distress caused by an active reaction to those two pathogens. It could be concluded from this that the variety of cryptosporidium picked up in the testing is not dangerous to humans. According to my reading, only one variety of cryptosporidium is generally dangerous to humans and, of course, that may not be the particular variety that has been found in Sydney water. I cannot offer an explanation, but it is strange that we do not know whether the cryptosporidium pathogen found in Sydney's water is the dangerous strain.

The Government said that it has cleared itself of responsibility by being conscientious in announcing the levels as they occurred. Even that is peculiar. For something that contaminates our water in such vast quantities, or that we are told contaminates our water in such vast quantities, it has the amazing characteristic of being completely clear for a number of days and then returning to contaminate the water just as the announcement is to be made that the water is safe to drink. The Government is presented with a genuine dilemma, but it is incumbent on the Government to almost literally shift heaven and earth to solve this problem as soon as possible.

I cannot believe that throughout the world there is not sufficient technological, scientific or medical expertise to at least identify the strain of cryptosporidium that is cropping up in our water system and to conclusively assure us that it is dangerous to humans, and that we therefore need to take these precautions; that it is not one of the varieties that causes us any harm and that we can return to drinking tap-water quite freely with an assurance that it will not affect our health; or that it may be a variety of cryptosporidium that perhaps affects a certain section of the community—the very young, the very old, those with impaired immune systems—and that they may be the only ones who need to take precautions. That would make life much easier for the vast majority of people.

I am told that most people during their healthy adult lives build up an immunity to pathogens such as giardia and cryptosporidium. One of the reasons people are affected when they go to different areas is that their systems are temporarily upset by a different strain of these pathogens and that has an effect on their internal systems. Those of us who generally stay in one place, those of us who become used to the local brand of water, are not at risk and suffer no adverse consequences. The first and most important thing that the Government must do is to determine the exact nature of the elements of giardia and cryptosporidium in the water system and the exact nature of their danger to the humans who consume that water. That will be the key to overcoming the immediate problem of how much care we need to take when drinking water.

There appear to be two theories in regard to this problem. One is that it is developing in the reticulation system, that is, after it has been placed in the system from its natural storage. The other is that it occurs in the natural storage areas or catchments and is transferred into the reticulation system. One would think, given all the technology available in the world, it is not an insurmountable problem, and tests could be run to clear up once and for all whether water free of these pathogens was coming into the system and that they were being generated afterwards, or whether contaminated water was coming into the system and contaminating the system. If it is developing in the system, the logical step is to determine what is creating it and, if that cannot be counteracted—and it may not be possible—what filtration and treatment processes are necessary to remove these elements or to nullify their effect so that the water that comes out of the tap is perfectly fit to drink.

If the catchment is creating the problem, there is no way it can be cleaned up in the next few months. In any case it involves filtration and treatment, because we cannot take risks. We cannot manage the catchment completely, because if the contamination does occur in the system, or if it may occur in the system, proper filtration and treatment are essential. If it comes from the catchment, no matter how clean the catchment is, we cannot rule out the possibility that at some stage it may happen in the catchment. Therefore, we will need treatment and filtration to overcome that possibility. The need for high-level technology in filtration treatment is absolutely essential.

The Minister has had much to say about this aspect and about his foreknowledge of these problems through his service on the Sydney Water



select committee. He indicated to the House that he was fully aware of these problems and that the Minister for the Environment was fully aware of these problems. But 12 months after he was appointed Minister responsible for Sydney water, probably on the advice of Sydney Water, he declared that the giardia and cryptosporidium scare was nonsense, just scaremongering, and proceeded to do nothing about the problem. If it is true that he was aware of the problem from his experience on the select committee and from other investigations he undertook, he misled the House when he answered that question in 1996.

A more cautious and less arrogant Minister would have said in answer to the honourable member for Liverpool, "I have been told by Sydney Water the water is perfectly okay but, quite frankly, I have some concerns. When I was on the select committee I heard otherwise. Therefore, as a responsible Minister, rather than just accept Sydney Water's assurance, I have instructed them to take this course of action because I believe these problems are not being overcome. They are major problems, and this Government will address them now, in 1996."

But he did not do that. He did absolutely nothing. He basked in the glory provided for him by the initiatives of the previous Government. He comfortably accepted the assurances of Sydney Water even though he told the House yesterday that he knew all along that Sydney Water was wrong. Therefore, the Minister has misled the House in a way that is sufficient to warrant a no confidence motion in that Minister.

Finally I address the question of catchment management. A good amount of my political career has been involved in this area. I believe the catchment from which Sydney Water draws its water is not in a bad condition. By world standards it is good. It may not be absolutely pristine—clearly it is not—but it is not in bad condition. Having said that, there is a need to pay a lot more attention to the management of our catchments, to the establishment of controls which will prevent leachate, and waste of all types working its way into our water storage systems. No matter how pristine catchments are, we cannot avoid native animals dying in the forest or, as the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai said, doing what they do in the forest. We cannot avoid those things.

After periods of excessive flood or bushfire we cannot be certain there is no deterioration in the condition of the catchments, but we can put in place controls that will better manage the catchments. We

can upgrade the sewage treatment plants that currently are either non-existent or operate poorly and certainly do not enhance the quality of the catchments. We need someone other than Sydney Water to carry out an audit of the quality of the catchments. To do otherwise is a bit like putting the poacher in charge of the gamekeeping. There is a need for an independent body that has the capacity to direct Sydney Water and other agencies that may be doing work in the catchment—the leasing areas for subdivision or allowing developments that may be adverse—to not undertake certain actions or to conduct developments in a way that will not affect the catchment adversely.

The management of water catchments involves a complete emphasis on the total water cycle. That includes considering the periods of excessive dry flow and excessive high flow in river systems, coming from what we have recently learnt is known in scientific terms as the El Niño effect, the long dry periods, and the La Niña effect, the long wet periods. It is important that we manage the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system for both the dry and the wet periods. That river system supplies more than 90 per cent of Sydney's drinking water, so it is crucial to this whole debate. Fundamental to that is the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall by the 23 metres recommended by Sydney Water, which was agreed to by the previous Government and abandoned by the current Government. The raising of the dam wall is necessary to provide the flood mitigation regarded as being essential to protect the lives and property of those below the dam.

It is also necessary—as has been learnt from recent research—to provide a capacity for water to be stored behind the existing dam but which, if the dam were raised to that level, would place the dam under considerable threat of breaking. The additional amount of water that can be retained behind the current dam, without storage behind the additional 23-metre wall, could be used for the purpose of a number of water management strategies, for the addition of riparian flows to the river below for irrigation and for the purpose of environmental flows. One may ask why it is necessary to take that issue into account. After all, it is the water that is in the dam that is needed for Sydney's water supply. We have been advised by the Minister that one of the highest readings of cryptosporidium ever taken was taken at North Richmond water supply storage, which supplies the areas of Windsor, Richmond, North Richmond and Kurrajong.

**Mr McManus:** In what year was the reading taken?

**Mr ROZZOLI:** The year does not matter. The point I am making is that the take-off point for water supply is below the dam. It comes straight from the river, and the quality of the water drawn from the river is at all times much worse than anything one would ever dream of coming from the Prospect facility. There is therefore a responsibility on this Government—as there was on the previous Government—to make sure that the general water quality in the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment, both above and below the dam, is of a reasonably high standard. To do that, water must be held in the dam which can be released to increase the environmental flows in the river and prevent the build-up of pollutants that is often a feature of the river below the dam.

In the light of all the evidence currently available and particularly in the light of the claims made by the Minister responsible for Sydney Water that he has known about all of this for five years, there is clear ministerial responsibility and an urgent need for the Minister to take a strong hand in the management of all the complex features that make up the management and control of the total water cycle in the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system. As I said before, that river system is the source of more than 90 per cent and of the water within the Sydney water reticulation process.

I support this motion of no confidence not because I believe that the Government initially did other than inherit the problem. On that score I certainly would not support a motion of no confidence, because I believe that initially this was not something that the Government could have done much about. I support the motion of no confidence because the Minister has, by his own words, damned himself by assuring the House and the people of New South Wales that he has known about the problem for five years. Having been in government for 3½ years, the Minister has sat on his hands and done nothing until now. Now, however, he seeks to blame everyone but himself and his Government. Given the knowledge to which the Minister has referred, the Government should have done more.

I support this motion of no confidence also because of the way in which the Government has handled the matter irresponsibly. It is not sufficient for the Minister to try to get the Government off the hook by saying that the Government tells everyone when the problem is bad. We appreciate being told, if it is now considered important that these levels be the subject of the reaction we are now witnessing. We are grateful for having our health protected. But we would like to think that the Government has a

little more direction and focus in addressing the problem not only for the health and welfare of the people of Sydney and those who visit Sydney now but in doing something to restore the very tarnished international reputation that Sydney is gaining over this matter.

In the long run, I believe that will be the gravest consequence of this issue. I believe that in all probability—although I am not in a position to give guarantees because I am not a technical expert—we did not ever need to boil our water, but we have to wait for that to be proved. Irrespective of whether it is ultimately found that there was a problem, the problem that is now being created overseas by the crisis of confidence in Sydney as a destination where one can safely drink tap-water is one that will take a long time and a lot of money to overcome. For that reason I believe that the Government stands condemned and that all honourable members should support the motion of no confidence in the Government.

*[Pursuant to Standing Order 122(8) Mr Speaker left the chair at 10.30 p.m.]*

Thursday, 10 September 1998

*[Continuation of Tuesday's sitting.]*

*[The House resumed at 10.00 a.m.]*

**Mr BLACKMORE** (Maitland) [10.00 a.m.]: I join with my Opposition colleagues in supporting the motion that this Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House. A number of members of my family live in Sydney, including three granddaughters, one of whom celebrated her first birthday today. While she was in the bath, she grabbed a face washer and immediately sucked on it, as young children are inclined to do. I became angry when I realised that the water on that face washer may have been contaminated. I do not know what to say when my relatives ask me what I am doing to ensure the safety of my children and grandchildren, other Sydney families and visitors to this beautiful city.

Residents of the Hunter region do not want a similar problem to occur in respect of the Hunter Water Corporation. I can say with confidence that Hunter Water is carrying out exactly the same testing as Sydney Water. It has increased the frequency of its testing to one test per week instead of one test per month. At this stage the water in the Hunter is not affected by cryptosporidium or giardia

and I certainly hope it will not be so affected in the future. It may appear that I am half-hearted in my support for the motion, but the fact is that I am aware that the problem could have occurred during the term of any government. I am open and upfront about that.

I support the comments made in this House last evening by the honourable member for Hawkesbury, but the Government's lack of action has led me to support the motion of no confidence. What would have happened if the coalition had been in government? Would Labor, in opposition, have moved a motion of no confidence in the coalition? I can recall a number of motions seeking the production of various documents. In addition, numerous motions of no confidence in successive governments have been moved during my term as a member of this House. The process is not unique and under the Westminster system of government the Opposition has an obligation on behalf of the community to ensure that the Government does the right thing.

Sydney will be the showpiece of the world during the 2000 Olympics and I am greatly concerned that the city may be held to ransom by extortionists. Honourable members will remember what happened with Arnott's Biscuits, Tip Top, Sanitarium baby foods and Nestlé chocolates. With so much information available, it would be a simple matter for an extortionist to threaten to poison the water supply. I certainly hope that that does not occur, but if it did how many people would be affected? In recent times many members of this House and the majority of the people in New South Wales have learned two new words: cryptosporidium and giardia. I admit that I was not aware of them, but those "nasties", as I call them, and the phrase "dangerous faecal bacteria" are regularly used in news broadcasts. How long have they been in our water?

In the past few days, during the course of debate on this motion, the Government alleged that Ministers in the former Government were aware of the existence of those substances in the water supply, but what are we going to do about them? The Opposition has offered assistance to the Government in good faith, but to date that offer has not been taken up. The Opposition announced a 10-point plan to minimise the risk of future outbreaks and restore public confidence in Sydney water. That 10-point plan was as follows:

1. Appoint a new Water Board based on expertise, not political association.

2. Introduce a Safe Drinking Water Bill similar to the legislation enacted by the Clinton Administration.
3. Freeze the planned increase in water rates until the crisis is resolved.
4. Establish an Internet site with up-to-date information on water quality.
5. Regularly monitor for cryptosporidium, giardia and other parasites which have emerged over the past 2-3 years as a significant threat to Sydney's water supply.
6. Redirect money from this year's predicted \$279 million Government dividend to improvements in monitoring and filtration treatment.
7. Provide a \$40 rebate to rate-payers on their next water bill.
8. Transfer responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the Public Health Unit of the Department of Health.
9. Tighten access to water catchment areas like Warragamba Dam and initiate regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination.
10. Impose statutory obligations on the Minister and Department to issue health warnings as soon as relevant information is made available to them.

That plan was offered by the Opposition in good faith. This debate has gone on for more than two days and no doubt we will continue to trade insults and apportion blame to each other. However, I believe that it is now time for the Government and the Opposition to work together to combat this problem, for the sake of the health of the community and the reputation of this great State.

Members of this House are well aware of the history of this matter, which has been quoted often in previous days. I am pleased that the honourable member for Waratah is in the Chamber, and I hope that he will contribute to the debate today. I was reminded after referring to *Hansard* that when the House debated the Hunter Water Corporatisation Bill those honourable members who represent electorates in the Hunter region expressed their concern about the proposed corporatisation of Hunter Water. Of course, those concerns were revived during the debate on the Sydney Water Corporatisation Bill. On that occasion the Opposition spokesperson for the environment said:

Labor believes urgent steps are required to protect the quality water of New South Wales. Water is fundamental to human life and the natural environment . . . The Water Board alone represents \$14 billion [of a \$20 billion economic investment]. Australians cannot sustain the profligate use of 10 trillion litres of water each year, nearly 500 litres per person per day—water restrictions in Sydney notwithstanding. Water can no longer be regarded as an infinite resource.

In relation to the Hunter Water Corporatisation Bill the former Opposition spokesperson for the environment said:

The Opposition opposes strongly any moves to limit the access of the community to information held by what is essentially a public body. For years the Sydney Water Board has been accused of being a closed shop which works in secrecy. Freedom of information legislation has opened the board a little, as have exposés by the Opposition of the Sydney Water Board's use and abuse of consultancies. The same problems would occur in the Hunter Water Board if it were allowed to fall victim to the same dreadful habits of the Sydney Water Board in not enlightening the public of its activities. Despite the apparent good intentions of the present Hunter Water Board leadership, people do fall into bad habits when those requirements are not placed on them on a regular basis.

During the debate on the Hunter Water Corporatisation Bill the honourable member for Waratah alerted the House to the fact that dezincification can occur, particularly when brass fittings are used in the process. A number of honourable members have attempted to ring warning bells in the past. Now those warning bells are being rung all too regularly. There is an obligation upon us to ensure the provision of drinking water of a calibre of which we would be proud. I know that some honourable members, when travelling overseas, have been amazed to find on taps in hotel rooms signs indicating that the water is not potable and that bottled water has been provided for their use. That caused them to think how well off we are in this country.

Recent events have demonstrated that we are in a similar, embarrassing situation. Honourable members will recall the oyster contamination scare at Wallis Lake and the successful prosecution of a motel-caravan park owner at Karuah under Environment Protection Authority legislation. I listened with interest to comments made yesterday by the honourable member for Sutherland and I congratulate her on her contribution to the debate. We are entering the final phase of the rugby league season. On television we will see the trainers or the zambucks, as we like to call the St John Ambulance officers, running onto the field and throwing water bottles to the players. How easy it would be for a team that came to Sydney from elsewhere—for example, the reigning premiers, the magnificent Newcastle Knights—to throw caution to the wind and fill their water bottles from the tap. The players may even be unaware of the contamination. Injuries or open wounds can occur in any type of contact sport. Would injured players be at risk when showering after the game?

As members of Parliament we have an obligation to ensure that we work together to combat this crisis, so that we can give a guarantee to the community and to tourists that our drinking water is the best in the world. This crisis could have happened six years ago during the time of the former Government, but it has happened right now. The Government has botched the job. Members of the community no longer believe that the Government is able to ensure compliance with the regulations or the provision of pure drinking water straight from the tap. For those reasons I support the motion of no confidence in the Government.

Residents in the electorate of Maitland in the Hunter plan to hold a public meeting on Saturday because they want to be connected to the sewerage system. They are using a church sewerage system to transport sewage into Hunter Water's facilities. The problem is one of funding. Those residents have had to seek the assistance of the church because they been told they must contribute \$777,000 towards the provision of the most basic of modern-day facilities: sewerage. While Hunter residents are forced to wait for modern facilities, the Government continues to take dividends from these public authorities.

If this basic facility is not provided Hunter residents will face the risks associated with raw sewage. For example, in the Clarence Town area, which is on the Williams River in my electorate, the Government has agreed to provide up to 70 per cent of funding for the provision of sewerage facilities. A recommendation of the Healthy Rivers Commission, which was adopted by the Government in this House, was that a reticulation sewerage system be placed in Clarence Town. That system will cost the residents many hundreds of dollars over a 40-year period. Clarence Town is kerbed and guttered, and the water run-off from the area flows into the Williams River, which is a direct take-off point for Hunter Water to pump water into the Grahamstown water supply.

Raymond Terrace turf farmers have inquired about the possibility of using secondary water to spray turf—a very important use because growing turf is a big business in the Hunter. Now Hunter Water wants to charge \$17,000 to install the necessary pipes. I do not propose to talk at length about this issue, because my colleagues have said what needs to be said. The members of this House who represent electorates in the Hunter voiced their concerns during the debate relating to corporatisation of Hunter Water. They were also quick to voice their concerns of the corporatisation of Sydney Water.

I challenge those members to contribute to this debate to ensure that the problems that occurred in Sydney do not also occur in the Hunter. The Opposition has offered to assist. We are sincere about wanting to work with the Government to resolve this problem. People cannot continue to boil water. That is what one expects in a Third World country. However, this is Australia, this is New South Wales, and to have such a problem thrust upon the people of New South Wales is not good enough.

Government members can say, "It is all right, we will win the vote because we have the numbers. This is just a flash in the pan." But members opposite must be upset and embarrassed by the crisis. The Opposition has an obligation to move a motion of no confidence in the Government, although it knows that the motion will be defeated, that it will not succeed. When will the Government learn that we simply cannot continue to go our separate ways? The offer is on the table. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party have offered to work with the Government to ensure that cryptosporidium and giardia are a thing of the past for the citizens of New South Wales. As I said earlier, the words "cryptosporidium" and "giardia" have now entered our vocabulary. We probably had not heard the words before and, frankly, we do not want to hear them again. In conclusion, I pray that the people in the Hunter region do not suffer the same fate as the residents of Sydney have been suffering in the past few weeks.

**Mr GLACHAN** (Albury) [10.21 a.m.]: After almost three days of debate not much can be added to what has already been said about this matter. However, I wish to make a couple of remarks. Sydney is one of the great cities in the world and in the past its water supply has always been regarded as of the very highest standard. As I listened to all the comments about Sydney Water made over the past few weeks, and what was said in the Parliament during the past few days it became obvious that the organisms causing the problems now must have been in Sydney's water for many years, if not for generations. However, the Government has alerted the ordinary people to the problem and they have been put to the enormous inconvenience of having to boil every glass of water they drink.

I feel very much for families and for the mothers of small children as they must now go to the enormous trouble of having to boil every drop of water their children drink, which poses a difficulty for them. I am disappointed that since the crisis began the Premier and Government Ministers have looked for scapegoats and people to blame in order

to shift the blame from themselves, rather than providing a solution to the problem. In the Parliament reference has been made to almost every person who has had anything to do with Sydney Water over the past 10, 15 or 20 years. Government members have blamed many people, as well as corporatisation and privatisation. They have seized everything imaginable in order to shift the blame from themselves. The people of Sydney do not want to apportion blame and they are not interested in finding out who is responsible for the crisis. They simply want a solution to the problem.

Instead of poring through the files and records of past years to find names to which to attach blame, the Premier and Ministers would have served the people of Sydney better if they had sat down with the experts in the field and made a genuine effort to solve the problem and ensure that it does not happen again. The people of Sydney would have been happier if the Premier had simply said that we as a community faced this problem and that the Government would find out what is causing the problem and ensure that it is corrected. He should have told the people of Sydney that, whatever it takes, however long it takes and whatever cost is involved, the Government will ensure that the problem is solved once and for all. The people of Sydney would have been happier with that response. Instead, they have witnessed the appalling sight of the Premier and Ministers searching for someone to blame for the enormous problem we face.

The people of Sydney are not vindictive. They do not want anyone to be pilloried and blamed and they do not want to see heads rolling over this incident. They simply want the problem fixed and the matter finalised so that they can get on with their normal lives and Sydney's reputation as a city with clean, safe drinking water can be restored. I support the Leader of the Opposition's motion of no confidence in the Government. It would be better if the Premier and Ministers exercised their responsibilities, solved the problem and ensured that it cannot happen again, instead of continuing to look for someone to blame. The people of Sydney want good, clean, safe drinking water, and the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, the Premier and other Government members should give it to them.

**Mr D. L. PAGE** (Ballina) [10.25 a.m.]: I support the Leader of the Opposition's motion of no confidence in the Carr Government over its handling of Sydney's drinking water crisis. The Government has been asleep at the wheel; it has let the people of Sydney down; it has allowed this great city's reputation to be damaged on the eve of the Olympic Games; and perhaps worst of all, it has refused as

government of the day to accept responsibility for the problem and to remedy it as a matter of urgency. The people of Sydney are not interested in the attempts by Government members to blame anyone and everything but themselves. The people do not want excuses, smokescreens or scapegoats; they want the problem solved.

The Government has offered no solutions to the problem. Indeed, it has been paralysed by the crisis. The Minister responsible and the Premier are interested not in delivering a solution to the people but only in rewriting history. The Government's inability to come to grips with Sydney's biggest environmental crisis means only one thing: if it cannot fix the problem it should move out of the way and let the coalition do so. The Leader of the Opposition has prepared a safe water bill and a 10-point plan to solve the problem. I will not detail the 10-point plan because the honourable member for Maitland has already done so. It is patently clear that the Government has no answers. It has been asleep at the wheel for the past 3½ years, and it is still asleep at the wheel.

I shall speak only briefly today not because I do not have plenty to say but because I want to make a symbolic gesture. The people of New South Wales are not interested in hearing a lot of words from the Government—or anyone else, for that matter—about who is responsible for the problem. They are not interested in playing the blame game. They want action, not words. The bottom line is that despite concerns about water contamination being raised as far back as mid-1996, the Government has done nothing to fix the problem. In July 1996 in the estimates committee the shadow minister for health asked the Minister for Health whether testing for these contaminants should be undertaken. What was the Ministers response at that time? He scoffed! He said:

Routine monitoring for cryptosporidium is not appropriate.

Three months later, in July 1996, a member of the Minister's team in this House asked the Minister responsible—so he had time to research the matter and prepare an answer—about the Government's reaction to the report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of that day about a dangerous bug in Sydney's water supply. The Minister said:

Frankly, attempts to beat up the likelihood of a cryptosporidium outbreak are little more than scaremongery.

That was a planned question from a member of the team of the Minister responsible to the people of New South Wales for Sydney's water supply. The Minister went on to assure the House and the people

of Sydney that there was nothing to worry about, that it was all scaremongering by the Opposition and others. In light of what has subsequently transpired obviously the people of Sydney have little faith in any assurance given to the House by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. Indeed, throughout this water crisis he has adopted more positions than a yoga instructor. First he adopted the "don't worry, be happy" position; then he adopted the "there is a problem, this exercise is more difficult than I thought" position; and then he finally adopted the "it's not my problem, it's your problem" position.

The Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has to shoulder his responsibilities and fix the problem instead of looking for scapegoats and blaming others. That is what the people of Sydney want and that is what they deserve. Similarly, the Premier, when opening the Prospect water filtration plant, said with a flourish, after commending everyone involved in the project, "I would now like to toast Sydney Water and its fresh filtered water as we look towards the 2000 Olympics, when our water will be water to the world." Despite several warnings that there was or might be a contamination problem, Government Ministers and the Premier were too lazy, too tired or too disinterested to investigate and find out the truth. In our Westminster system of government the buck stops with the Minister.

Try as the Government might to blame David Hill, Chris Pollett, the Opposition, dogs, cows or anyone else it can think of, the fact is that the Government has been negligent in its administration. It does not deserve the confidence of this House. Another aspect that has not received much attention during the debate is the extent to which the Government has been negligent in relation to the Warragamba Dam catchment. I refer specifically to the Government's handling of treatment plants in the catchment, bearing in mind that sewage has been identified as a possible source of contamination of Sydney's water. The sewerage systems of Mittagong, Goulburn, Bowral, Berrima and Bundanoon have been identified as the source of sewage overflow into the Wollondilly River which, together with the Cox's River, accounts for 60 per cent of water flow into Warragamba Dam. Peter McClellan, QC, states in his second interim report:

I have been informed that prior to the second event the heavy rainfall caused sewage treatment plants at Goulburn, Bowral, Mittagong, Bundanoon and Berrima which lie within the Wollondilly catchment which flows to Warragamba to be overloaded.

Since coming to office in 1995 the Government has reduced the annual allocation for these schemes

from \$75 million under the coalition Government to \$50 million. That is a reduction of \$25 million in funds for the country water and sewerage scheme. But the Labor Government tells the people of New South Wales that it is trying to fix our water quality problems. The Government will reap what it sows. The Warragamba catchment has serious sewage overflow problems. The Government's response has been to take 33 per cent of the money out of the system that was allocated as far back as 1995. It is a disgrace!

At the same time as the Government has taken 33 per cent of funding out of the sewerage and water funding for country areas, which has an impact on the Warragamba catchment area, it has been sucking hundreds of millions of dollars out of Sydney Water in dividends rather than reinvesting the money in upgrading infrastructure, whether for filtration plants within the Sydney area or for sewage disposal in the broader catchment area. The people of Sydney do not want words, excuses, scapegoats or smokescreens; they want the problem fixed so that they can safely drink the water again, Sydney's international embarrassment can cease, and its reputation as of one of the great cities in the world can be restored.

The Opposition knows that the Government will use its numbers today to win the vote on the motion of no confidence. The Government might get some satisfaction from knowing that it will survive the motion of no confidence. However, I can assure the Government that so far as the people are concerned, if a poll was carried out in regard to confidence in the Government for its handling of the Sydney water crisis it would not win. The Government will get some satisfaction from knowing that the motion of the Leader of the Opposition will be defeated on the numbers. The Government might have the numbers in here, but it does not have them in the community. It has to get serious about solving the problem.

The people of Sydney are not interested in the Government's attempts to rewrite history about who did what back in 1995, 1996 or 1997. They want to know that the Government has an answer. Obviously the Government does not have an answer. It has been asleep at the wheel for the past 3½ years, and it is still asleep. The Government has to do the right thing and come up with a solution, but clearly it is not able to do that. I have great pleasure in strongly supporting the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Even though the Government may win the vote, it does not enjoy the confidence of the people of Sydney. The Government's handling of the

whole issue has been negligent and it has a lot to answer for.

**Mr CARR** (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs) [10.35 a.m.], in response: The Leader of the Opposition has moved a motion of no confidence in the Government. In moving such a motion he must demonstrate that the Government took action, or failed to take action, that led to the contamination of Sydney's water. A motion of no confidence is the most serious motion a member can move in this Chamber. The member who moves the motion must make a case to demonstrate that the action of the Government has been dastardly or neglectful and, perhaps to clinch the argument, that the record of the previous Government has been, by contrast, exemplary.

If I were the Leader of the Opposition and moved a motion of no confidence in the Government, I would have to establish that the Government's behaviour on the issue outlined in the motion was, by all accounts, dastardly; that the Government was responsible for the disaster that occurred; and that, by contrast, the record of the party I represented on those matters was exemplary. The question before the House is whether the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated either of those things. I ask all honourable members to ask themselves whether, at the end of three days of bluster and blatherskiting, it has been demonstrated that the Government has done or has failed to do a single thing that has brought about, led to or caused contamination of Sydney's water.

If I read the transcript of the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition I would fail to find a single argument, a single fact, a lone revelation, to demonstrate that I, any Minister or the Government as a whole caused the contamination of Sydney's Water. In fact, in a most ironic and paradoxical outcome at the end of 2½ days debate the only person on trial for the problems surrounding Sydney Water is the Leader of the Opposition himself. It is a most ironical outcome! It is proof of the paradox that prevails the human condition: the paradox of unintended consequences. A motion of no confidence in the Government about Sydney Water enables the House, at some length, to canvass evidence that points right back to the action and inaction of the Government we replaced in March 1995.

At the end of 2½ days the Leader of the Opposition faces this big question: why did his Government cover up readings of contamination up

to five times higher than those that led my Government to issue health warnings to the people of Sydney? It has not been explained. The coalition attempted some sort of comeback in the House yesterday in question time, but failed miserably to defend its actions. The second question that he faces at the end of these 2½ days of debate is why his Government took the option of the treatment plant at Prospect that was, according to the evidence available to the former Government, technically inferior to the alternative, although \$25 million cheaper. That has not been explained. We look forward to question time today. We might bring it on early. We might even extend it!

If the Leader of the Opposition had demonstrated dastardly action by the Government and had demonstrated, by contrast, an exemplary record by the coalition, he would have made his case and the Government would have been hard pressed to prove otherwise. I would have been hard pressed, even with the loyalty of my colleagues, to ward off a motion in those circumstances. I would have had to work overtime last night buying drinks and making promises. I will not mention cigars, given the Starr inquiry in relation to Pennsylvania Avenue, but I would have been promising preferment to rally support today.

The Leader of the Opposition has not demonstrated either of those two propositions. When the Government was faced with evidence of contamination it openly presented the data to the public as quickly as possible. An inquiry was set up and Mr McClellan was brought in to head that inquiry. To the best of my knowledge the coalition has not criticised his qualifications to head the inquiry. The Government made all the resources available to him. He does not require the powers of a royal commission because he is not required to summons people from prison.

Anyone who is required to give evidence before the inquiry is happy, prepared and willing to do so. Therefore, no coercive power is required. The coalition made a half-hearted call for the royal commission, but has not repeated that call. I believe it was excessive enthusiasm on the part of the honourable member for Gosford—he sometimes gets it, sometimes sustains it and we are all the wiser for it. The inquiry is in place. Moreover, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning has given an account of the range of measures the Government has set in place relevant to the catchment, the treatment plant, Warragamba Dam and the distribution system. I shall not repeat those measures as the Minister has highlighted each one.

There may have been a revelation that would have disturbed the relative tranquillity of this side of the House if the Leader of the Opposition had been able to say, "We have scientific evidence; we can shed some scientific data on this debate. We and we alone have found the undisputed cause of this contamination. Our laboratories have analysed the causes, and we can establish that X or Y has been the cause of the contamination." The House would have been enlightened, and the coalition case for the motion would have been strengthened and irresistible. But the coalition has not done what American scientists have failed to do, what the Water Board and the Health Department have failed to do or what the McClellan inquiry has failed to do at this point, that is, to establish beyond dispute the incontrovertible cause of the contamination.

**Mr O'Farrell:** We are waiting for Terry Rumble to return.

**Mr CARR:** That is an hilarious interjection. No wonder the honourable member is regarded as the great win for the Opposition. He is so highly regarded they will not give him a front bench job. After 2½ days of debate we are waiting for an explanation from the Opposition on two matters: why contamination five times higher than any of that recorded now was covered up under the coalition administration, and why, according to its own evidence, the coalition opted for what was the technically inferior option for Prospect treatment plant. It is an irony by any measure, after extensive debate on a motion of no confidence in the Government, that no-one who listened to it, no-one who weighed the arguments, and no-one who honestly appraised it could reach any other conclusion than that of no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr COLLINS** (Willoughby—Leader of the Opposition) [10.44 a.m.], in reply: Government members run from the truth; they cannot get out of the place fast enough. The Premier has made a rare appearance in this debate. Members in the public gallery may not be aware that the Premier rarely appears in these debates. Today we learned why he appears so rarely. During this debate the coalition has demonstrated three things. First, Labor ignored all the warnings of the mounting crisis. It ignored front-page headlines in 1996 which warned of the cryptosporidium crisis; questions asked in Parliament in 1996; the Health Department's decision to make cryptosporidium a notifiable condition in 1996; Sydney Water's 1996 annual report, which branded cryptosporidium an emerging threat; and evidence provided at world conferences on cryptosporidium,



to which Labor sent delegates with great abandon at taxpayers' expense to examine issues such as cryptosporidium and other parasites in our water supply.

Nowhere has the Government demonstrated the benefit of those conferences or that it was awake to hear the call, the mounting clamour and the warning bells about cryptosporidium in our water supply. Second, the Government's bungling made the crisis worse and last longer than necessary. Third, and most important, the coalition, in the run-up to the election six months away, has produced a plan to prevent a repetition of this crisis. I will outline that plan in this summation. Earlier in this debate the Premier challenged me to identify ways in which the Government contributed to the water crisis. Of course, the Premier believes he is not responsible; he is just an innocent bystander. He happens to work in this building but he shuns any responsibility. His message in this debate is to blame anyone, but do not blame him.

I take up the Premier's challenge and will point out how he made the crisis worse. First, he cut funding from country town sewerage schemes by one-third or \$25 million. That is \$25 million that will not be spent on avoiding sewage run-off from towns like Goulburn and Mittagong, whose overflow heads straight into Sydney's drinking water when it rains. That is failure number one. Second, he has ripped record dividends from Sydney Water. This year the figure is \$278 million. Over \$0.25 billion dollars has come off Sydney Water profits, but it has not gone towards cleaning out pipes, better monitoring or better filtration; rather, it has gone into consolidated revenue for non-water related purposes. That \$278 million will not be spent on better filtration. Instead it will go straight into Michael Egan's coffers. That is failure number two. Third, the Premier oversaw breathtaking bungles and delays in notifying residents of the risks they faced when the crisis broke

The record now shows that Sydney Water was at war with the Health Department, and David Hill was at war with everyone. The result was that Sydney waited two days for the first boil-water alert and almost eight hours for the second. That is failure number three. Fourth, the planning Minister failed to use his undisputed power under the State Owned Corporations Act. He has always had that power, which was conferred on him by this Parliament. That Act is in force today, and was in force every day of the water crisis. The Minister failed to use his power under the Act to renegotiate the Prospect plant contract to filter for

cryptosporidium and giardia when the threat emerged not six weeks ago, but in 1996.

The Government says that it needs more power. It had the power all along. I ask the residents of Sydney: why have such power if the Government will not use it responsibly and in a timely manner? The Premier gave that power to his Ministers as one of his first legislative actions following the 1995 election, but this Minister chose not to exercise it. Despite the mounting evidence of a water quality threat, front-page headlines in 1996, alarm bells and questions in Parliament in 1996—including a Dorothy Dixier from a Government member to the Minister of the day specifically about cryptosporidium—the Government has failed.

Despite the Health Department making cryptosporidium a notifiable condition in 1996—a signal to the Government, if it had been awake—the water board's annual report identifying giardia and cryptosporidium as an emerging threat in 1996 and Sydney Water sending staff to conferences around the world, the Minister failed to use his power to order filtration of the parasites. All these warnings, opportunities and power, but nothing from the Government until Sydney was crippled. The damage to Sydney's reputation is of the utmost concern. A major article in the *Straits Times* on 1 August 1996 stated:

No safe drinking water in Sydney. Residents have been warned to boil their water even if it is for their pets after the discovery of a third parasite in the Australian city's water supply.

The New Zealand *Herald* stated, "Sydney's nice but don't trust the taps." The word is out about our crisis. It is one of those quirky stories that is picked up by the international media. Sadly, this story has reverberated around the world over the past six weeks. Our international reputation as the most desirable city on earth to visit will be affected. The Opposition moved a motion of no confidence in the Government because we want to protect Sydney's image. There is a lot at stake. Sydney has not even begun to experience the damaging repercussions to its tourism market.

If Sydney gains the reputation of being a city with unclean water, people might decide to spend their holidays at places where they can drink the water. In weeks, months or years they might decide to visit, but that is how long it will take to overcome this situation. The Government was and still is in denial. According to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the Minister responsible for Sydney Water two years ago, the Opposition's specific

concern about cryptosporidium was nothing more than scaremongering. Failure number five is that the Premier failed to appoint experts to the Sydney Water Board. Instead, it is top heavy with the Government's mates. It looks like a Labor branch meeting. At the top of the tree was the chief mate, the Australian Labor Party candidate for Hughes, David Hill, who always turns up in key appointments under Labor.

**Mr Schipp:** When there is money around.

**Mr COLLINS:** The honourable member for Wagga Wagga made an interesting point. When this news broke, David Hill, then Chairman of Sydney Water, said, "Why blame me? I am just the Chairman of Sydney Water on \$70,000 a year. No-one told me that any responsibilities went with the position. No-one told me it would be a tough job and I might have to deal with important issues." He thought he was getting play money, attendance money for turning up. He thought that for turning up and marking the roll he got paid \$70,000 a year. Many people would like work like that. I am delighted that the work is no longer available to David Hill. However, it took the Government a long time to make that decision and the rest of the board members still hold their positions.

As a slight digression, it will be interesting to see what happens to David Hill, Labor candidate for Hughes, former Chairman of Sydney Water, in the Federal election on 3 October. I predict that he will be shredded by the people in the electorate of Hughes. He will be flushed down the drain of history. Having been on the Labor gravy train for the past couple of decades, his big chance to make it as a legislator will fly out the window. It will be good riddance to David Hill. On 3 October the people in the electorate of Hughes will remember above all that he, as the Chairman of Sydney Water, thought that his responsibilities involved only the signing of a book.

The Government is prepared to stack boards with its mates but not to give them any instructions about performing the work that is demanded of them. Clearly, David Hill had no idea what to do, nor did Peter Sams, Hill's boardroom buddy from the Labor Council, or Labor mate Chris Pollett, the now discredited chief executive of Sydney Water. I have given five examples of the Government's failures which have worsened the crisis. Country sewerage funding was cut, record dividends were carved off and put into the Government's collapsing budget, breathtaking bungles occurred in publishing the boil-water alert not once but twice, the planning Minister refused to use his power to order filtration

of the new parasites, and the board of Sydney Water was brimming with Labor apparatchiks, not water experts. The Parliament will hear of more examples of the Government's failures in the days ahead.

It is not a record to be proud of. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 4 August accurately summed it up with the headline, "Bungled from Day One". The Premier did not put up a very good defence in this debate. The Premier said his inaction was appropriate because high cryptosporidium levels under the coalition Government had not been reported to the public. Yet the Premier's ministerial advice was that those samples "were not analysed for many weeks and could not be validated". Those key words were omitted from the Premier's document, which he masked by describing it as a report. He did not refer to the ministerial advice which said that the tests could not be validated. He relied on a report that conflicted with that advice.

Which is accurate? The ministerial advice based on the report is the accurate document from which the Premier should be quoting and about which he has lied to Parliament and to the people of New South Wales. The Premier failed to reveal the bit of the same advice that said treated water samples showed no cryptosporidium at all. The fact is no cryptosporidium was in the drinking water. Luckily, the Opposition got the same advice, so it set the record straight. But the Premier's secretive release of official advice—his selective use of information, his lies about this issue—highlights the need for a totally independent inquiry with clout to get to the bottom of what happened, one that has all the powers of a royal commission. The Premier will not tell the truth in Parliament or outside Parliament.

Then the Premier shifted his attack towards privatisation. Failing in one area, he thought he would try another. The implicit message from him and his colleagues was that the Prospect plant, privately operated, was to blame. The Opposition then raised the words the Premier used when he opened the plant: "Crystal clear, healthy and great tasting." That plant is the same plant he is trying to blame. He drank the water on that occasion, so that may explain something. The Opposition also produced evidence of Treasurer Egan telling trade unions that he wanted an equity partner for the Prospect company, "so it could fulfil its ambition of getting into the Asia-Pacific to compete for big water and sewerage projects." Mr Privatisation himself, Bob Carr, was out there endorsing it all, saying: good news financiers, come on in, we like plants like this. He claimed credit for this plant despite the fact that he had not initiated it. He took

full ownership and revamped the whole thing. He accepted full responsibility for that plant in the endorsement he gave. Now he is trying to back off, in typical fashion.

To top it off, the Opposition released a letter signed in 1992 by Bob Carr, then Opposition leader, and countersigned by the shadow environment minister, Pam Allan, effusively praising private sector involvement in the water industry. They could not get enough of it, the more the merrier. They love having the private sector involved in the water industry. In that letter they made a pledge to the water industry that this would apply in government as it did in opposition, and they thought they could do a lot better. There goes privatisation as an excuse for the Government.

In question time earlier the Premier was forced to concede that privatisation was not the issue, and in doing so he conceded the intellectual debate. Then he argued that the Prospect tenderer was second best. He said that the government of the day should have spent more money to choose a different, more expensive tenderer, which would have made the plant more expensive to build and to run. He said that in a bid to sheet responsibility home to anyone but himself, and with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. Let us not forget that the Premier raised none of these concerns when he opened the Prospect plant with such fanfare and gusto. On that occasion, with a flourishing grand finale he toasted the new privatised plant with Sydney water—from the very same Sydney water supply that is now crippled.

The Premier's final response was to blame everyone else. It was never his fault. Instead, he pointed the finger at David Hill, at the board, the technicians, John Howard, the monitors, Australian Water Services, the Prospect plant, the previous Government, flying foxes, bushwalkers, cows, dingoes, dogs, campers and even the rain. He went right through the list. He blamed anyone and everyone but himself. One would think that this man had just walked into public life yesterday, a completely innocent bystander trapped in this nasty situation, about which he knew nothing, for which he had no responsibility, and over which he had no control, deprived of resources and information. This is the absurdity of the Premier's defence. Then, with Sydney in uproar, with Sydney's reputation in tatters, with the Government in crisis, this is what the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning had to say:

This is a serious problem for Sydney, one which we are dealing with as quickly and efficiently as possible given the complexity of the system. We anticipate the problem will begin to solve itself.

**Dr Macdonald:** He should have resigned.

**Mr COLLINS:** As the honourable member for Manly so rightly interjects, the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, the Minister responsible for Sydney Water, should have resigned. Because he did not offer to resign, the Premier should have sacked him. The Minister made that statement on 1 August 1998. His answer is that the Government does not have to do anything because the problem will fix itself. In other words, the Government has failed. The Government has failed to explain to the people of Sydney why this crisis occurred and why it continues. The Government has failed to spell out to Parliament in categorical terms precisely what it will do to make sure such a crisis will never happen again. The Government nominated three battlegrounds. The first was privatisation. The private plant at Prospect was to blame, the Government said. It took just two days before the Premier had to retreat on that front.

The second battle ground was the allegation that cryptosporidium levels were kept secret under the former Government. On that front, too, we proved their facts hopelessly wrong, and that the Premier was, again, quoting selectively from documents to completely misrepresent the truth. The third battleground was the claim that the Prospect tenderer was second best. But the Government conveniently ignored the commercial reason that justified the decision and the advice that was given and acted upon. In other words, the Government failed in its three principal defences and it has conceded the debate entirely. Members of the Government have thrown up their hands, they have thrown in the towel. Sydney is none the wiser about why this crisis happened and about what the Government will do.

Today I want to talk not just about the failings of the Carr Labor Government but about the positive solutions offered by the coalition government in waiting. It has a plan to provide safe drinking water to the residents of Sydney, water they do not have to boil. First, we believe information is our best weapon against water contamination. We will make water utilities report to their customers in plain English about the quality of their drinking water. Specifically, water utilities will be required to produce quarterly consumer confidence reports to water consumers. These reports must be part of every water bill, be posted on the Internet, placed in the print media, and contained in annual reports.

The consumer confidence reports will do four things. First, they will tell families whether their drinking water meets the quality expected by

consumers, and, if not, why not. Second, they will identify potential sources of any contaminants found and potential health effects of contamination. Third, they will include specific health advice for people with medical conditions that weaken their immune systems, making them, as these parasites do, more vulnerable to certain contaminants. Fourth, they will tell consumers where they can go for more information on water quality. These simple measures will arm the public with information, the one weapon they have against contamination. These consumer confidence reports will be part of our Safe Drinking Water Bill. That is the first element in our 10-point action plan to fix the crisis and stop it happening again.

Second, the Opposition will appoint a new Water Board whose members must be water experts, not political hacks, not simply representatives of the government of the day and of similar political persuasion. In other words, let us get expertise into the Sydney Water Board, expertise that has been so lamentably lacking in this crisis to date. Third, the Opposition will freeze the planned increase in water rates until the crisis is permanently solved. Fourth, we will establish an Internet site with real-time up-to-date information on water quality. Fifth, there will be regular monitoring for cryptosporidium, giardia and other parasites that have emerged in the past three years as a threat to our water supply.

Sixth, the Opposition will redirect money from this year's predicted \$279 million government dividend to improvements in monitoring and filtration treatment and equipment. The first call on this money should be to fix the crippled water system, to improve it, to make sure that it is monitored properly, and to go about treating the contamination as it is uncovered. Seventh, we will provide a \$40 rebate to ratepayers on their next water bill, not a paltry \$15. It is about time that the Government did some calculations. The inconvenience and the cost families have been put to amounts to much more than \$15, and everybody knows that tenants have no guarantee that they will get any share of the \$15 rebate, paltry as it is, if and when it is made.

Eighth, we will transfer responsibility for issuing health warnings from Sydney Water to the public health unit of the Health Department. Ninth, the coalition will tighten access to water catchment areas such as Warragamba Dam and initiate regular patrols to report on possible human and animal contamination. The Melbourne water supply system can be contrasted to the Sydney water supply system. The Melbourne catchment area is inaccessible, it is well sealed off. Unfortunately, the same does not apply to the Sydney catchment system. Then again, a Minister of the Carr Government has been mad enough to propose that

the catchment system be opened up for recreational purposes so that people can go waterskiing and fishing in our catchment area.

Perhaps people could take their yachts up there and a marina could be installed in the catchment area! That suggestion comes from the Minister for Fisheries. I am not aware of the Premier disciplining the Minister for Fisheries and saying to him, "Look, Bob, you're not allowed to have a marina there. You can't have speedboats travelling over drinking water." There has been no rebuke and no leadership from the Premier on this issue. One of his Ministers is proposing such a crazy idea yet he has not been brought to account. The idea is still on the books. It is an idea that, despite the present crisis, the Government could well proceed with.

Tenth, we will impose statutory obligations on the Minister and the department to issue health warnings as soon as they are told of a risk. We could continue to stand here as politicians trading insults and squabbling about the detail, or we could choose to move to fix the crisis. The coalition wants to move to fix the crisis. We should make a commitment, here and now, to draw the line, to treat Sydney water differently and with the greatest respect and to stop putting out coffee table annual reports. Let us have annual reports published on recycled paper and let us at least have them tell the truth for a change.

The Premier has tried to finger everyone around him but he still has not told the people of Sydney why they cannot drink tap water. The Premier has failed to tell the people of this the greatest of Australian cities why they cannot turn on the tap to get a glass of water. By contrast, the coalition has a 10-point action plan to fix this difficulty and it has legislation ready and waiting. The coalition proposes swift, strong and decisive action—everything the Premier has promised but failed to deliver. That is the coalition's positive solution to the crisis that has so hamstrung the Carr Labor Government. The coalition's message is clear. Prevent another Sydney water crisis. Get rid of the parasites that caused it.

*[Debate interrupted.]*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Routine of Business

**Motion, by consent, by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the House to continue to sit to consider the following business:

- (1) the taking of private members' statements up until 1.00 p.m.;

(2) at 2.15 p.m., notices of motions followed by questions;

(3) the consideration of the notice of motion on the Commonwealth Games given by the Minister for Sport and Recreation on Tuesday, 8 September 1998;

(4) the following bills to be brought in and proceeded with up to and including the Minister's second reading speech:

Law Enforcement (Controlled Operations) Amendment Bill  
Banana Industry Amendment Bill  
Local Government Amendment (Community Land Management) Bill  
Local Government Amendment (Ombudsman's Recommendations) Bill  
Harness Racing New South Wales Amendment Bill  
Home Invasion (Occupants Protection) Bill;

(5) at the conclusion of the introduction of bills and up until 6.00 p.m. private members' statements will be taken, during which no divisions or quorums shall be permitted; and

(6) at the conclusion of private members' statements the Speaker shall leave the chair and the House shall adjourn without a motion.

## NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT

### Motion of No Confidence

[*Debate resumed.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 41**

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

**Noes, 47**

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

**Pairs**

Mr Armstrong	Mr Debus
Mr Cochran	Mr Knight
Mr Slack-Smith	Mr Rumble

**Question so resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### T. M. FRANKLIN MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE

**Mr MILLS** (Wallsend) [11.27 a.m.]: Today I would like to bring to the attention of the House the celebration of the fulfilment of a dream of the Lambton High School community in the Wallsend electorate last week with the opening by the Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs of the T. M. Franklin Multipurpose Centre at the school. The dream started in 1974 when the Lambton High School was built. Kotara School and Glendale High School were built in 1968 and 1970, respectively. Each of those three schools contained a temporary shelter rather than a school hall. At the beginning it was recognised that the shelters were very small, ungainly and relatively unsuitable constructions.

Nevertheless, in order to maximise the number of schools built, the construction of halls was put lower down the priority list. The shelters were temporary and would be fixed up soon, it was thought, but time passed and the quality hall and the quality performance space did not come into being. Sometimes they were on the priority list and sometimes they were not. In 1994 the then President of Lambton High School Parents and Citizens Association, Diana Bridgman, wrote to me to seek support for securing a new assembly hall for the school.

Ms Bridgman outlined reasons why the hall was needed. Those reasons included: the existing hall was small with no extra room other than the size of a basketball court; there was no stage so that each time a special function was held a portable makeshift wooden stage had to be assembled and then disassembled; the existing hall could not be extended because of its position in the school—it was enclosed by a quadrangle on one side, a canteen on the other and lengthwise it would hit other buildings; the hall was built when the capacity of the school was 400 students and the current capacity is more than 1,000 students; and assemblies had to be held outside and could only be held in fine weather.

I supported the Parents and Citizens Association. I wrote to the then Minister for Education, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick, who replied that there were schools in the Hunter region that had a higher priority for assembly facilities than Lambton High School. I also wrote to the shadow minister, who is now the Minister for Education and Training. He responded in December of that year and was pleased to advise that there was support for the construction of the hall in the immediate future and that he would include that item in Labor's Hunter policy. I made a commitment during the 1995 election campaign that Labor's capital works program would include the construction of a multipurpose centre for Lambton High School.

I am pleased to inform the House that I have been able to keep that commitment. The Minister for Education and Training has kept his promise and the school community of Lambton High School has been able to fulfil its dream. The planning funds were provided in the first Carr Government budget; the construction funding was provided in the second Carr Government budget. In October 1995, after the first Carr budget was handed down, the school held a meeting which was attended by the school community; representatives of the Parents and Citizens Association, Diana Bridgman, Judy Jankovics; the principal, Terry Franklin; the deputy

principal, Ian Martin; the head teacher of science, John Simpson; and representatives from the Department of Public Works and Services and the Department of School Education.

The school community was determined to get the best possible performance space. It made a commitment to raise \$100,000 for a Francis Greenway and Carlingford model. That model contained a mezzanine floor with extra seating in addition to the normal performance space and would give the school a much larger hall than would have been provided if a sporting model had been used. The school met that commitment through successful fundraising. I congratulate the school community on its efforts to raise the extra funds which have enabled the hall to be built.

I also thank Terry Franklin and acknowledge his great efforts as principal of Lambton High School for 10 years. He had a distinguished career in teaching services across the State. He retired last year and I am delighted that the school community pushed hard for the hall to be named after him. The school community successfully persuaded the Minister to name the hall after someone who is still alive and who had made a significant contribution to the school. I thank Minister Aquilina for honouring his promise to visit Lambton High School. I also thank the principal, Peter Hall, for the arrangements he made at this most successful function. The school community of Lambton High School is delighted with its new hall.

**Mr AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth Affairs) [11.32 a.m.]: I acknowledge the contribution made by the honourable member for Wallsend to the construction of the multipurpose centre at Lambton High School. As shadow minister I made commitments in relation to the construction of halls at three schools in the Hunter, schools that had been sorely neglected by the previous coalition Government. Those schools were Kotara High School, which is in the electorate of Charlestown, and Glendale Technology High School and Lambton High School, which are in the electorate of Wallsend. I am pleased to advise that all three halls have been officially opened and are now operational.

I was pleased to officiate at the official opening of the Lambton High School multipurpose centre for a number of reasons. As the honourable member for Wallsend would be aware, having attended the ceremony, it was memorable because of the presentation by the school students. Their

performance was outstanding, particularly the renditions by the school band and the school choir. I especially enjoyed the performance of a scene from *Macbeth* by the year 11 drama class, which was superb.

It is great to use occasions such as official openings to highlight the outstanding academic, theatrical and musical talents of schoolchildren. Teachers work very hard to bring out those talents. I extend my congratulations and thanks to the former president of the Parents and Citizens Association, Diana Bridgman, as well as the principal, Peter Hall. I congratulate Terry Franklin, who was the principal for 10 years; I note that the hall has been named the T. M. Franklin Multipurpose Centre. Mr Franklin was a principal of outstanding renown and made a dramatic difference to the school. It is appropriate that he should be honoured in that way.

#### HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR NORTHCOTT LEBANON TRIP

**Mr O'FARRELL** (Northcott) [11.34 a.m.]: Within the electorate of Northcott, in the suburb of Thornleigh, live many families of Lebanese background. These honest, hardworking and enterprising Australians make up some of the 300,000 strong Australian-Lebanese community in this country. Over the winter recess I was afforded the privilege of visiting Lebanon to help me better understand Australian-Lebanese people generally and my Thornleigh constituents in particular. The trip was sponsored by the International Council of Lebanese Migrants in Australia. I am indebted to its President, Ghassan Karaki, for providing this opportunity.

The bipartisan delegation comprised, Steve Bracks, MLA, Victoria's shadow treasurer; Eddie Micalleff, MLA, a former Victorian shadow minister for ethnic affairs; the Hon. John Hannaford, MLC; the Hon. Patricia Forsythe, MLC; and Acting Inspector Chris Boik from the Campsie Local Area Command of the New South Wales Police Service. In addition to Mr Karaki, we were accompanied by Richard Mitry and his wife, Sandra, and their children, Ritchie and Valdis; Joe Khoury, Editor-in-Chief of *Al Bairak*; Fardi Karaki; and Ahmed Dirani. Australia's ambassador, His Excellency Ian Parmenter, and his deputy, Sean Singh, provided valuable support during the visit. We were impressed by their efficiency and the obvious expertise in Arab affairs which they bring to their roles.

The eight-day visit was both comprehensive and rewarding. We were afforded access to those at

the highest political and religious levels in Lebanon and met with senior politicians in Syria. We saw the country from Qana, Tyr and Kharbat Salem in the south to The Cedars in the Mount Lebanon range, Bane and Becharre in the north. The images and memories I experienced while in Lebanon will live with me forever. Lebanon is governed effectively by a troika of presidents—the President of the Republic, the President of the Council of Ministers, or Prime Minister, and the President of the National Assembly. We were honoured to meet all three. While each expressed strong ongoing support for Australia's close ties with Lebanon, individually they also left us with specific messages.

President Elias al-Hrawi stressed the importance of expatriate Lebanese not continuing old civil war rivalries in their new homes around the world. That came on the back of as yet unproven allegations about Australian involvement in a recent terrorist incident in Lebanon. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri impressed us all with his vision for a rebuilt Lebanon based upon a strong, internationally competitive economy in which tourism would feature as significantly as it does in our own country. Speaker Nabih Berri underlined the importance of an Australian-style public education system in ensuring that the conditions for a prosperous, lasting peace were cemented into place in Lebanon.

While in Lebanon the delegation met with two of the country's main religious leaders. His Eminence Cardinal Nsrallah Sfeir, Patriarch of the Maronite Church, echoed the Speaker's comments about the importance of education. Cardinal Sfeir also took the opportunity to thank Caritas and other Catholic charities for the support they have given to his social programs, which are helping rebuild communities in the wake of civil war. The Mufti of the Republic, Qabani, leader of Lebanon's Sunni community, drew parallels between Australian and Lebanese society during the delegation's visit. He said that unity through diversity, which is a feature of Australia's society following our long-term immigration program, should also be a goal for Lebanon. Because of his absence from the country, the delegation was unable to meet Chamseddine, the Head of the Higher Shi'ite Council.

On Saturday, 18 July the delegation visited Qana, a site known to most of us through the *Bible* as the place where Jesus turned water into wine. Unfortunately, Qana has a more recent, less inspiring, story. Two years ago, on 18 April 1996, the United Nations compound at Qana was subjected to a five-minute bombardment by Israeli forces. In the course of 35 rounds being detonated in the area,

a hospital was hit and destroyed. Fifty-two men, women and children sheltering in the hospital were killed, and another 51 people were killed elsewhere in the compound to which they had gone in the belief it would be a safe haven. Two of the dead were Fijian United Nations peacekeepers.

Qana is a sombre site. Its inhabitants have turned the massacre site into a shrine; they call it a holocaust. As one enters the town one is greeted by a sign stating, "Our victims' blood is our voice to the world." Qana is a potent symbol to the world about Israel's ongoing occupation of southern Lebanon. Israel has struggled hard to ensure its own existence as an independent nation. It should provide Lebanon the same opportunity. I support the 20-year-old United Nations resolution 425 seeking the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from Lebanon.

I join Cardinal Sfeir in his support for United Nations resolution 520, which calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanese soil. No-one committed to democracy and self-determination could do otherwise. I greatly enjoyed my visit to Lebanon. I hope to visit the country again, this time privately with my wife. My visit brought home to me the stark reality of a country which was racked by civil war. It provided a shining example of what can be achieved when people are determined to leave the past behind and are committed to rebuilding a better future. Above all, however brief, my visit gave me a better insight into the history, the culture and politics of Lebanese-Australians, both in Thornleigh and beyond.

#### YENNORA METHADONE CLINIC

**Mr TRIPODI** (Fairfield) [11.39 a.m.]: I inform the House of my decision to veto any licence application to establish a methadone clinic in Fairfield. Recent advice sought from the Crown Solicitor's Office states that it is legal for a local member of Parliament to express his or her intention to veto a methadone licence application before it has been lodged. Therefore, I have advised the applicant, Dr Nasser, of my intention to oppose the issue of a licence. I have made this decision after carefully weighing all the issues presented. The decision has been motivated by one consideration: the best interests of the people I represent. On one hand the broader community and public health issues had to be taken into consideration. On the other hand the interests, fears and concerns of local residents, business owners and operators played a dominant role in the decision-making process.

Although most of the attention has been focused on methadone itself, the issue to be resolved

relates to location. The strong campaign waged by community representatives, organisations and residents led me to determine that the Yennora site is inappropriate. The main concerns raised by the community have been the close proximity of the site to Yennora Public School, Yennora railway station and the adjacent residential area. Furthermore, the overwhelming and unanimous view of the community is that a methadone clinic will have an adverse effect on the existing social and economic situation of the locality. The development application submitted by Dr Nasser was a proposal for a doctor's surgery, including a methadone treatment service. Amendment 20 of Holroyd local environmental plan defines a doctor's surgery as follows:

A room or a number of rooms forming either the whole or part of a building and used by not more than three legally qualified medical practitioners who practice therein the profession of medicine, and who employ not more than three employees in connection with that practice.

Residents have questioned the ability of the applicant to comply with these guidelines. They are of the opinion that the development application clearly establishes that the scale of operation is likely to be well beyond that permitted by the definition of a doctor's surgery. On 21 July, despite significant community objection, Holroyd City Council approved a development application lodged for a methadone clinic on the site of 24 Norrie Street, Yennora. In the rush to address public opposition to the Merrylands clinic, Holroyd City Council jumped at the opportunity to relocate a Merrylands problem in Yennora's backyard. The application was opposed by every segment of the community, and the council in good conscience should not have supported it.

Furthermore, Holroyd City Council's independent consultants' report recommended strongly against approving the development application. Patience has been exercised by all segments of the community during the council process but the end result is unjust, lacks compassion and is a Holroyd council quick fix at Yennora's expense. We need to continue to work with the Health Department, councils, police and the community to find alternative sites. We need also to explore new methods of methadone distribution. Keeping in mind the demand for an appropriate methadone treatment facility in the Fairfield-Holroyd area, we need to find a site that as far as possible minimises the adverse impact of such a facility on the surrounding community.

There is strong support for methadone programs from the Health Department as a treatment



for drug addiction and from the Police Service as a means of reducing drug-related crime. However, we must all work together and consider the overall effect of the proposed development in the Yennora area, including the suitability of the site. In conclusion, I commend the residents of Yennora for running an extremely focused and intelligent campaign to express their views on the matter and for taking the time to inform themselves properly on the issues, arguments and matters involved.

#### NORTH COAST HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr FRASER** (Coffs Harbour) [11.43 a.m.]: Once again I draw the attention of honourable members to the issue of health services not only in Coffs Harbour but also on the mid north coast.

**Mr Jeffery:** The lack of services.

**Mr FRASER:** As the honourable member for Oxley rightly says, the issue is the lack of health services. In the past few weeks I have discovered that the Mid North Coast Area Health Service has instructed Coffs Harbour Base Hospital to cut its expenditure by 10 per cent.

**Mr Jeffery:** Who is the deputy chairman of the board?

**Mr FRASER:** I shall come to that in a moment. The area health board has said that that is not the case. The fact is that Coffs Harbour Base Hospital and other hospitals on the mid north coast have overrun their budgets because of insufficient funding allocations. Indeed, they have been told that their funding allocations next year will be the same as those for this year. That means that expenditure will be cut by 10 per cent, although the area health board has denied that. I know that the hospital has been told to cut its expenditure because a member of the media repeated to me what he had heard from a board member about what had been discussed at the meeting.

**Mr Nagle:** Name him!

**Mr FRASER:** I will name him. The board member is Paul Sefky, who is a candidate for the ALP in the Federal election. He has lied to the people of the mid north coast about the true budgetary problems of the Mid North Coast Area Health Service. Mr Sefky told the journalist that he could not go on the record because he was hiding behind board confidentiality. He is not a suitable candidate for election to the Federal Parliament or for any other election because he is using his position as acting chairman of the area health board

to mislead the people of the mid north coast. Indeed, health services on the north coast are farcical. During the time Mr Sefky has been on the board we have received the following indicative milestones for the new Coffs Harbour hospital. The first milestone was completion of the project definition plan on 31 March 1998, but that has not been reached. The second milestone was tender and award early works package on 1 April 1998—a good date. However, that was not done until 15 April—and all we got was a platform for a hospital.

**Mr Jeffery:** April Fools' Day.

**Mr FRASER:** The honourable member for Oxley rightly says, "April Fools' Day". The only fools in this debate are the Minister for Health and Paul Sefky. The next milestone was tender design and construction contract on 21 April 1998, but that was not reached. The final date for receipt of tenders for the design and construction contract was 30 June 1998. However, the board has not even called for tenders. The next milestone is award preferred tenderer status on 28 July 1998. That has not been reached. The next milestone is award design and construction contract on 22 September 1998.

**Mr Jeffery:** Not reached?

**Mr FRASER:** It is not 22 September yet. I inform the House that the contract for design and construction cannot be awarded because the board has not completed the preceding schedule of milestones. The only milestone reached so far is more like a millstone—a piece of concrete and inadequate health services. At a recent meeting with the medical staff of the hospital the chairman of the board, Dr Philip Houlton, said that 157 beds are currently open—the Minister for Health has closed at least nine beds that we know of. We also heard that 95 per cent of all operations at the hospital are urgent, which means that there are few elective operations. The 157 beds are outdone only by 180 desks and 180 computers. Coffs Harbour hospital has more desks and computers than beds so that the Government can hide the real situation.

When there is a problem the Minister does not provide an extra bed or extra nursing staff; he finds another bureaucrat, another desk and another computer to print more lies for the people of Coffs Harbour. Health funding for the mid north coast is \$163.30 per person, compared with \$454 per person in the metropolitan area. The Minister for Health has lied to us and he has not delivered the promised services. It is a disgrace. A member of the ALP is lying to the people of the mid north coast on behalf

of the Minister. That shows that he cannot be trusted if he is elected to the Federal Parliament, as the Minister for Health and the Premier cannot be trusted to deliver health services to the people of Coffs Harbour.

### WYONG SHOPPING CENTRE CAR PARKING

**Mr CRITTENDEN** (Wyong) [11.48 a.m.]: I draw the attention of honourable members to the loss of car parking spaces at Wyong shopping centre as a result of the Wyong bus-rail interchange project. Although the Labor Party did not promise to construct the interchange before the last election, the project will come to fruition shortly. Honourable members may be aware that the Standing Committee on Public Works reviewed the cost of the project. Although the then Liberal mayor of Wyong wanted taxpayers to contribute an extra \$1 million to the project, the standing committee found that the same result could be achieved and at the same time save \$500,000, which is a conservative estimate, and perhaps even up to \$1 million.

There was a slight problem with the Department of Transport's parking proposal for the bus-rail interchange project because 13 car parking spaces in Wyong shopping centre, on the western side of Pacific Highway, were to be lost. There was also a proposal to relocate approximately 50 commuter car park spaces from Wyong to Tuggerah. Many people, including myself, have been actively working with the Wyong Chamber of Commerce to help businesses in the Wyong shopping centre grow so they can provide competition to the newer, bigger and more expensive shopping centres, such as Tuggerah Westfield, in order to retain the sense of community in the Wyong township.

Many business people like Gwen Conti from the Legends Bakery and Coffee Shop and John Parmenter from Blooms Chemist were concerned at the loss of car parking spaces because that was the advantage Wyong shopping centre had over the large shopping centres. The issue came to light only last week and within a short space of time approximately 300 people had forwarded letters to the Minister for Transport pointing out the major problem the proposal would cause. The Minister acted decisively and sent officials to a meeting held on Tuesday, 8 September, with representatives of the Roads and Traffic Authority, Wyong Shire Council and Wyong Chamber of Commerce.

The issue now appears to be resolved. I thank the Minister for his forthright instructions to his bureaucrats to resolve the matter. I have received already a letter from the executive manager of the

Wyong Chamber of Commerce, Jodie Davis, pointing out the following points of agreement reached at the meeting. It was agreed that the proposed third set of traffic lights between Church Street and Alison Road would be abolished; the structure of the interchange would be revised as per RTA and council suggestions; no parking spaces on the western side of the Pacific Highway in the shopping centre would be lost; all parking on the eastern side of the highway will possibly be removed; one parking spot on Cameron's Corner where the L. J. Hooker real estate office is located may possibly be lost; and three additional parking spaces outside the Grand Hotel are possible. Those points of agreement are great news for the people of Wyong because the car parking problem appears to have been resolved.

Wyong requires more infrastructure to improve its sense of community, and council and government officers acted constructively to overcome problems as they arose. Most council officers worked constructively towards a solution; it is a pity the Liberal councillors could not do the same. They have lost credibility, even in the Liberal Party. Both Liberal councillors were candidates at the recent Liberal pre-selection for the seat of The Entrance at the next State election and were not successful. That demonstrates the goodwill amongst officers of Wyong council. I hope that goodwill extends to the application for the proposed Wadalba High School and that development will be progressed as speedily as the parking problem was resolved.

### MAITLAND LAW AND ORDER

**Mr BLACKMORE** (Maitland) [11.53 a.m.]: On 31 August 450 people attended a meeting held at Maitland Town Hall to express their concerns regarding law and order in the Hunter. Invitations were extended to the Minister for Police, the Attorney General and the Minister for Community Services. Only the Minister for Community Services had the decency to acknowledge the letter and forward an apology. The shadow minister for police, the shadow minister for community services and the shadow attorney general were present at the meeting. Many issues were raised at the meeting, including the horrific accident on the Queen's birthday holiday weekend that resulted in the deaths of Dr Andrew Lojszczyk and his friend Maryann Cameron. The young offender who had stolen the BMW involved in the crash is at present involved in a court hearing.

Another incident involved a 19-year-old convicted murderer being allowed home less than nine months after being sentenced to 14 years gaol to visit his mother, who, I might add, was at home

on home detention, and to celebrate his birthday with her. This young offender's residence was 300 metres from the scene of the crime and 300 metres from the residence of the deceased person's family. A charge against a 14-year-old relative of that convicted murderer of assaulting the coach of a women's soccer team was recently dismissed in court. The case was dismissed on *doli incapax* grounds. That means that the prosecution must prove that offenders aged between 10 years and 14 years knew at the time of committing an offence that what they were doing was wrong and was punishable by law. I intend introducing a bill to correct that anomaly. In addition, I am concerned at decisions of magistrates, a concern echoed by those present at the Maitland law and order meeting. I refer particularly to Magistrate Geoff Bradd at Worimi court. It saddened me and many others to read his comments when a 16-year-old offender who had appeared before him—

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gaudry):** Order! I remind the honourable member for Maitland that the standing orders provide that he should not reflect adversely upon a member of the judiciary.

**Mr BLACKMORE:** I take that advice on board, but these comments were mentioned in the *Newcastle Herald* by Jeff Corbett and I shall quote from his report. The 16-year-old offender was on amphetamines and had assaulted his mother and three siblings. This year he had appeared 20 times in court and the mother had pleaded that he be kept in Worimi juvenile institution to enable him to go on a rehabilitation program. The Department of Juvenile Justice and the police prosecutor urged that the offender be confined in Worimi. As reported in the *Newcastle Herald*, Magistrate Geoff Bradd said, "This is not a care and protection court."

Is a juvenile court not supposed to care for young people? Is its responsibility not to protect the community? I am disappointed at the magistrate's comment. I note also on the same day that two young ladies were given bail after stabbing a man at Taree and robbing him of \$17. This Government brought in tough knife laws, yet two offenders using knives were given bail. These sorts of matters concerned the 450 people who attended the public law and order meeting. I plead with the Government to listen to the concerns of the community. If it does not, law and order will be a major issue during the campaign for the forthcoming State election.

#### IRISH FAMINE COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENT

**Mr NAGLE** (Auburn) [11.58 a.m.]: I acknowledge the visit to Sydney of Mary McAleese,

President of Ireland, who addressed this House only a few days ago. A few months ago I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Richard O'Brien, His Excellency the Irish Ambassador, and his assistant, Pat Bourne, and other staff members. Richard asked if I could help to organise the erection of a monument at Hyde Park Barracks to commemorate the Great Irish Famine. I joined the committee and became actively involved in the organising process. I acknowledge the members of the committee who have worked hard to achieve the goal set by the committee: Tom Power, Martin Coleman, Frank O'Connell and his wife, Patsy Daggett, Michael Daley, Fergus Doyle, Steve Carey and my good friend and secretary-treasurer of the committee, Marie Tunks.

When I joined the committee it had already raised about \$70,000. I organised a function at Parliament House which was attended by almost 380 people. I am indebted to some of my parliamentary colleagues for their help in organising that function, in particular the honourable member for Northcott; the Hon. J. F. Ryan, and that great Irishman, the Hon. J. R. Johnson. Donations were also needed and I am pleased to say that at that function the Premier nominated the sum of \$30,000 to the committee and the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Frank Sartor, donated \$10,000. I understand the Hon. J. F. Ryan and the honourable member for Northcott are doing their best in another jurisdiction to obtain further donations to the Great Irish Famine Commemorative Monument.

When I visited Ireland for the Australian Bar Association conference I had the pleasure of meeting the President of Ireland and having afternoon tea with her. We discussed the way things are run here. I told her about the need for funding. I attended a golf day organised by a good friend and journalist, Mel McNally. At that Fianna Fail fundraising function I donated a small gift of parliamentary wine and the book *First Parliament* as a prize. That went over well.

I was to meet the Prime Minister of Ireland at that function but unfortunately he was unable to attend because on that day three young boys were burnt to death in Northern Ireland. I did get to meet Des Richardson, a close friend and adviser to the Prime Minister, and Mr Rory Brady, senior counsel. With their help I was able to put a submission to the Prime Minister of Ireland with regard to a donation to the Great Irish Famine Commemorative Monument, which is to be built at Hyde Park Barracks. The President of Ireland commenced that building process by removing a stone from a wall.

I am grateful to Mr Paul Bradford, the member for Mallow in Cork. Many people who left Ireland

did so through Cork and Cobh to go to the United States of America, Canada, Australia and many other countries. With the help of the President of Ireland, Mr Rory Brady, Des Richardson, Mel McNally and Paul Bradford and many others who were able to assist, the President of Ireland announced at Hyde Park Barracks that the Irish Government has promised a substantial donation. The amount of the donation is yet to be determined. I am pleased that I helped to negotiate that donation. I am also indebted to members of the Great Irish Famine commemorative committee for their help and to President Mary McAleese for the help she has given to enable us to raise that money. I expect further help from my parliamentary colleagues.

I particularly want to mention Tom Power, who has done a lot of hard work in raising that money, and also to Peter Brennan, Chairman of the Lansdowne Club. I was also fortunate in London to meet Andy Rogers, the Assistant General Manager of the Bank of Ireland, and Roy Mantle, public relations manager of Guinness Brewery. I think we will get some help from them. The parliamentary function raised \$64,000 as well as the \$40,000 in donations, a total of \$104,000. The Great Irish Famine Commemorative Monument is well on its way to being built, and we look forward to a great deal of support from other people, particularly Guinness Australia and Waterford Crystal, who were sponsors of the parliamentary function. There were many other sponsors as well. In the next few weeks people will attend a dinner at Parliament House, and I will refer to them at another time and to what we intend to do in the future. I thank all those people for their help and continued support. [*Time expired.*]

### KEMPSEY HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr JEFFERY** (Oxley) [12.03 p.m.]: Unemployment in Oxley is being made worse by the ill-conceived decisions of the State Labor Government which threaten the future of our hospitals and jobs. At Kempsey hospital the linen services, catering, stores, payroll, sterilisation, engineering and pathology are at risk, have gone or are under review. The people of Kempsey and districts demand that their hospital is adequately funded so that it can provide the services and jobs expected by the community. Kempsey hospital has a proven track record and is supported by a caring local community with dedicated local employees. Last Thursday more than 600 people attended a public meeting in the mall. They do not want their hospital downgraded. The Minister says the hospital is not being downgraded, he is just taking away the jobs. If that is not downgrading, I do not know what is.

One cannot run a hospital by remote control. For months I have been asking the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health—whom I advised I would speak on this matter today—to visit Kempsey and speak with concerned citizens about the future of their hospital. I have made numerous representations by letter, fax and phone on behalf of the Kempsey community. The Minister says he is too busy. I sent more than 2,000 letters in one hit to the Minister. It was a mammoth task, and they reached his desk earlier this year. The Minister's response denies the seriousness of the issue. The Minister will have to start listening.

A total cook-chill system is not suitable for Oxley—at Kempsey, Wauchope or Macksville. The Minister will say that a cook-chill system existed under the previous Government, but it did not exist in Oxley. I have an assurance from the shadow health minister, the honourable member for North Shore, that while there is high unemployment it will not exist. Oxley has arguably the best kitchen catering services in New South Wales.

A parliamentary inquiry into rural health was established by the upper House in response to concerns about threats to our health services. The honourable member for Kiama should be aware that the inquiry identified very real problems in rural areas. At the same time I reiterate that the people of Kempsey have a great hospital with wonderful staff. Our latest grandchild was born at that hospital three months ago. Our daughter-in-law, Susie, said that the care was outstanding and the birthing unit was excellent—even better than Royal North Shore Hospital, where she had her first child.

Before last Christmas we saw the closure of operating theatres and the intensive care unit because the health service was unable to get a temporary replacement for the specialist surgeon, who went on leave. The Macksville, Wauchope and Kempsey communities have lost touch with their hospitals since local health boards were abolished. Rural community hospital boards must be reinstated to allow local community input into rural health services and to restore the voice of local people, who know what is best for their own community. I am sure the Minister for Health will blame the Federal Government, but he cannot, because the Federal Government has given record assistance in monetary terms. Where is the money going? This week and last week constituents of mine in Kempsey have been signing petitions and meeting with the Director General of Health, Michael Reid.

Of particular concern is the review of catering services at Kempsey and Wauchope. The people of

Wauchope are directing letters through me to the Minister for Health regarding the cook-chill proposal. There are 23.5 full-time jobs in food catering at Kempsey District Hospital. The introduction of an off-site cook-chill system would see a reduction of 10 to 12 full-time catering jobs at Kempsey alone, and several at Wauchope. Bean counters will say that saves 50¢ a meal, but their figures are rubbery; they are not comparing apples with apples. That will not be achieved. There will be a lot of waste, and the proposal does not take into account the nutritional value nor the bedside service.

Kempsey hospital's catering service meals are 100 per cent delivered. With food bought locally and cooked to order on site there is no waste. This has a snowball effect, with meat and vegetables being bought locally. If this service is removed, I understand it will go to Casino. The current meal system is most acceptable to the community, with a 97 per cent satisfaction rate. There will be some cook-chill meals at the hospital, but only in small areas. If a cook-chill meal was cooked on Monday in Casino and despatched the next day, it would be unlikely to be served before Wednesday.

Cook-chill meals cannot be reheated, so more patients would reject them than be prepared to eat them. Food prepared on site is fully utilised and there is no waste. The Minister may ask what happens if someone wants a boiled egg. As I said, if services are taken out of town there will be a snowball effect and local produce, local people and local jobs will all suffer. Already 250 jobs have been lost at Midio, Macksville, and we are in a disastrous situation. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour referred to the acting chairman of the North Coast Area Health Service—[*Time expired.*]

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [12.08 p.m.]: I appreciate the work of the honourable member for Oxley in bringing to our attention issues he faces involving my portfolio areas. He has always been strong in bringing local concerns to my attention. It is productive working with the honourable member because he often tries to find solutions to problems rather than play politics, and I appreciate that. It is important to point out that over the past four years the Carr Government has increased funding for rural health by more than 33 per cent—a massive increase. Never before has so much money been put into health services in rural areas. No government has ever provided such a large boost to funding for rural health services.

The Government is now providing \$1,050 million to rural health services, which represents a massive 34 per cent increase in funding over four years. Of course, that does not solve all the problems. There is no doubt that there are significant problems in the health system. There are problems resulting from the fall-out in private insurance, affecting places such as Kempsey. There are problems resulting from the cut in the dental health program, affecting country areas in particular. There are problems resulting from what is called a cost-shifting penalty by the Federal Government that New South Wales has suffered as a result of the actions of the former Government.

All of those issues have made things difficult. There is also the ongoing difficulty of attracting doctors to work in country areas. The Government has embarked on several projects to try to increase the number of doctors working in country areas and it is seeking to improve efficiencies, whether they be in catering and cook-chill or other areas. The prime responsibility is to provide for patients. I am not going to walk away from making sure that the Government gets the best service for patients for the dollars it is spending. Patients are what the Health Department is about.

#### NALTREXONE DETOXIFICATION

**Mr HARRISON** (Kiama) [12.10 p.m.]: Today I bring to the attention of the House that I have recently travelled to Western Australia and met with Dr George O'Neil, who is conducting a clinical trial of naltrexone in the treatment of opiate drug addiction. I took with me a letter of introduction from the Minister for Health, for which I thank him. I also thank the Minister for being present in the Chamber to respond to this statement. On the evening of Tuesday, 28 July, I attended a meeting of the naltrexone clinic carers recovery group at which former patients of Dr O'Neil, with parents and carers of present patients, discussed ways in which they could become better equipped in understanding how best to manage their own lives while assisting addicts to break their drug addiction.

This was a very interesting and informative experience for me and my wife, who attended with me. On the following day, Wednesday, 29 July, my wife and I attended Dr O'Neil's clinic in Subiaco, where we spent an entire day observing patients being treated and former patients being interviewed and counselled. I was extremely impressed with Dr O'Neil's compassionate and altruistic approach to the needs of people suffering from heroin addiction,

even to the point of immediately providing rapid detoxification to a young couple who came in off the street pleading for help. I took an instinctive liking to this man and the way that he perceives his role as a medico.

Throughout the day, when my wife and I sat in Dr O'Neil's treatment room talking to former patients of his and discussing their progress, I was impressed also with the confidence they expressed in Dr O'Neil, and observed former patients who were coming into his establishment apparently on a regular or semi-regular basis and assisting with voluntary work in the treatment of new patients. Dr O'Neil expressed some concern about a high-profile group from the eastern States that would be visiting him in the immediate future to assess the success or otherwise of his clinical trial.

I therefore took the opportunity to write to the Federal health Minister asking that any high-profile group sent over by him for this purpose take the time to visit the carers group, which meets in the Church of Christ annexe in Subiaco on Tuesday nights, after which it might see fit to visit his clinic on the Wednesday and avail of an opportunity to speak with former patients who now assist the trial on a voluntary basis. I have since been advised that this did not occur and that the bureaucrats sent to Western Australia by the Federal health Minister were interested only in speaking to Dr O'Neil and in voicing criticisms of the way he was conducting the trials. That is a pity, since I feel the group would have benefited from spending a little more time observing what was taking place.

Today I especially bring to the attention of the House the existence in Western Australia of the save a mate program—SAM—developed with the assistance of the Australian Red Cross in Western Australia in conjunction with the Duke of Edinburgh award. The program aims to support and encourage young people aged between 15 years and 24 years at risk of life-threatening situations, such as drug overdose, to complete a first aid course. The skills gained by those who do this course place them in a position to save a mate should the need arise. This program, if adopted, could be of great benefit to young people in New South Wales, provided, of course, that no similar program is already operating in this State, and I seek advice on that matter.

I have in my possession two press statements, one from the Australian Red Cross of Western Australia, dated 26 July 1987, and the other from the Western Australian health Minister, dated 27 August 1987, which elaborate on the SAM program. In my opinion, it would be beneficial to any member

of the New South Wales Parliament to visit Dr O'Neil's clinic and observe his naltrexone trial at first hand. Dr O'Neil has treated approximately 850 addicts since the commencement of his trial. I understand that the success rate of his trial is fairly high.

Dr O'Neil's policy is always to have a carer—a mother, father, husband, wife or other close person—make sure that the naltrexone is given on a regular basis to the person going through the detoxification process, to make sure that that person does not lapse. I have been heartened by comments appearing in yesterday's *Sydney Morning Herald* attributed to the Minister for Health in regard to the trial that is taking place at Sydney Hospital, with 50 per cent of heroin addicts showing improvement after going through that trial.

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [12.15 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of honourable members not only the valuable information presented by the honourable member for Kiama but also that he paid his own way for a trip to Israel to examine the progress of naltrexone rapid detoxification treatment under Dr Waismann just a few months ago. The honourable member has shown an enormous interest in this issue and in the wider ramifications of drug abuse. His recent trip to Western Australia to inform himself fully of what is happening there demonstrates that he is trying to find answers and bring the information to the attention of others.

It is important to recognise that naltrexone has not really gone through a scientific evaluation of the type that we in New South Wales are conducting. That is why the rest of the world, not just the rest of Australia, is interested in the trial being established here. I reported yesterday on the pilot, the preliminary part of the trial being conducted at Sydney Hospital. The trial is showing encouraging results. As I said many months ago when the issue of naltrexone was raised, there is no miracle cure. This is not a miracle cure. We have all known miracle cures in a whole range of areas to come and go. It is important for us to evaluate exactly where naltrexone fits into the scheme of treating drug addicts.

It is very important to realise that detoxification is not the difficult part of coping with drug abuse; it is staying off drugs long term that is difficult. Detoxification can be achieved in a number of ways. Naltrexone is a particular drug being used for detoxification under a number of different procedures involving sedation or general anaesthetic.

It is the long term that is the real difficulty and it is the long term for which we still do not have the full answers. I certainly welcome the contribution made by the honourable member for Kiama.

#### DEATH OF Mr MARK EVANS

**Dr KERNOHAN** (Camden) [12.17 p.m.]: On 23 August Mark Evans of Ingleburn was innocently driving a Woolworths truck southwards on the F5 when he approached the Glenlee Road overpass near Menangle Park. A few seconds later a concrete rock weighing approximately five kilograms hit him in the chest, killing him almost instantly. A post-mortem indicated that Mark Evans died of a severed artery and a ruptured spleen. His death was not an accident—it was caused by one of a number of such rocks deliberately hurled from the bridge to damage vehicles.

Four men have been charged with the murder of Mark Evans: Sean Sutcliffe, aged 25 years; Sean McGoldrick, aged 21 years; and two unnamed juveniles, aged 16 years and 17 years. Allegedly the men collected rocks from a Bradbury rockery for the express purpose of throwing them at the traffic on the F5. When police arrived to inspect the scene where the truck had careened across the road onto an embankment the accused were still at the scene. Then they went to a party. It has been reported that police arrested McGoldrick the next day when he was spotted, carrying a camera, with his co-accused on the Glenlee overpass. What remorse did those young men show by going to a party after causing a serious accident and the death of an innocent man?

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Clough):** Order! I advise the honourable member for Camden that this matter is before the courts. She should take care not to prejudice the hearing.

**Dr KERNOHAN:** The 16-year-old has already been granted bail and I believe the other three accused will soon apply for bail. What guarantee does the public have that they will not reoffend if bail is granted? I call on the Attorney General to ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to immediately appeal the decision. Other delinquents who still throw rocks from overpasses must be shown how seriously the New South Wales justice system views such actions. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald* a train driver was cut by flying glass near Mount Druitt on 7 September, and the day before that, boys threw rocks onto the F3 at Newcastle.

I believe that if juveniles 15 years of age or over commit serious adult crimes they should be

tried in a criminal court, not the closed juvenile system. Victims, their families and the general public need to see and hear that justice is being done. I have drafted a letter to the Attorney General asking for an immediate change of law so that victims and their families have full access to the trial of an accused juvenile, although I know that the current law does not permit that. It is not enough just to express sincere condolences to Mark Evans' family: his wife, Dewita; his five-year-old daughter, Ashley; his seven-month-old son, Navarone; his parents, Keith and Helen Evans of Camden south; and his sisters, Marie Evans and Tanya Morris.

It is not enough to screen all the bridges over the M4, M5 and F5 at a cost of \$3.2 million. All the bridges on every road cannot be screened, so every motorist who approaches any overpass must now wonder if some idiot who is out for kicks is waiting to throw a rock at their car. The Government's attitude and the treatment of such offenders by our judicial system must emphasise that such actions are premeditated murder. I await to hear the outcome of this trial, which will determine if juvenile delinquents are given the green light to commit murder under the guise of mindless fun.

#### ILLAWARRA FLOODING

**Mr SULLIVAN** (Wollongong) [12.22 p.m.]: I inform the House of an event that occurred in my electorate and in other electorates in the Illawarra in the early evening on Monday, 17 August, when, over a period of about two hours, 200 millilitres of rain fell. Within a 24-hour period more than 300 millilitres of rain fell, causing significant flash flooding and storm damage to quite a number of properties. About 90 homes will either have to be demolished or to have significant structural repair work carried out on them. Residents say that the crisis lasted for about one hour. I would expect that only now many of those who lost cherished personal belongings, such as photographs, have come to terms with the fact that they simply did not have time to save those precious memories.

One person to whom I spoke said, "It started really pouring down. I walked out the front. There was no water around. I went back inside and within 10 minutes the water was rushing through the house up to my waist, and within 40 minutes it was all gone." In that period of time his house and possessions had effectively been ruined. Some people could swim in their homes. In an endeavour to escape, one woman had to break glass in the front windows to get herself and her children out of her home. She suffered significant injury.

Professor Nanson of the University of Wollongong and his associate Kit Bryant have said that the fundamental cause of the problem is urban development. Urban development creates hard surfaces and intensifies the run-off which, rather than taking a period of time to enter the creek system, concentrates that flow into a very restricted period of time because the hard surfaces retard the run-off. They also noted that although the amount of rain that falls on the plain near the beach and on the escarpment is the same, the effect of it on the escarpment seems double that on the plain.

The topography contributes to an intensification of a downpour. It should be remembered that urban floods, as they are sometimes referred to, are not rare. In the Illawarra they occur about every four or six years, and Professor Nanson said that between 1984 and 1991 in Sydney 10 such storms have occurred, generally centring on about a 10-kilometre radius, so they are not unusual. A commission of inquiry is being established to examine urban development on the escarpment. Development needs to be curtailed.

Large holding ponds are required to control the dispersal of water in a more manageable way. Such a system exists in a couple of creeks, and they are noteworthy for the lack of flooding that affects downstream residents. I take this opportunity to record my appreciation of the work done by the State Emergency Service, the fire brigades—both full-time brigades and rural fire units—the Police Service and the Ambulance Service, which did an excellent job in very difficult circumstances in the days following the storm. I commiserate with those who were affected. I visited many homes and saw many people who were heartbroken about their losses. It is easy to understand their heartbreak when one sees the damage that was caused to their homes.

**Mr DEBUS** (Blue Mountains—Minister for Energy, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Corrective Services, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Minister on the Arts) [12.27 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to endorse the remarks of the honourable member for Wollongong. The Wollongong event to which he referred was one of the most severe in recent times. Indeed, it has been described by the emergency authorities as a one-in-300-years event. To my mind it is close to miraculous that only one life was lost during the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of the flash flood which occurred in the middle of the night, at the worst possible time. It is, as the honourable member said, a great tribute to the skill and bravery of the emergency service workers that they were able to rescue people who were literally

floating on their lounges only minutes after they had been calmly watching the television or carrying out some other domestic activity.

It is worth mentioning that the people of Wollongong suffer—as do those in so many other places affected by floods—from great ambiguities in their dealings with insurance companies. Those who have been directly affected by flood will, as usual, find it extremely difficult to receive insurance cover. It is therefore significant that the Premier's suggestion of the establishment of a national disaster fund to cover such circumstances has been endorsed in recent days and declared as a policy by the Federal Labor Opposition. In the meantime, however, I am sure that the State Emergency Service will continue to battle, as it has been doing for months now, with the floods that continue to affect various parts of our State. It will do so with the competence that we have become used to in recent times.

#### **Mr BRETT TAYLOR ALLEGED POLICE ASSAULT**

**Mr ELLIS** (South Coast) [12.29 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the difficulties faced by one of my constituents in seeking redress for an alleged police assault. The case commenced about 4½ years ago when Mr Brett Taylor, of Old Erowal Bay, was arrested at Burwood following an incident to which he was a party. Mr Taylor claims that during the melee both he and his brother were assaulted by police and sustained injuries. Mr Taylor was charged with one count of assault and four counts of resisting arrest. The charges were upheld, and he appealed. He sought, and was given, legal aid to pursue action against the police.

Since this matter was brought to my attention in 1996 I have written on his behalf to the Legal Aid Commission, the Attorney General and the Minister for Police in regard to the processing of his case. Mr Taylor has waged a campaign to gather evidence to support his contention that he was assaulted by police but has found extreme difficulty in having the evidence he needs produced. It is not my purpose today to argue the merits of this case or to be judgmental in relation to the incident. That is for someone else at another time. What concerns me is that a pattern of stonewalling by the Police Service seems to have developed in relation to attempts to extract information from it. I add that Mr Taylor approached the police royal commission but was told that his case had to run its natural course before it could be referred to the Police Integrity Commission. The difficulty is, of course, that the case cannot run its natural course until all the evidence needed is made available.



In any event, Mr Taylor was subsequently advised by the Police Integrity Commission that it was not interested in his case, and it was at that point that he chose to pursue the evidence himself. With some difficulty and delay, Mr Taylor sought extracts from the notebooks of the officers involved and from the police radio log in relation to the incident in which he alleges he was assaulted. Despite supplying a call sign used by attendant officers and stipulating specific dates and times, he was advised by Inspector C. L. Langburne, the police freedom of information officer, that more information was needed. Mr Taylor was later advised that access was not available because the operational orders could not be found.

He was referred back to Sergeant Grumley at Burwood police station, who was instrumental in his arrest, and it was he who advised that the operational orders could not be found. Mr Taylor again wrote to Inspector Langburne requesting copies of all reports and documents relating to an internal affairs investigation which he had already been forwarded by the Ombudsman's Office. The police then sent him the same 19-page report which contained omissions of material crucial to his case to which he was denied access. He subsequently wrote a letter of complaint appealing the denial of access to the documents, which was passed onto the Ombudsman. Mr Taylor also wrote to the Ombudsman stating that a recording tape obtained by investigating police had gone missing and that the typed log was altered to fit the police story.

The Ombudsman wrote to the police on 31 December last year asking for the documents deemed by the police to be exempt from the freedom of information request, plus any associated documents. The Ombudsman again advised Mr Taylor that some but not all documents had been forwarded to him and, in reply, Mr Taylor rightly asked the Ombudsman why the police explanation for the missing operational orders was not contested. On 19 March Mr Taylor again wrote to police asking for copies of notebook entries and the names of officers manning SW554. The police replied that operational orders containing the prefix SW could not be found and that in any case they were kept for only 12 months. The incident occurred in 1994.

In the latest twist, on 2 March Mr Taylor requested the subpoenaed documents that were produced at Burwood Local Court on 21 November 1994. After several telephone calls he was ultimately informed by letter that these subpoenaed documents were never actually produced in court. He now finds himself on a treadmill. The Parliamentary Secretary for Police has advised him to approach the

Commissioner of Police direct for information relating to operational matters. He did this and was directed back to Inspector Langburne, the FOI officer, to start the whole process over again. This is not satisfactory and it seems to me that there has been a deliberate attempt to cover up aspects of this case which would lend credence to Mr Taylor's accusations. I call on the Minister to institute a thorough investigation into this case to determine whether Mr Taylor is being denied justice and whether there has been any conspiracy to cover up the events surrounding any illegal actions on the part of any police officer in this affair.

### DAVIDS LTD STRIKE

**Mr GIBSON** (Londonderry) [12.34 p.m.]: I congratulate the workers at Davids Ltd. They are back at work now, but they went through a fairly hard time during their eight-weeks strike. Picket lines are legal in this State and police have never been used to break picket lines. Never in the industrial history of New South Wales have we seen police used in the way they were used at Davids Ltd at Blacktown. Davids is Australia's largest wholesale grocery distribution business and operates distribution centres at Blacktown and Silverwater in New South Wales, at Fyshwick in the Australian Capital Territory, and in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. Davids was recently taken over by a South African multinational company, Metro, which now owns more than 70 per cent of the Jewel low-price supermarket chain.

The store workers in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory decided to strike because they could not agree on an enterprise agreement, which should have been resolved last September or October. During the strike the company took out injunctions and used the strike to cut down the facilities and conditions of the workers and to try to get on top of the union movement. I have no doubt that every big business in this State would have been interested in the outcome of the strike. Had Davids been successful I am certain there would have been a chain reaction in every big warehouse and business throughout New South Wales.

Workers at Davids had the temerity to ask for a pay rise for the first time in 2½ years. They asked only for a 5 per cent pay rise! The company wanted to sack the workers and replace 50 per cent of their number with casual workers. Some workers had been employed at Davids for 28 and 30 years, and for some it was the only job that they had had since leaving school. The company used the New South Wales Police Service as its private security

company. That has never happened before. On some days more than 10 police attended and on other days as many 174 police were on the picket line. On some days 30, 40 or 50 police vehicles attended from 5.30 a.m. until late at night. I am certain that if people needed to contact a policeman they could simply go to the picket line instead of their local police station. People could have chosen any policeman, any size, big, short, black or white. People could have had their pick of the stall!

The police were the meat in the sandwich; but they should not have been there. Things happened during the strike that were not Australian. I went there late one day and I thought I had entered a mediaeval torture chamber. Workers were handcuffed by one hand, as high as possible, to fences. They were like dead chooks waiting to go through the processing line. They had been handcuffed by police who said that this was a little game—a great little game called intimidation. It should never have happened. Police from Kings Cross, Cronulla and all over Sydney as well as Newcastle were in attendance. There were reports that police attended from all over New South Wales. That is not Australian and should not happen.

During the Patrick waterfront strike police played a passive role. They sat back and made sure that the picket line did its work, and the picketers, the workers and the company got together and arrived at a solution. But at Davids it was totally different. The police did not play a passive role, they played a very aggressive role. That meant that the strike, which should have been over in a week or two, dragged on for eight weeks, because the company was using the Police Service as its private security firm. I put to the House that if that situation happens in future the company involved should pay for the police it uses on the picket line. That is what happens when police are used at the rugby league grand final, and the New South Wales Rugby League picks up the tab. If police are used on picket lines, the companies that use them should pay the bill, not the taxpayers of New South Wales.

### **CRONULLA SEWERAGE SYSTEM OVERFLOWS**

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [12.39 p.m.]: The House has just concluded debate on a motion of no confidence in the Government because of the Sydney Water crisis. As I said in the House yesterday, fortunately the tap-water in my electorate of Cronulla is still drinkable. However, my electorate has other problems, one of which relates to sewage overflows. A sewage overflow is a discharge of waste water from a sewerage system

that occurs at a designed overflow point. I have been told that the Cronulla sewerage system has 188 overflow points that act as safety valves to relieve the pressure that can build up when wet weather waste water flows are too large for the sewer, when blockages form or when there are mechanical or electrical failures.

When that happens the waste water overflows into the nearest available waterway or stormwater drain. Sewage overflows are designed to protect public health by preventing uncontrolled sewage surcharges, or spillages, on private properties. A number of constituents in my electorate have experienced the very problems that the sewage overflows were designed to alleviate. I have received a number of letters from residents, one of which states:

My stormwater drains are adequate to handle heavy rain but are not designed to accommodate the extra volume of sewage and excess water coming from overflowing sewer mains. I have two young boys who constantly play in our backyard and I am particularly concerned with the health risks associated with raw sewage etc overflowing into my backyard. The health of my family is of paramount importance to my wife and myself and we should not have to put up with this type of inconvenience. My family and my neighbours are disgusted with the recent events and strongly believe that this should not happen in our backyard . . .

These overflows occur in the Shelly Park area. Another resident wrote to me about a local matter that is important to the shire residents. The letter stated:

I have two overflows near my home, one in Shelly Park, one in a friend's front yard, both of which can clearly be seen by anyone walking along the Esplanade; raw sewage, toilet paper etc. is not a pretty sight (a local Sydney Water employee at my request visited these inspection pits 18 months ago, saying it could be a blockage, but then more likely to be inadequate pipes—was to contact me within the week, I am still waiting!).

This letter is dated 26 August this year. The letter further states:

Clearly, even if the proposed new treatment works—

the people in the Cronulla electorate have been waiting for new treatment works for some time—

are commenced on time . . . this will not fix all our problems though hopefully it must improve water quality in Bate Bay.

I wrote to the Minister about the sewage overflows and the problems they are causing after a number of residents contacted the Sydney Water board about the matter. Indeed, one resident wrote to the water board as far back as May 1988. Recent downpours of rain have greatly accentuated the problem. Such hazards to the health of residents is unacceptable.

Action must be taken urgently to identify and rectify the cause of the sewage overflows. The Cronulla area is too beautiful to be literally stained by this sewage. Not only is the sewage staining the natural beauty of the area but the community is crying out for action to preserve public health.

### CAMDEN VALLEY WAY, PRESTONS

**Mr LYNCH** (Liverpool) [12.44 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House and the Minister for Roads in particular to a serious situation involving that part of Camden Valley Way located in Liverpool electorate. Camden Valley Way is under the total care and control of the Roads and Traffic Authority. It is a busy road that runs from Liverpool in the north to Leppington and Camden in the south. The problems to which I advert were put to me by the Casula Progress Association on 25 August, when I discussed these matters with the secretary of the association, Mrs Dorothy Miller, and another member, Mrs Chrissy Newcombe. The problems occur at the intersection of Camden Valley Way and Kookaburra Road at Prestons, an extremely dangerous intersection which requires immediate work for the danger to be alleviated.

There is a problem with vehicles turning right from Camden Valley Way into Kookaburra Road. The problem is worse for buses, especially school buses, as Camden Valley Way at this location serves as a route for buses travelling to William Carey Christian School at Prestons. At that point Camden Valley Way is a busy road with one lane of traffic in each direction; the speed limit is 90 kilometres per hour. All traffic has trouble turning from Camden Valley Way into Kookaburra Road but buses have considerable difficulty turning at the intersection.

The problem is becoming increasingly difficult because of massive residential development in the areas served by Camden Valley Way. It is generally recognised by all the relevant authorities that this part of Sydney is the fastest growing area in New South Wales. The difficulties were tragically highlighted on 12 August this year when a motorcyclist was killed in a collision with a bus. I do not wish to pre-empt any inquiry into the causes of the accident or to attribute blame to anyone for causing the accident. However, the accident highlights the longstanding problems with this intersection. The Casula Progress Association has provided me with a copy of a letter from Mr W. Wilkie, the principal of William Carey Christian School, which states:

The intersection of Kookaburra Road and Camden Valley Way Prestons is extremely dangerous and on the morning of the 12th of August a motorcyclist was involved in a fatal and bloody collision with an empty bus. The accident was witnessed by over 40 students of William Carey in another school bus. Some of these children are in kindergarten and some were traumatised and required counselling. The school expended many hours in dealing with this situation.

The school has been asking for traffic lights at this intersection without result. We do not want any of our children or family members injured or killed at this intersection. Our families report constant near collisions. Any small error of judgment or mechanical failure could result in a collision, because the spacing between vehicles in times relevant to the school (8.00 am - 9.55 am and 2.45 pm - 4.00 pm) is very limited in both directions along Camden Valley Way.

We therefore demand immediate action to remedy this avoidable situation. There have been meetings and previous correspondence especially with Liverpool council about the matter. We note the tokenism in erecting a stop sign at the intersection. The sign will achieve nothing because vehicles invariably stop as a matter of course.

I understand that Liverpool council is reluctant to construct traffic lights at the intersection until Camden Valley Way is widened. That is, the council does not want to incur additional expenditure by having to relocate the traffic lights when the road is widened. Under section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act the council has properly collected money from developers to fund the installation of traffic signals at the intersection. The council, not unreasonably, does not want to install lights now because they would simply have to be ripped out when the road is widened. A number of problems with the intersection have been highlighted. At the meeting with Liverpool council subsequent to the tragic accident a number of resident groups expressed their concerns. The proprietor of the local bus company said that this accident was the second crash this year involving a bus at the intersection, and he pointed to a series of complaints over a period.

Accordingly, I urge the Minister for Roads to expedite the widening of Camden Valley Way so that pedestrian lights can be installed at the intersection of Camden Valley Way and Kookaburra Road as soon as possible. However, in the meantime action should be taken to render the intersection somewhat safer. To that end it has been suggested to me that a swallow treatment be applied to the intersection, that is, only the section of road at the location of the intersection would be widened. That would allow for extra turning lanes and turning spaces into and out of Kookaburra Road. Another issue that should be looked at—and I know that Liverpool council is pressing the RTA to do this—is a review of the 90 kilometres per hour speed limit.

On the face of it, reviewing the speed limit would be sensible. I urge the Minister to review the situation as soon as possible. The progress association emphasised that further lives will be lost at the intersection unless something is done.

### **PORT MACQUARIE BASE HOSPITAL**

**Mr OAKESHOTT** (Port Macquarie) [12.49 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to express my frustration at the raw and pointless political agenda pursued by the Minister for Health yet again in relation to the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. The local community desperately awaits the community mental health review that was due to be released in April. The six-month delay in releasing this document, which has been with the Minister for some time, has had an impact on service delivery and staff morale. If it is being withheld for nothing other than the Minister's determined yet infantile political agenda of hate towards the Port Macquarie Base Hospital, the Minister, who is a medical practitioner, deserves the harshest criticism.

The Port Macquarie Base Hospital mental health service was part of the privatisation of the hospital. The decision was made that prior to any contract being signed, the effectiveness of the management of community mental health services would be subjected to review three years after commencement of the service. The review was conducted on 16 March by Professor Beverley Raphael, who is the director of the Centre for Mental Health. Commitments were given that the report would be released at best in two weeks and at worse by Easter, but the report has not been released because of ministerial intervention. This issue is not just about politics or the blinkered political views of one Minister; it is about the denial of clinical needs and the delivery of health services on the mid-north coast because of ministerial stubbornness and incompetence.

The Minister's petty politics have resulted in several distressing clinical events including the withholding of a national grant of \$65,000 for a joint trial for depression prevention in adolescence; withholding the appointment of an additional adolescent worker; not providing previously promised additional staffing resources; and withholding funds to upgrade data collection. These delays have resulted in a lack of development of quality after-hours crisis service; a failure to provide court liaison services; massive staff frustration; a restriction on the range of available inpatient programs; non-appointment of a registrar, a post

required to be filled by the hospital to meet its delineation criteria; and cutbacks in initiatives to meet demand on crisis presentations.

Delays in those matters have created a continuing increase in demand for services such as up to 50 new client registrations per month, a mobile community team working on a one to 15 case load, the daily rehabilitation program attendance increasing from nine to 30, scheduling more patients to Newcastle than the 1994 levels, the inpatient unit functioning with double the anticipated occupancy rate, and staff working at workloads above that established as acceptable in other regions, resulting in dramatic increases in sick leave and burnout and the possibility of staff leaving the service due to the failure of the Government to do two simple things—release the Raphael report and provide subsequently increased funds made available following the report.

This issue has local broad cross-political support. I have discussed this issue with the local support group ARAFMI—Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill—the local schizophrenia support group, the local hospital, the community board of advice, mental health workers, consumers of mental health services and even frustrated but fair-minded local Labor Party members. The only person keen to have this report delayed is the Minister. I was pleased the shadow minister for health visited and spoke with frustrated mental health workers in Port Macquarie last week, and I thank her for her efforts.

The message by mental health workers at the lunchtime meeting was loud and clear: they are frustrated at the enormous demands being placed on them and at their inability to meet the increasing demand on local services. Those workers are at the end of their tether and rightly so. Do we hear anything from the Minister for Health in recognition of this problem? Unfortunately not. What is worse, there are rumours and innuendos that the Minister has returned the report on several occasions because it was not critical of the local hospital.

Indeed, one rumour floating around is that the report will not be released until after the March election because—lo and behold!—the report has a positive message on which the Port Macquarie community can build. Regardless of rumours, the actions of this Minister are impacting directly on the delivery of mental health services in the Hastings area. I strongly urge the Minister to release the Raphael report and provide the subsequent necessary

funding for obvious increased demands on the service. I strongly urge the Minister again to take off the blinkers and drop the politics on Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

### **COMMONWEALTH BANK GREENACRE BRANCH CLOSURE**

**Mr STEWART** (Lakemba) [12.54 p.m.]: On 24 August I received a letter from the Commonwealth Bank of Australia indicating its intention to close its Greenacre branch on 2 October. Astonishingly, this was the first contact I had with the bank about its decision to close an integral branch within my local area. The letter was forwarded also to customers, but there had been no contact or consultation about the possible closure of the Greenacre branch before then. In the letter the bank stated that the closure was "in the interest of striking a balance between the bank's shareholders and its customers".

The Greenacre branch of the Commonwealth Bank is one of the busiest banks in my local area. It certainly is not indicative of a branch running out of business. Consequently, it seems that any decision by CBA management to close the branch cannot be based on customer needs; rather I surmise that the decision was to appease shareholders at the expense of many thousands of loyal customers. The closure of the Greenacre branch is another example of this so-called people's bank losing sight of its foundations—its customers, the very people who made the CBA the success it is today. In this light I can only describe the CBA's approach on this issue as one of total disregard for the banking needs of 22,000 local residents and hundreds of local businesses in the Greenacre area.

The decision of the Commonwealth Bank to close its Greenacre and Yagoona branches on 2 October will significantly hurt my local community. The decision was made without community consultation and with total disregard for the local community at a time when the CBA's latest financial statements released in August show that the bank attained a massive \$1.9 billion profit in the previous 12 months. The Commonwealth Bank advises me that after the Greenacre branch is closed its customers will have to use other branches in the local area at Lakemba, Punchbowl or Bankstown. This creates a ridiculous situation particularly for the thousands of elderly people who utilise the Greenacre branch because many of them are physically unable to travel to other branches.

More than 22,000 people reside in the Greenacre area and there are numerous local

businesses. These people deserve and need an adequate local Commonwealth banking service and should not be forced to travel several kilometres to find that service. The CBA Greenacre branch has always been and remains a busy branch. The decision to close it can only be regarded as a further attempt to streamline and reduce branch operations at the expense of local people. For many years the Commonwealth Bank has been and is an integral part of Greenacre's Waterloo Road shopping centre. The bank's management should review its decision to close the Greenacre branch on 2 October.

Next Monday I will meet with Mr Dick Perkins, General Manager, Customer Services Division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. On behalf of the people of Greenacre I shall put a strong case that the bank should rethink or at least postpone its decision to close the Greenacre branch until a proper and fair dinkum review is conducted of the branch's performance, rather than act on an ad hoc review or one that simply appeases the short-term needs of shareholders at the expense of the local community or the interests of the bank itself. Surely the bank must realise that it will not survive without adequate customer framework and community support.

Hopefully, the Commonwealth Bank will be convinced that it should reassess this matter to achieve a win-win result for the bank's shareholders and for the local Greenacre community that has enjoyed and used the services of the Greenacre branch for many years. The Commonwealth Bank has played an important role in bringing other services to the area, but a decision like this is of utmost importance for a small strip shopping centre because if the main bank is taken away other businesses will be stripped of their viability. Indeed, that has begun to happen since the community heard news of this decision. I urge the CBA to review its decision to close its Greenacre branch, not only for the residents of Greenacre and its local communities but also to give heart to those living in other metropolitan areas and throughout New South Wales who have been left without banking services.

### **RICHMOND CLINIC MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Mr RIXON** (Lismore) [12.59 p.m.]: Previously I have raised in this House the problems faced by families as they try to live with a family member who suffers from mental illness. Today I wish to speak about the concerns of my constituents over the increased use of available services and the increased need for new services for the mentally ill on the far north coast of New South Wales. I raise

two major problems. First, some needed services have never been provided. Second, the services that have been provided are at risk of collapsing because the numbers accessing services are increasing the stress level to the degree that staff and facilities simply cannot cope. The Richmond Clinic, which is attached to Lismore Base Hospital, illustrates how available services are being stressed to dangerous levels.

The Richmond Clinic is a 23-bed gazetted acute psychiatric unit providing in-patient services for the Northern Rivers Area Health Service, and a population of approximately 248,440. It is located in an area with one of the highest growth rates in the State. It is one of the busiest psychiatric units in the State. The rate of separations is the second highest in the State, being 27.6 separations per bed compared with the State average of 18.1. The percentage of scheduled patients is 53 per cent, with the State average being 31 per cent. The Richmond Clinic occupancy rate has increased by 12.2 per cent between 1991-92 and 1994-95. There is no bypass policy if the unit is full, so the unit frequently nurses more than its expected number of patients. Transfers of patients to James Fletcher Hospital are negligible. At times the clinic has to manage extreme levels of aggression, with resulting staff injuries. There are no supporting specialist units, so the patient mix is extreme, ranging from aggressive young males to frail, aged, depressed women.

According to a recent survey, the Richmond Clinic is understaffed when compared to staffing levels of other similar size units in the State, the variance from the average staffing levels being minus 26.8 per cent. The recent opening of a special care unit has further highlighted the inadequate staffing levels of the clinic. The following points of concern are in urgent need of investigation and attention. The present building, which was built in 1990, is totally inadequate for the current number and mix of patients. In 1990, 30 per cent of admissions were involuntary, compared with 70 per cent in 1998. Population figures indicate that 75 beds are needed to support the community. Based on the national average, that requires a budget of \$17 million. However, the current budget does not reach \$8 million. Thus the mental health facilities of the far north coast could be regarded as little more than a fraction of what is needed.

Mental health funding per head is only \$30, half of the State average of \$60. The high number of extremely dangerous patients, of which 90 per cent are classed as psychotic, together with the low staffing levels is of grave concern to both staff and patients. Continuity of care is in crisis as less

experienced staff are often looking after the clinic's most disturbed patients. The number of beds in Richmond Clinic needs to be reduced from 25 to 20 immediately to allow the clinic to operate effectively. Fifteen additional beds need to be made available in wards of other hospitals within the area. The immediate need is for 35 beds, while in the longer term an allocation of up to 75 beds is sought.

It is not sufficient to say that the situation may be relieved once development occurs at Tweed hospital, as that is three to four years away. I am currently aware of the rumoured closure or change of management of the rehabilitation unit or hostel at 145 Ballina Road, Goonellabah. The closure of that 10-bed rehabilitation unit would make matters much worse. A possible solution would be to use empty wards, wherever they are available, in district hospitals such as Casino, Coraki, Mullumbimby and Lismore. Should the clinic fail to receive assistance in the near future a crisis will inevitably occur. Headlines such as those in yesterday's *Northern Star*—"Jails used as de facto hospitals for mentally ill"—are causing much concern. I would appreciate the direct intervention of the Minister for Health. I urge him to take action about this very serious problem.

*[Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Clough) left the chair at 1.04 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION

**Mr COLLINS:** When can the Premier guarantee that families will be able to drink Sydney water again without having to first boil it? That is the question that all Sydney wants an answer to.

**Mr CARR:** Recently the Leader of the Opposition said that one of the few things an opposition can offer is a bit of unity.

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

**Mr CARR:** In other words, his proposition to the people of New South Wales six months out from the general election is not of policies or an alternative—just the hope, just the promise, that the Opposition can hang together.

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

**Mr CARR:** This Parliament has spent 2½ days debating this matter. At the end of those 2½ days the Leader of the Opposition cannot offer a single shred of evidence that this Government, through either action or inaction, has caused contamination of Sydney water. On the other hand, after 2½ days the Leader of the Opposition has not offered an explanation for the fact that back in the days when he was shareholder Minister with responsibility for Sydney Water—or, variously, Minister for Health—there were readings five times higher than now exist.

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

**Mr CARR:** It is no surprise that the numbers on the Opposition side of the House are 14 Collins, 14 Chikarovski, and 10 undecided. It is no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition is negotiating the deputy leader's spot. Neither is it any surprise that the valiant honourable member for Gosford is casting an eye at the leader's spot. Honourable members would be aware that the Government established the McClellan inquiry, which has produced two reports. The Government awaits the inquiry's further reports.

**Mr O'Doherty:** On a point of order. My point is important for all of question time. It relates to relevance and the Premier's failure to guarantee—

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

## DRUG COURTS

**Mr NAGLE:** My question is addressed to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. What is the status of the Government's plan to create drug courts?

**Mr CARR:** There is no question that drug abuse is one of the biggest problems we face as a community. It devastates families, disrupts society and imposes a huge financial burden on our health and criminal justice system. My Government already has a comprehensive policy to protect the community from drug abuse—a balance of rehabilitation, education and a ruthless approach to drug traffickers.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Bligh will remain silent.

**Mr CARR:** Today I announce a new tactic in our fight against drugs: the establishment of Australia's first drug court at the Parramatta courthouse early next year. This is a bold new approach to the drug problem and another step to a safer community. The sad response of the Leader of the Opposition to this announcement was reported in the *Northern Daily Leader* on 23 July this year. He said, "Simply putting more police on the beat could solve the problem of drug dependency." The Leader of the Opposition has no creativity, no positive solutions, no policies and no answers.

**Mr Collins:** On a point of order. The Premier is not quoting from the *Northern Daily Leader*. I challenge the Premier to table the document. He was not reading from the *Northern Daily Leader*. It is another lie.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr CARR:** It is only on such a front bench that the honourable member for Lane Cove could look an alternative leader. But an alternative leader she appears to be at this time, up against the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition. After two months not sitting in the House, this is the best the Leader of the Opposition is able to do. He has had all that time to prepare tactics and it is pathetic that the best he can offer as a drug policy is to suggest that "simply by putting more police on the beat could solve the problem of drug dependency in the community".

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

**Mr CARR:** Drug courts emerged in the United States of America in the late 1980s when judges saw the need for a new approach to the related problems of drug addiction and crime. The first such court was set up in Florida in 1989, and now there are 400 across the United States of America. The weight of evidence suggests impressive reductions in crime, drug use and recidivism. Long-term hard-core addicts who spend years spinning through the revolving doors of prison and drug treatment systems are finally coming clean.

To give an example, a drug court works for a heroin addict who is charged with a drug-related offence such as a property crime. Offenders involved in sexual offences or offences involving violence are excluded from the process. An assessment team decides an offender is a suitable candidate for a drug court and the offender appears before the drug court judge. Following a guilty plea,

the offender is given a choice of going to gaol or getting cured. If the choice is treatment, any sentence is suspended and the offender enters 12 tough months of a rigorous program of drug treatment and rehabilitation, regular appearances before the judge and frequent random urine testing to ensure that he or she is kept drug free.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is far too much audible conversation on both sides of the House. Members should be aware that the information the Premier is providing to the House is important. If they want to conduct personal conversations, they should do so outside the Chamber.

**Mr CARR:** Offenders are under intense supervision and strict accountability. An offender receives praise and encouragement when doing well but for the slightest breach he or she faces a raft of penalties, ranging from the swift withdrawal of privileges to the ultimate sanction of gaol. At the end of 12 months, if the offender is drug free and is getting his or her life together, he or she graduates from the program. The judge takes the offender's progress into account when deciding whether to reduce the sentence.

The drug court system provides the incentive that addicts need to break their destructive habit once and for all. About 70 per cent of inmates in New South Wales prisons are locked up because of drug-related crimes. There must be punishment for the crime, but the cause of the crime must be tackled also. The New South Wales drug court will be a dedicated court exercising combined Local Court and District Court jurisdictions. People eligible to appear before the drug court will have committed one of the following offences: non-violent theft; possession; fraud or forgery; stealing from a person; unarmed robbery, provided there is no physical harm involved; or dealing in quantities of drugs below the indictable limit.

Participants will be dependent on drugs, facing a prison term, prepared to admit their guilt, and willing to participate in the program. Today I announce that Her Honour Judge Gay Murrell has been appointed as Australia's first drug court judge. She will be supported by a team of health and legal specialists. Legislation to enable the trial to proceed will be introduced this session. Drug treatment services will need to be expanded to cope with the increased demand. A two-year trial will begin early next year and is expected to cost around \$5 million. I have written to the Prime Minister seeking a Commonwealth contribution for half the cost.

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

**Mr CARR:** He has declined to provide immediate support. Drug abuse is a national issue. The Government will continue to press the Commonwealth for funding but, if necessary, it will go it alone. It recognises the destruction that drug abuse causes families and communities. The Government is committed to fighting the problem from every angle. Drug courts are not a panacea. They are another part of a multipronged approach of rehabilitation, education and tough law enforcement.

#### **SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION**

**Mr PHOTIOS:** My question without notice is directed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. When can the Minister guarantee it will be safe for families to drink water without having to first boil it?

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** I know that the honourable member for Lane Cove will have the honourable member for North Shore as her spokesperson on health matters, but I did not realise that the Leader of the Opposition does not want the honourable member for North Shore either. I have heard also that the Prime Minister has banned the honourable member for North Shore from asking me questions on health issues because her questions have constantly rebounded on the Federal Government. This persistent lack of performance must be depressing for the Opposition. There is no doubt that the Government, as it has said right from the beginning, has engaged the best experts available both here in Australia and from overseas, and relies, and will continue to rely, on the advice they provide. If the members of the coalition want to rely on someone else's advice, let it be on their heads. The Government is content to rely on the advice of internationally renowned experts.

#### **CANNABIS USE**

**Mr MARKHAM:** My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What is the latest research on cannabis and its effect on mental health?

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Carr Government has comprehensive policies to protect the community from drug abuse—from better treatment services to increased policing.

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



**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Carr Government has taken decisive action to address the problems caused by drug abuse. Through the use of drug courts and parent education nights, we are allowing the community to play a part in the solution.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Government's recent crackdown on methadone shows that it is serious about making treatment programs work not just for addicts but for the entire community. It has never been easier for parents and families to get answers and help on drug issues. The Government's 24-hour, seven-day a week Alcohol and Drug Information Service hotline means that help is just a phone call away. The Government is acting comprehensively to fight drugs where they are hurting our families and our communities. Information and education are two of our best weapons in the fight against drugs. By keeping parents informed of the latest developments they are better prepared to help their families.

The Government is identifying the issues so that it can work together with families. What was being experienced at the front line in our hospitals with regard to cannabis was most disturbing. Between 1993 and 1997 there had been an almost 10 per cent increase in the number of cannabis-dependent patients suffering from a drug-induced psychotic illness. A patient suffering from psychosis loses contact with reality, hears voices or sees things that are not there; his thoughts are confused. The available evidence tends to explode the myth that cannabis is a harmless drug.

Between 1993 and 1997 the percentage of cannabis-dependent patients suffering from drug-induced psychosis rose from 15 per cent to 26 per cent. In patients suffering from other forms of psychosis the percentage of people dependent on cannabis has also increased from 4.5 per cent to 9.1 per cent over the same period. There is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is a link between cannabis use and mental illness. We know that people suffering from, or susceptible to, schizophrenia may be at increased risk if using cannabis.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** Cannabis is now more potent than ever before, with higher addictive qualities. The psycho-active chemical responsible for

the effect of cannabis is THC. The THC content for leaf cannabis varies from between 1 per cent and 3 per cent.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** All this has changed with the advent of hydroponically grown cannabis, some of which contains a THC level of 30 per cent, some 30 times higher than the concentration of leaf cannabis. That makes cannabis a more dangerous and potent drug than ever before. One in three young people in Australia have experimented at one time with cannabis.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members should allow the Minister to deliver his answer without the present level of uninformed interjection.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** While the latest data shows a very small proportion of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 using illicit drugs, there has been an increase in cannabis use. Figures from a secondary schools survey show that 35 per cent of secondary school-aged youth have experimented at one time or another with cannabis, and this figure is mirrored throughout Australia. In Western Australia the figure is 36 per cent, in Queensland it is 32 per cent, in Tasmania it is 36 per cent, in Victoria it is 36 per cent, and in South Australia it is 32 per cent. As a result of those findings I have allocated \$75,000 for the development of a new treatment program specifically designed for young people.

Further, New South Wales Health has produced a cannabis information brochure which clearly outlines the issue, the symptoms of cannabis use and where parents and families can get help. This brochure will be available from community health centres. I place a copy of that brochure on the table of the House for the information of honourable members. The Alcohol and Drug Information Service—ADIS—hotline is open 24 hours a day to provide answers to questions about drug use and to offer counselling services. The phone number for metropolitan Sydney is 9361 6831 and for rural New South Wales it is 1800 422 599. The Carr Government has also approached the Victorian Government to establish a joint co-operative approach to the exchange of drug research findings to further protect families.

The Government has provided \$5 million for school-based alcohol and drug education across New South Wales and has introduced parent information nights at all secondary schools to inform parents

about drug-related issues. The Carr Government has joined forces with the community in fighting the war against drugs. It has already made significant progress on such issues as law and order, education, health, counselling and treatment services. By working together we can certainly better protect our families and children from the harmful and destructive effects of drugs.

### DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAMS

**Mrs SKINNER:** My question is to the Premier. Have health groups ranked the New South Wales Government as the worst performing of all Australian governments in providing drug treatment programs? Given that the Government has cut funding for treatment programs, how will drug court referrals to non-existent programs help?

**Mr CARR:** First, the statistics to which the honourable member refers apply largely to the coalition's period in Government.

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

**Mr CARR:** Second, one of my first decisions as Premier was to increase by \$5 million the amount of money allocated to drug education in the school system.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the honourable member for Coffs Harbour on two calls to order. I call the honourable member for Pittwater to order for the third time.

**Mr CARR:** During Labor's time in government it has increased police numbers by 500—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Under the standing orders members are entitled to ask questions at the appropriate time. However, they are not entitled to interrupt a Minister who is attempting to provide an answer to the House. If members do not agree with statements made by Ministers during question time, they have the opportunity to make a personal explanation at the conclusion of question time. Members should not shout in unison so that the Chair, those in the gallery and Hansard cannot hear the answer being given by the Minister. I will direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove any member who interjects in that manner. I have extended a degree of leniency to all members today, but the House must come to order and the barrage of interjections that has continued throughout question time must cease.

**Mr CARR:** In the meantime the Federal Government has cut funding to the Australian Customs Service and the Australian Federal Police. Is it any wonder that the flow of heroin into this country has increased? When I spoke out against this reckless indifference on the part of the Federal Government I did not receive support from members opposite. I am happy to speak at length in this House at any time the Opposition wants to debate the extensive program that the Government has under way, under the headings of education, rehabilitation—

**Ms Moore:** Bring on the debate.

**Mr CARR:** You bring it on.

**Ms Moore:** Yes, I will.

**Mr CARR:** The heroism of the honourable member for Bligh stops short when there is talk of siting a needle exchange or other similar facility in her electorate; she then supports those opposed to such facilities. She has one policy—

**Ms Moore:** That's a lie.

**Mr CARR:** You have been caught out. You have one policy for the grand debate in here and another policy for—

[*Interruption*]

**Mr CARR:** The Government has a great range of initiatives that I am prepared to detail in this House.

[*Interruption*]

**Mr CARR:** The honourable member for Bligh would never raise it in debate. In the meantime I invite all members of the House to join me when next I condemn the national Government for cutting funds to customs and the police and for allowing high-grade heroin to enter Australian ports. Members opposite stand condemned for supporting those policies.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the honourable member for Eastwood on three calls to order. The honourable member for Bligh is aware that interjections are disorderly. If she believes she has been misrepresented by the Premier, she will have an opportunity to make a personal explanation at the conclusion of question time. However, she should not disrupt the House in the way she has done.

**Dr Macdonald:** She was provoked.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! During his answer the Premier referred to the honourable member for Bligh, and the Chair understands that the dynamics of the House make it difficult for her not to respond. However, as I have said, the member should not have disrupted the House in the way she did. The Chair always extends a certain degree of leniency to members who are referred to by the member with the call, but—

**Mr Photios:** Hear! Hear!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! If the honourable member for Ermington is seeking to attract the attention of the Chair, he should continue with his present behaviour. In future the honourable member for Bligh should restrain herself. I will direct the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove any member who behaves in the way she has behaved.

### FLOOD RELIEF

**Mr ARMSTRONG:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. Will the Minister give the business people, residents and farmers of northern New South Wales now being engulfed in a massive flood disaster an unequivocal assurance that swift and effective government action such as low-interest, long-term recovery loans and essential goods freight rebates will be offered to help their communities survive this crisis?

**Mr AMERY:** I thank the Leader of the National Party for his timely and important question. It hardly caught me by surprise because on the Alan Jones radio program this morning he said that he would raise this matter in the House.

**Mr Armstrong:** Wrong, wrong and wrong. You've got it wrong. It's the wrong program.

**Mr AMERY:** I have been corrected; I have referred to the wrong program. This morning the honourable member also said that he would ask the Government to provide loans to flood-affected farmers and business people. The honourable member should know from when he was Minister for Agriculture that successive governments since the 1960s have been providing these loans. He is finally catching up with government policy! Indeed, when he was Minister for Agriculture he, together with the Premier of the day, announced that similar loans would be provided to people affected by flooding and, at other times, drought. Whilst the criteria for the loans and the conditions attached to

them have generally remained the same over many years under governments of all political persuasions, the Government has made one change to the criteria for the recent funding allocations.

The Premier and I have toured different parts of the State over many weeks talking to people affected by these floods. Now is probably a good time to reflect on what has been happening in regional areas this year. The year started with an ever-worsening drought which broke about Easter with autumn rains, and many parts of the State are now affected by floods, with the resultant loss of livestock and crop damage. During my visit to north-western New South Wales some weeks ago—on the radio this morning the Leader of the National Party referred to a similar trip—I met a number of business people and farmers at Walgett, Narrabri, and Tamworth who expressed appreciation for the assistance given by the Government to people affected by the floods.

However, they asked me to approach the Premier and the Treasurer about improving the criteria for applications for financial assistance. The new President of the New South Wales Farmers Association, John Cobb, told me that the interest rate of 6 per cent for loans to farmers and businesses was too close to the current market rate and that the Government should consider lowering it. Mr Cobb and Xavier Martin said that when these loans with an interest rate of 6 per cent were first announced the normal interest rate for commercial loans was about 15 per cent. That argument was a strong one.

Following discussions with the Premier and the Treasurer, and as a result of the representations from farmers and business people, I am pleased to announce, as has already been announced in the media, that the interest rate on these loans has been reduced to 4 per cent. There is more. During the tours to which I have referred farmers and other people affected by the floods expressed concern that many conservation loan applications had been rejected because the asset criteria had a ceiling of \$800,000. Indeed, 25 per cent of the 60 or 70 loan applications had been rejected because of that ceiling.

Members of the New South Wales Farmers Association, other farmers and people in regional areas asked the Government to consider raising the ceiling of \$800,000. I am pleased to announce that, following discussions with the Premier, the ceiling of \$800,000 has been increased to \$1.2 million, enabling more people to access rural financial assistance packages. Although there have been

media releases about these matter, the Leader of the National Party did not know that such loans have been available for the past 20 years.

**Mr Armstrong:** You haven't mentioned small business.

**Mr AMERY:** The Premier has announced that farmers and small business people are eligible to apply for these loans. Does the Leader of the National Party want me to read the press releases? Not only have the floods caused a lot of damage to farms, business premises and so on; some people tragically lost their lives. Also, many farmers raised concerns about livestock being isolated on high ground because of the floods. I congratulate New South Wales Agriculture on providing more than \$500,000 in assistance for farmers affected by the floods.

On radio this morning, whichever station it was, the Leader of the National Party said helicopters are dropping fodder to stranded livestock. He did not tell the audience that the New South Wales Government is picking up the full cost of the helicopter charters. I am not saying that that should be treated as a big deal, but I would have thought it would be nice for someone who called for bipartisan support on this matter to acknowledge that New South Wales Agriculture, a department for which he was once responsible, co-ordinated the provision of fodder to the farms. The department has provided \$500,000 and will continue to provide assistance.

[*Interruption*]

**Mr Souris:** You are incoherent.

**Mr AMERY:** I am taking advice from the Deputy Leader of the National Party, who told this House yesterday that 1998 was this year! He's quick! The Leader of the National Party knew the National Party was in good hands when the deputy leader took over yesterday. The issues raised this morning by the Leader of the National Party—

**Mr Armstrong:** On a point of order. The Minister has been particularly careful not to mention small business and whether he is prepared to support small business by providing low-interest loans and freight rebates.

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

**Mr AMERY:** The Leader of the National Party is obviously not on the Government's fax stream. I will make sure that every press release I

have issued and the Premier has issued outlining the assistance available through the Rural Assistance Authority to small business and the farming community is made available to him.

**Mr Armstrong:** Tell us what it is, Richard.

**Mr AMERY:** The Minister for Roads and the Minister for Local Government will, of course, talk to local government. I can give the Leader of the National Party a few more pages of advice if he wants it, but I will direct my office to send all press releases to him because he has not been informed of what the Government has done in recent months. The Leader of the National Party has bipartisan support. The Government will continue to provide assistance to those affected by floods and to those affected by the drought in the early part of the year.

**Mr Collins:** Does the note the Minister has been handed tell him to bring home two litres of milk?

**Mr AMERY:** No, it does not. It says there has been a recall notice on Kerry Chikarovski Barbie dolls. Apparently there is a fault in the loyalty mechanism that causes them to turn on their owners. If anyone has a Kerry Chikarovski doll, send it back. I will send the press releases to the Leader of the National Party, but I shall conclude by quoting from a press release issued by the Premier of New South Wales today:

... the assistance to areas declared "natural disaster area" includes:

please listen carefully—

- personal hardship and distress assistance—through the Department of Community Services—to people in distressed financial circumstances due to damage to houses and property;
- low interest loans up to \$80,000 to primary producers and small businesses;
- road and rail freight subsidies of up to 50 per cent on carriage of livestock and fodder;
- grants to local councils to meet the additional costs of emergency work to restore essential services;
- assistance to sporting clubs to restore facilities that have been damaged or destroyed.

You are on the ball, Ian! We should not be keeping these press releases a secret! I believe I have answered the question. These people have suffered enough as a result of the floods without being used as pawns in corny campaigns by the Leader of the National Party. The Government will continue to

provide assistance to those affected by the floods. I am sure all members will join me in wishing them the best during these distressing times.

### COALITION ONE NATION PARTY PREFERENCES

**Mr WATKINS:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Ethnic Affairs. What is the Government's response to community concerns about coalition preference deals with the One Nation Party?

**Mr CARR:** Shame! It had to happen, and today was the day! The National Party candidate for the Federal seat of Hunter, Mr Rob Macaulay, announced that he would give preferences to One Nation. It had to happen! In the absence of leadership from the Leader of the National Party or the Leader of the Liberal Party it was inevitable. While John Howard makes a fuss about putting One Nation last on ballot papers in his electorate, he allows coalition members of Parliament to make deals with One Nation to save his political skin. Neither the Prime Minister nor the Leader of the Opposition in New South Wales has the true sense of leadership or the will to say the right things about One Nation without doubt and without qualification.

One cannot say the same about Ian Sinclair, the former leader of the Nationals, who said the decision to make preference deals with One Nation is not in the national interest, but the Leader of the National Party here cannot say what Ian Sinclair said. Ian Sinclair is prepared to do and say the right thing, but not the Leader of the National Party in New South Wales. Kim Beazley and I are saying that in the national interest we will have nothing to do with One Nation. Federal and State Labor is united. Both federally and in New South Wales the coalition parties will make deals with One Nation and today we have the proof: in New South Wales a National Party candidate said he will deal preferences with One Nation.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the Deputy Leader of the National Party on two calls or order.

**Mr CARR:** This is the ninth occasion on which I have had to speak in this House on this issue to send the message that we in the Government of this State are adamantly opposed to One Nation on principle. The Leader of the Opposition has managed to drag himself into this Chamber to debate this issue on only one occasion. I will not repeat what was said by the Leader of the National Party, who is so deeply sensitive.

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

**Mr CARR:** I remain the only party leader in this House to say there will be no power sharing with One Nation, no preferences with One Nation, no deals with One Nation and no governing with One Nation if it holds the balance of power. At the recent annual general meeting of the Ethnic Communities Council on 23 August, I again challenged the Leader of the Opposition, who was present, to state on behalf of the New South Wales coalition that neither the Liberals nor the Nationals would enter into an agreement with One Nation candidates to form a government with One Nation.

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

**Mr CARR:** We are still waiting for that firm declaration. The member for Maitland expresses very clearly his desire to have a preference deal with One Nation. He is on the record as saying it, and he was not disciplined by his leader. He is a Lib!

**Mr Collins:** He was.

**Mr CARR:** Was he? Were you disciplined by your leader? Who asks the questions around here?

*[Interruption]*

**Mr CARR:** My colleague says it is now 16-12. I leave the Opposition with this challenge. There is still no binding commitment from poor old Peter Collins, so in the remaining days of his leadership, in the last hours—

**Mr Collins:** Don't stick around!

**Mr CARR:** Peter, it is all over for you; it is wrapped up. It is an academic exercise. You can go down with the ship or you can have a burial at sea.

### SYDNEY WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATION

**Mr MOSS:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. What progress has been made in relation to the contamination of Sydney's water supply?

**Mr KNOWLES:** Since the recent contamination of our water supply the Government has acted promptly and responsibly to keep the people of Sydney informed about water quality. Today I should like to provide an update. As

honourable members are aware, last Saturday there were high levels of cryptosporidium and giardia in the water coming from Warragamba Dam. The protocol for the Health Department's current boil-water alert has been based on the advice of the expert panel and has been recognised by the water quality expert from the National Health and Medical Research Council. The Government has continued to emphasise that its principal concern is to ensure public health. That is why it has taken a conservative and precautionary approach.

**Mr Phillips:** You didn't tell them.

**Mr KNOWLES:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is bleating over there. He was the Minister for Health during the cover-up of the cryptosporidium outbreak during 1992 and 1993. Why did he not tell us all about it? Why did he not demand better water quality standards? They are showing all this disingenuous and feigned concern when they had an opportunity to contract the 99.9 per cent promise into the water filtration plants, and they did not. They adopted a 15-year-old 1980 drinking water standard. They had their chance and they did nothing.

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

**Mr KNOWLES:** The sudden reappearance of high levels of contaminants in the raw water just as we appeared to be in a position to lift the alert a week ago has clearly been frustrating for everyone concerned. However, it has led experts from Australia and around the world, and indeed Mr McClellan and his inquiry, to the conclusion that the sources of contamination are not evenly spread throughout the water of Warragamba Dam. It is apparent that the contamination may be present in layers and pockets at varying depths in the dam. It is also clear that as the water in the dam moves in response to natural currents the contaminated water is also moved.

Water in Warragamba Dam can be extracted from different points. I am advised by Sydney Water that last weekend, and again on Monday of this week, the extraction point was altered and water of a higher quality was taken from a different level. Since then this higher quality water has been flowing through the system, although some test results continue to show some levels of cryptosporidium and giardia. Mr McClellan believes that may be one way of explaining why over recent weeks high readings have been received one day and clear readings the next. In this most recent event, both cryptosporidium and giardia levels were high.

However, the expert panel has confirmed that the process of chlorination is very effective against giardia and should ensure that it will not present a health problem.

**Mrs Skinner:** Not cryptosporidium.

**Mr KNOWLES:** The Leader of the Opposition did not even know cryptosporidium existed. He did not know and he did not care. As an added precaution, and in addition to the regular process of chlorination, chlorination is now also occurring near the dam wall and at various other parts of the system, as well as the Prospect plant. At the same time, New South Wales Health has also increased surveillance of the community and is requiring giardia infection to be, at least in the short term, a notifiable illness. To date, I am pleased to say, based on Health Department advice, there has been no observed increase in reported illness associated with the contamination.

All this work complements the other activities designed to address the current problem. That work includes surveying the catchment to identify all potential pollutants, monitoring the water in the dam to predict its movement through sophisticated computer modelling techniques, the use of a continuous sampling program and using overseas laboratories to accelerate and verify the types of cryptosporidium, its viability and potential health impacts. In collaboration with the McClellan inquiry, testing of the Prospect water filtration plant also continues and includes running a pilot plant located at Prospect to test the performance of the filters and the chemical treatment processes under a range of varying conditions, laboratory work to establish whether cryptosporidium and giardia are responding to the current treatment processes at the plant and, for the distribution system, a complete, accelerated review and cleansing program, including analysis of any build-up in pipes to ensure that it is not contributing in any way.

The tests on the plant will assist in determining how its operation might be changed to improve removal of cryptosporidium and giardia. That information will inform the McClellan inquiry, and assist Mr McClellan in making his final recommendations. I can also advise that a comprehensive cleaning program at the plant has been undertaken and has been completed. A range of initiatives have already been outlined to deal with potential sources of pollution in the catchments, everything from accelerating sewerage programs to intense monitoring programs to detect any point-source pollutants. The Government will continue to work with the independent inquiry headed by Peter

McClellan to investigate all aspects of the contamination incidents. The Government will continue to provide whatever resources are necessary to tackle the problem. In doing so, it will be guided by the experts and by Mr McClellan as head of the independent inquiry.

#### DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

**Mr PHILLIPS:** My question is to the Premier. How can he have any credibility on drugs when he sought to decriminalise marijuana, police heroin hauls have dropped by more than 60 per cent under his Government, and he is on the record as supporting heroin shooting galleries?

**Mr CARR:** No wonder he has within the Liberal Party a level of criticism that is unprecedented for any deputy leader of a once-great party. First, no-one promoted decriminalisation or legalisation of marijuana. The Government proposal was that while possession of personal use quantities remained a criminal offence, people would not be sent to gaol purely for possession of personal use quantities. In other words, a young person making a mistake—not dealing in drugs but holding a personal use quantity—should not be flung into Long Bay.

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

**Mr CARR:** That is what the Government proposed. That offence remained a criminal offence, but the young person committing a mistake early in life, deserving a second chance, would not be flung into Long Bay. That is the position the Government took, and it is a perfectly honourable and proper position.

**Mrs Skinner:** What about shooting galleries?

**Mr CARR:** I am on the record with regard to shooting galleries. I have said time and again that one cannot ask a community to assume and shoulder the responsibility, given the risks that attach to shooting galleries. If there is one issue that can be above party political argument, surely that is finding approaches on drugs that will work. A decent opposition would congratulate the Government on its initiative on drug courts.

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

**Mr CARR:** A decent opposition would say, "Let us see if it works." Surely that would be the approach of a responsible opposition. Surely a

responsible Leader of the Opposition would do what I did as Leader of the Opposition: issue a great range of alternative policies and argue them in the news media.

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

**Mr CARR:** As Leader of the Opposition I wrote a long article, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1989, making the case against decriminalisation of heroin and drawing on a host of resources that had not been quoted in this country up to that time. I entered the debate. I was engaged in the effort to find new solutions and argue through the different approaches to this challenge. The present Leader of the Opposition, the clown despised as dead wood by his own party, comes up with the tired, worn-out, old cry that the Government is soft on drugs because it proposes drug courts and proposes that young people with only personal use quantities do not go to gaol.

I remind honourable members that this is the Government that passed a law—despite the opposition of the coalition in the upper House—imposing mandatory life sentences for large-scale dealers in heroin and cocaine. That legislation came from and was promoted by this side of the House. For a whole session it was stalled by opposition from the coalition in the upper House. Who could go to the coalition for a policy on drugs, any more than for a policy on any other subject?

#### PRIVATE BUS SERVICE STANDARDS

**Mrs BEAMER:** I ask a question of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. What is the Government doing to improve standards on private buses?

**Mr SCULLY:** It is apparent that Opposition members are not interested in western Sydney bus services; they are leaving the Chamber. The Government has demonstrated through a range of initiatives its commitment to improve the standard of public transport and provide a system that is safe, accessible, clean and reliable. I am pleased to announce that the Carr Government is fulfilling its commitment to improve the level of service provided by bus operators across the State. Today I shall release a discussion paper for community consultation on the introduction of a performance assessment regime that links the renewal of commercial contracts to those operators achieving best practice standards and benchmarks.

The principal aim of this process is to improve the quality and frequency of bus services throughout the State. This will result in improved performance of bus operators, particularly in western and south-western Sydney and rural and regional New South Wales. This process will reform the way in which private bus operator contracts are renewed. At present the Government issues bus operators with five-year contracts, giving them exclusive rights to operate services in a particular area or on a particular route. Those contracts are renewed if operators meet minimum service levels. However, the Government wants to raise the standard and encourage operators to provide better services for the people of New South Wales. Through the reforms introduced by the Government in the Passenger Transport Amendment Act passed last year, the Government for the first time links the renewal of commercial bus contracts with the achievement of best practice.

The discussion paper is the first step in implementing the Government's plan for achieving high standards in the bus industry. If high standards are not met, that will result in operators' contracts not being renewed. The standards outlined in the discussion paper focus on providing a number of key benefits to bus patrons: more frequent bus services to meet the community's needs; the introduction of new bus services catering for areas not previously serviced; better access to timetable and route information; improved passenger and staff safety through the introduction of video camera surveillance; increased passenger satisfaction through improved comfort in buses—and I point out that airconditioning is recognised as a key priority in improving the performance and standard of buses, particularly in western and south-western Sydney; the introduction of more environmentally friendly buses; and better accessibility to bus services for people with a disability.

The purpose of releasing the discussion paper today is to ask the community and other stakeholders what they believe are the key elements that need to be considered when introducing the performance assessment regime. In the next three months the Department of Transport will seek the views of all individuals and organisations on the proposed standards and benchmarks set out in the paper. As part of the consultation process, the department will also conduct information sessions to ensure that people properly understand the issues raised in the paper. The closing date for submissions to be lodged with the department is Friday, 11 December. All submissions received will be evaluated and taken into consideration when the performance assessment regime is finalised. An

information paper that includes standards and benchmarks and details the way in which the performance assessment regime is to be administered is planned for release in May 1999, with the phasing in of the performance assessment regime due to begin in July 1999.

**Mr Photios:** That will be for me to decide.

**Mr SCULLY:** What did the honourable member do when the coalition was in office? What did Bruce Baird do about private bus services? This process is about providing better public transport for working families across New South Wales. The Government wants fairness in service provision and a higher standard of service across the board. That is what this process will achieve. I look forward to hearing the views of the community and key stakeholders, including the Bus and Coach Association, in the coming months and to working with all bus operators throughout the State to ensure that together we provide the people of New South Wales with the public transport system they deserve but did not get under the previous Government.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

## **DRUG HARM MINIMISATION**

### **Personal Explanation**

**Ms MOORE,** by leave: Today the Premier misrepresented me. He accused me of backing a resident group that is opposed to a needle exchange. He accused me of double standards. That was an attack on my character. My record on this issue is consistent both in the Parliament and in the community. I am a strong supporter of harm minimisation, which includes needle exchange programs and the trialling of safe injecting rooms. This is a really serious issue for my electorate, where cocaine dealing and use are out of control. Two lives a day are lost through drug abuse. This Government has defunded detoxification. Addicts cannot get into methadone treatment programs, and the Government has turned its back on safe injecting rooms. Do not misrepresent me. I challenge the Premier to a debate on this issue.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Bligh is starting to debate her actions. Her personal explanation must be brief.

**Ms MOORE:** Certainly.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Has the member finished her personal explanation?



**Ms MOORE:** No.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member may explain to the House how she has been misrepresented or how her character has been maligned, but she is not entitled to debate her actions. I allow the member to continue, but her personal explanation must be brief.

**Ms MOORE:** The Premier has attacked my character, misrepresented me and accused me of double standards. I ask the Premier to withdraw the remarks and apologise. I also challenge him to debate this issue at any time.

**Mr Photios:** On a point of order. The honourable member for Bligh asked the Premier to withdraw his remarks. Earlier you indicated that she would have an opportunity to pursue the matter at a suitable time.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The standing orders do not require the person—

**Mr Photios:** But she has sought a withdrawal.

**Mr Whelan:** On the point of order. I refer you to a wonderful ruling of Speaker Rozzoli which was delivered in 1992 and appears at page 46 of the October 1996 edition of *Decisions from the Chair*. The ruling states:

Members cannot request apology and withdrawal at conclusion of making a personal explanation.

## XVI COMMONWEALTH GAMES

**Ms HARRISON** (Parramatta—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.21 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the athletes selected to represent Australia at the XVI Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur; and
- (2) on behalf of the people of New South Wales wishes those athletes the best of luck in their pursuit of Commonwealth Games medals.

This Friday is the official opening of the XVI Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, the first Commonwealth Games to be held in Asia. For 10 days the eyes and ears of all Australians will be turned towards that city, with the largest Australian team ever assembled for a Commonwealth Games competition. More than 6,000 athletes and officials from 69 Commonwealth nations will take part in 18 sports during the Games which, for the first time,

will include team sports such as netball, cricket and rugby union.

More than 450 Australian athletes, our largest ever Commonwealth Games team, will attempt to better the record medal tally that our team won in Victoria, Canada, just four years ago. During those Games Australia won 182 medals—87 gold, 52 silver and 43 bronze—a tally for one country which many good judges thought impossible to reach. As the 1998 team awaits the start of these Games, it is important to reflect on the history of the Games. In 1891 in an article in the magazine *Greater Britain* Reverend J. Astley Cooper suggested a festival combining sporting, military and literary events to bring the British people throughout the world closer together.

The suggestion generated a great deal of interest in Britain and in the British colonies. The sporting contest suggested by Reverend Cooper was eventually staged at the Crystal Palace in London in 1911 as part of the celebrations for the coronation of King George V, and was called the Festival of Empire. The festival comprised a series of different entertainment events and exhibitions, with particular relevance to the progress and development of the British Empire. Importantly, the festival also included a sports meeting featuring athletes from Great Britain, Australia, South Africa and Canada.

Harold Hardwick, who also later won one gold and two bronze medals at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, won two events for Australia. He finished first in the 100 yards freestyle and competed the following night in the boxing tournament, which he also won. Being the heavyweight boxing champion of Australia in both the amateur and professional ranks would have helped him. I am sure honourable members will acknowledge that he certainly showed an interesting combination of sporting skills. Canada was the most successful country and was awarded a silver cup, with competitions being held in track and field, boxing, wrestling and swimming events.

The first Empire Games were not staged until 1930, in Hamilton, Canada. Empire athletes who attended the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics felt the need for regular competition between the athletes of the empire's nations and, fittingly, it was a Canadian, M. M. Robinson, who provided the impetus for the Hamilton Games. Support for the Games was strong with teams from 10 countries, including Australia, taking part. Events for the Games were similar to those held in 1911 with the addition of rowing and lawn bowls. While no points were allocated, Great Britain's athletes finished in the premier position.

The success of those Games was proof positive of the spirit that existed between the countries which made up the British Empire. During those Games it was decided to hold similar meetings every four years between the Olympic Games, and to form a British Empire Games Federation. The name of the federation and the Games have changed several times in their short history. In 1952 the federation was renamed the British Empire and Commonwealth Games Federation. In 1974 its name changed again in Christchurch, when it became the Commonwealth Games.

Like the Olympics, many stories from the Commonwealth Games will live forever in this country's sporting history—stories about some of the most memorable and courageous performances by some of our athletes; not just great victories but also great defeats, for in defeat there can often be just as much glory. Some of the performances have become important chapters in the history of the Commonwealth Games. Stories of performances such as Robert de Castella's marathon victory in Brisbane in 1982, Raelene Boyle's 400 metres win at the same Games and Tani Ruckle's gallant and life-threatening marathon in Canada in 1994 bear telling time and again.

Robert de Castella, or "Deek" as the Australian sporting public knew him, first came to prominence in middle-distance and cross-country races such as the City to Surf. Deek ran his first marathon in 1979 and two years later won the Fukuoka marathon in Japan in the then second fastest time in history. In fact he was a personal hero of mine. In 1982 at the Brisbane Games, Deek was a hot favourite for the marathon. I well remember being taken by my parents to see him compete. However, in the lead-up to the Games, Deek had to overcome a few obstacles.

Despite suffering from a spinal disc problem, Deek was still installed as the three-to-one favourite, ahead of the 1978 Games champion, Tanzania's Gidamis Shahanga and his classy team-mate, Juma Ikangaa. Games organisers started the race at 6.00 a.m. to give the runners the best of Brisbane's weather. The temperature was only 14 degrees but the humidity was an already stifling 94 per cent. The Tanzanian ran early and set a fast pace, while Deek settled back in the pack, a few hundred metres behind the two Africans, relaxing, conserving his energy, while not letting them get too far ahead.

Eventually picking up the pace, Deek was five seconds behind the leaders at the 10-kilometre mark but his presence seemed to spur the two on, and at the halfway point they were a minute ahead. After

30 kilometres Deek was still almost a minute behind, with the prospect of gold and glory quickly disappearing. Despite suffering a stitch, stomach cramps and diarrhoea, Deek rallied and closed the gap. He caught and passed Shahanga at the 37-kilometre mark and was running side by side with Ikangaa just one kilometre further. If, like me, honourable members saw those last few kilometres of the race, particularly the exact moment when Deek grabbed the lead, they will never forget it.

The expression on the tiny African's face showed many emotions, among them admiration for a great opponent and resignation that he was destined to take the silver medal. Deek finally finished 12 seconds ahead of Ikangaa and became an instant national hero as a result of what one of Australia's greatest long distance runners, Ron Clarke, called "the greatest marathon ever run". That was the greatest marathon I have ever seen. While Deek's performance signalled a new chapter in his great career, another performance at the same Games signalled a glorious end to one of the most turbulent and well publicised careers in Australian sport.

In 1982 Raelene Boyle was already a multiple Commonwealth Games gold medallist and an Olympic silver medallist over 100 and 200 metres—beaten at the Munich Olympics by a representative from the Eastern bloc whose performance was widely considered to be drug enhanced. A false start and a subsequent disqualification at the Montreal Olympics and the Australian boycott of the Moscow Olympics in 1980 ended the dream of Olympic gold for the then 29-year-old. However, the prospect of one last chance for glory presented itself at the Brisbane Games.

After a carefully planned preparation, under threat of a damaged achilles tendon, Raelene took her place in lane four for the final of the 400 metres. Raelene's form was good. In the Games trials she had broken her own Australian record and was ready for a great performance, and she gave one. The smooth Boyle stride was in evidence as she moved down the back straight, and when the field turned and took the staggered start out of the picture, she was in the lead. With a parochial crowd urging her on she hit the tape in front. She broke no records but she had the gold medal around her neck. That was a fitting end to a terrific career.

Twelve years later in Victoria, Canada, another Australian athlete hit the headlines with a gold medal performance for sheer guts and the sort of stubborn determination that only elite athletes have. Tani Ruckle, the 1990 Auckland silver medallist,

was on autopilot. She refused to listen to the voices in her head and acknowledge the pain wracking her body. She valiantly forced herself to complete the marathon. Fewer events demand as much of an athlete, both mentally and physically, as a marathon, and Tani experienced the most extreme of those demands.

Nothing could stop Tani: not the race organisers, who practically ordered her to pull out; not her coach, who wanted her to stop at the half-way mark; not even the police who escorted her over the last six kilometres as she made the agonising journey to her own personal goal—to finish the race she started. When she eventually finished, incredibly, under those conditions, in fifteenth place, she had endured the ultimate in physical and emotional punishment. Vomiting, diarrhoea and leg cramps—the marathon runner's constant companions—could not stop her as the athlete's inner voice kept telling her to keep going. No gold medal for Tani but she won the race in her own mind and achieved more than many other athletes who competed without giving everything they had.

This story, as much as the stories of Deek and Raelene, show us all what is ahead for our athletes in Kuala Lumpur. Two weeks from now some of those athletes may have a story to match the three I have just mentioned. They face the glory, the despair, the excitement, the frustration, the sweet taste of success, the pain of defeat—whatever it is, we salute them and wish them well. To us they are all champions and we are proud to have them represent us in victory or defeat. They all deserve our congratulations and best wishes and we look forward to watching their progress.

**Mr HAZZARD** (Wakehurst) [3.31 p.m.]: I am genuinely pleased to support the motion moved by the Minister. The Opposition intended to move exactly the same motion but chose not to do so but rather to support the Government in what we see as a worthwhile and opportune motion. Tomorrow is the opening of the XVI Commonwealth Games, a momentous event. These are the first Commonwealth Games that could be described as being of Olympic proportions. As the Minister said, 6,000 athletes from 69 nations will compete in the Games in Kuala Lumpur; 63 nations took part in the previous Commonwealth Games, held in Canada,

As the athletes arrived in Kuala Lumpur over the past few days they would have been greeted to the friendly Games with those welcoming words used by the Bahasa, or Malay, people—"Selamat datang", or "Welcome". As the Minister said, the

Commonwealth Games have a proud tradition, having commenced in 1911. Although they were not held regularly in their first few years, they have been held regularly in recent years. As the Minister said, the Third Commonwealth Games, then known as the British Empire Games, moved from England to Canada. The Games have developed a friendly focus; they are competitive, but that competitiveness is between friends of the Commonwealth, unlike the Olympics, in which friendship gets a little lost because of their slightly more competitive edge.

The Commonwealth Games are held every four years, between the summer Olympics. Tomorrow millions of people across the Commonwealth will watch the opening ceremony in Kuala Lumpur on their television sets. As the Minister said, Australians will proudly support and encourage our athletes as they march into the magnificent new stadium at Bukit Jalil in Kuala Lumpur. A few hours ago, in a bipartisan gesture, the Leader of the Opposition sent a facsimile to Perry Crosswhite, the General Manager of the Australian Commonwealth Games Association. Perry has represented Australia on three occasions in the sport of basketball. He now has the onerous task of ensuring that the Australian team is fully kitted out, prepared, organised and delivered to Kuala Lumpur. The message stated:

Dear Perry,

On the eve of the opening of the 16th Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur, I take this opportunity to wish the entire Australian Team (including athletes, coaches, managers, administrators and supporters) the very best of luck as they represent Australia over the next two weeks.

The NSW Liberal and National Parties are extremely proud of the contribution of our sportsmen and women make to sport and the wider community.

We well understand the level of commitment and application that is required to achieve the opportunity to represent the people of Australia.

Along with all residents of NSW, we take great pride in every member of the team who will be in Kuala Lumpur during these Games.

Please pass on my best wishes as well as those of the NSW Coalition and I trust that above all, every member of the team enjoys the very special experience of representing Australia in Kuala Lumpur.

Yours sincerely

Peter Collins QC MP  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Perry Crosswhite, and other sports administrators, managers, coaches, athletes and their families, have given an enormous commitment, particularly over

the past few months, to prepare for the Games. Of course, the athletes have been preparing for much longer. A few months ago I had the pleasure of attending breakfast at Camperdown with the Australian Society of Sport Administrators—ASSA. At that breakfast Perry Crosswhite detailed the enormous task of bringing together the Australian Commonwealth Games team. Unless one is directly involved it is hard to comprehend the amount of detail that goes into getting a team of that size, our biggest team ever, to the Commonwealth Games. I acknowledge the work done by Perry and many others to ensure that the team was well prepared.

Australia will be represented in a whole range of sporting events and many athletes will be well known. Of course, others who are less well known may become well known in the next few days. This is the last major sporting event—and is certainly of Olympic proportions—to be held in this region before the Sydney Olympics in 2000. It is a wonderful, exciting opportunity for the athletes to take part in a competitive environment and to prepare themselves for the massive event in Sydney in two years. A number of different sports have been introduced into the Commonwealth Games. Some team sports include cricket, the rugby sevens, netball, men's and women's field hockey, tenpin bowling and squash.

It is hard for people who are not athletes to understand how athletes at the top level of their sport think and apply themselves. A few weeks ago I attended a New South Wales sports federation luncheon at Royal Randwick Race Course. I was fascinated to hear two new sports representatives addressing the audience. One of them was Glenn McGrath, who will be representing Australia in cricket at the Commonwealth Games. Glenn spoke about his excitement at representing Australia for the first time as what he called a real athlete, that is, he would be at the Games with other real athletes. I sat in the audience thinking how could he ever conceive of himself as not being an athlete. It was beyond me.

Many top athletes are humble. It is wonderful that Australia will be represented in a broader range of sports at the Games and that more top athletes will have the opportunity to take part and try to win a gold, silver or bronze medal. We wish our cricket team the best of luck. Recently I watched the Australian netball team play during the series against the Americans. For many years Vicki Wilson, Kathryn Harby and Liz Ellis have played at the top level of their sport, netball, but have not had the opportunity to win a gold medal. That makes it more exciting for such people to attend these

Commonwealth Games. I suppose I should have referred to all the members of the Australian netball team but I will not do so. The Minister can do that if she wants to.

I congratulate all the teams that are taking part in the Games. Another interesting speaker at the federation luncheon was Michelle Martin, who has been playing squash at the top level in the world for some years. She is a superb athlete and she is humble. She talked about this marvellous opportunity possibly to win a medal for her country at these Games. She also spoke about how she had played in some wonderful venues and most unusual court arrangements in other parts of the world. Indeed, she referred to the wonderful experience of playing on one squash court that was literally on an island—it may have even been a Greek island. The court had all sorts of special arrangements which were wonderful for the spectators. However, Michelle said that nothing compared to representing her country at the Games.

The Games are a wonderful opportunity for all the Australian athletes, whether they play one of the team sports included in the Games for the first time or whether they compete in a traditional sport such as swimming and athletics. All Australians recognise their marvellous contribution. Some of Australia's more well-known athletes will be competing at these Games, including Melinda Gainsford-Taylor and Nova Peris-Kneebone in the track and field events and Susie O'Neill and Samantha Riley in the swimming events, and many other superb athletes. Many younger athletes are also in the Australian team. Recently during a sports program on one television network I discovered that one young member of the team is Jennifer Reilly from Geraldton. I wish her well. Jennifer is only 15 years old and is making her first trip overseas.

With our magnificent sporting tradition it is wonderful to see such young swimmers joining Susie O'Neill and Samantha Riley, who were described as the grandmothers of the sport in a recent newspaper article. The Games are a wonderful opportunity for us to share their great successes. In the time remaining I shall refer to some of the other athletes. Traditionally and historically, Australia has produced some great athletes who are known worldwide, such as Dawn Fraser who won gold medals in swimming at the 1958 and 1962 Empire Games.

**Mr Fraser:** She was a member of this House.

**Mr HAZZARD:** The honourable member for Coffs Harbour rightly says that Dawn Fraser was a

member of this House. The young athletes on the team are following in the path of many wonderful Australians. On behalf of all Australians I express my disappointment that some of our well-known athletes and excellent representatives will not be competing at the Games. One person who springs to mind is Cathy Freeman, who having suffered an injury will not be competing. I would have loved to watch her take part in the track and field events early next week but, regrettably, I will be denied that pleasure. One member of the track and field team is a local boy from the north shore, Matt Shirvington. Matt is a resident of Davidson, which is close to my electorate of Wakehurst.

I mention also Damien Marsh from Queensland, Kyle Vander Kuyp in the 110 metre hurdles, Rohan Robinson from Victoria in the 400 metre hurdles, Jai Taurima from the Australian Capital Territory in the long jump, Tim Forsyth in the high jump, Louise McPaul from Mount Keira and Joanna Stone from Queensland in the javelin, Nicole Boegman from Emu Ridge in the long jump and Debbie Sosimenko from Doonside in the hammer throw. Honourable members had the pleasure of welcoming Debbie to the Parliament only a few weeks ago. We wish Debbie all the best as she tries to win the gold medal in the hammer throw. Emma George is synonymous with the pole vault these days. Earlier I mentioned some of the female swimmers.

Some of the male swimmers are incredible: Michael Klim from Victoria, Ian Thorpe who is a local from Milperra, Kieren Perkins and Grant Hackett from Queensland, and Daniel Kowalski from Victoria. Less well-known sports at the Games in terms of public recognition include synchronised swimming and shooting. Representing Australia in shooting is Phillip Adams, the athlete with the highest number of medals accumulated at one Games. Phillip Adams was born in 1945 and is no spring chicken but he is one of Australia's great shooters. He is a country boy from Forbes in New South Wales and he is a farmer—an occupation that is the backbone of the country. Phillip's major event is the pistol competition. The Australian women's hockey team is competing at the Games for the first time. Recently the team won the World Cup, an event second in prestige only to the Olympic Games. An amazing number of athletes come together in that team under the direction of their formidable coach, Rick Charlesworth.

The Australian women's hockey team includes people like Alyson Annan, a local girl from Campbelltown, who I believe teaches in the northern part of Sydney. Our gymnastics team comprises

athletes who compete at incredible levels, including Bret Hudson from Campbelltown and Andrei Kravtsov from Queensland. Queenslander Rodney Eyles, a member of the squash team, is currently ranked fourth in the world. Shane Kelly from Victoria, Bradley McGee from Wentworthville and Stuart O'Grady from South Australia are members of our cycling team. Our diving team includes Robert Newbery from South Australia and Chantelle Michell from Victoria, who won silver at the Goodwill Games, but recently has been outperformed by Loudy Tourky from Eastwood.

Australia will be well represented at these Games by its lawn bowls team. The team captain, Rex Johnston, a local boy from Bondi Junction, won gold in the 1994 Commonwealth pairs and is our strongest hope to achieve a medal in the fours this year. Karen Murphy from Sydney and Willow Fong from Merrylands are also members of the lawn bowls team. Tenpin bowling is appearing for the first time as an event at the Commonwealth Games. Currently the Australian women bowlers dominate world events. Cara Honeychurch from Victoria, who is ranked as the number one amateur bowler in the world, and Maxine Nable form part of that formidable team. Australia is fielding weight-lifting, badminton and Rugby sevens teams. Many athletes and the people supporting them have committed so much of their lives to representing Australia at world events. The New South Wales Opposition remains committed to fully supporting those athletes throughout Australia and certainly joins with the Government in supporting this excellent motion.

**Mr KNIGHT** (Campbelltown—Minister for the Olympics) [3.51 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion of my colleague the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The Commonwealth Games are cherished in a special place in the heart of every Australian sports fan. They are known as the friendly Games because that spirit pervades when Commonwealth athletes compete. Of course, the Commonwealth Games are an extremely serious sporting competition. Every Australian athlete is proud to wear the green and gold. That pride was obvious from the reaction of our hard-core cricket and rugby professionals when they were selected for the first time as part of the Commonwealth Games team.

Some of the most memorable sporting moments in Australian sport history have occurred at the Commonwealth Games. Who can forget Kieren Perkins in Victoria, Canada, in 1994 breaking the 1,500 metres world record and in the same event breaking the 800 metres record? Or Rob de Castella's magnificent marathon duel in Brisbane in

1982 that culminated in his winning gold, which was described so eloquently earlier today by my colleague the Minister for Sport and Recreation? Or the 1954 miracle mile race between the only two men to break the four-minute mile barrier at that time, Englishman Roger Bannister and Australian John Landy? Unfortunately, John Landy looked over his left shoulder as Bannister stormed past him on the right!

Who could forget Raelene Boyle's multiple medal winning performances or the 17 medals won by Phillip Adams? Of course, the Commonwealth Games should not be mentioned without acknowledging the sporting success of former members of this House competing at Commonwealth Games—Michael Cleary and Dawn Fraser. The Commonwealth Games have often been the launching pad for Australia's next generation of sporting heroes. Who can forget the feats of Hayley Lewis in Auckland in 1990 when, as a young girl, she won our hearts and brought home gold? Dean Lukin came to prominence in 1982 by winning the super heavyweight weight-lifting gold medal in Brisbane and went on to win at Los Angeles in 1984 an Olympic gold medal, which to this stage remains Australia's only gold medal in weightlifting.

Who can forget Glynnis Nunn going from Commonwealth Games success to win gold in Los Angeles? I have no doubt that new champions will rise from the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur for us all to cheer on. Australian swimmers will build on their success at the Perth World Championships and use Kuala Lumpur as a stepping stone to ultimate glory at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Cyclist Michelle Ferris will show those outside the cycling community what a talented athlete she is and has been all year since the world cup. The hockeyroos make their first appearance in a Commonwealth Games and should continue their gold medal winning ways.

They will be joined by many other heroic performances of our Australian team athletes. I wish all our athletes, from whichever State they come, the very best when they represent our country in competition in Kuala Lumpur. I am sure that they will return home knowing that their achievements have done Australia proud. Our athletes who are already competing in cricket and hockey are doing well for Australia. I note that I am not the only member of this House with bleary eyes today after watching the hockey on television late last night after the House rose.

The Commonwealth Games not only offer great sporting feats but provide an opportunity for

Sydney Olympic organisers to learn valuable lessons about planning for a multisport event. No doubt there will be significant differences between the Commonwealth Games in Malaysia and the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, but with 15 Olympic sports included on the Commonwealth Games program, important knowledge can be obtained from transport arrangements, ticketing, village operations, catering and other areas. As well as wishing our athletes the best, I extend good wishes to everyone in Sukom 98, the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee.

Finally, I share with the House a story from the book *Commonwealth Games—The first 60 years*, which epitomises the spirit of the Commonwealth Games. The story is about a runner in the 1950 Auckland Commonwealth Games—not an Australian but an Englishman with a great Australian name. Jack Holden, a 43-year-old Englishman, contested the marathon—a fine example to many of us in our middle age decline. He battled not only encroaching middle age but also a few other obstacles along the route. Before the race he pointed to his backside and told his competitors to take a good look because that was all they were going to see of him.

He was right. He was hardly superstitious and gleefully wore the number 13 shirt, but it may have turned out to be an omen. Holden easily cleared the starting field, which included Olympic silver medalist Tom Richards of Wales and Olympic sixth place finisher Syd Luyt of South Africa, but they were the least of his problems. A battering downpour waterlogged his running shoes and they became so difficult to run in that he took them off with about eight miles left in the race. Water was six inches deep along the road in some stretches as Holden slogged his way towards the stadium while as many as 50,000 people lined the streets, standing on street corners or watching from the safety of their porches.

Then came the dog, either a great dane or poodle depending on whom you believe. About three miles from the finish the dog began nipping at Holden's ankles as he tried to shoo it away. At one point the dog almost tripped him up. Officials, who originally went looking for a gun to perhaps do more than just scare away the dog, finally got the pesky critter to the side of the road to allow Holden to reach the stadium in relative peace. His naked feet had abrasions and cuts from the road and were heavily bleeding when he finally entered the stadium—to at first a gasp from the crowd and then a huge roar. Holden had completed his eventful Games odyssey in two hours, 32 minutes and 57 seconds, which is quite remarkable considering all

he had to put up with. He might have been an Englishman, but in that fine Australian tradition he celebrated by quaffing a beer!

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI** (Lane Cove) [3.58 p.m.]: I have pleasure in joining with the Government in congratulating and offering our best wishes to the members of the Australian Commonwealth Games team. One of the most galvanising powers of this country is the commitment of its people to sport. I suspect that like many other Australians over the next few days I will be somewhat weary after watching on television a number of sports being played at the Kuala Lumpur Games. I suspect, like a number of other Australians, I will be sitting in front of the television cheering on our athletes as they compete for gold, silver and bronze, and cheering them on merely for competing. It is an honour to be competing for one's country in the XVI Commonwealth Games.

Today I would like particularly to congratulate and encourage the women who are competing in the Commonwealth Games, not because I am sexist or because I am a screaming feminist, but because too often we overlook the contribution of women in sport in this country. That is disappointing, given the fact that for so many years they have been such outstanding competitors at international level for this country. The record books and lists of medal winners in Commonwealth Games contain female names that are household names in this country. Dawn Fraser has already been mentioned. There has been mention of Hayley Lewis. I would like to add Lisa Curry-Kenny and Tracey Wickham, outstanding swimmers who have represented this country with grace and style and great success over many years.

I remind the House of the great names in track and field such as Marjorie Jackson—now Marjorie Jackson-Nelson—and Debbie Flintoff, and no-one should forget Raelene Boyle, who was and still is very dear to the hearts of all Australians for her successes in the Commonwealth Games. We all know that Raelene has gone through some personal struggles in recent times but her inspiration to athletes today is something that should be placed on record in this House, as she was a great sprinter and is a great lady.

The XVI Commonwealth Games will include team sports. That is good news for Australians, because Australia has two world-class teams competing. Our netball team are world champions and our women's hockey team—the Hockeyroos—are absolutely outstanding in their field. As the shadow minister for sport, the honourable member for Wakehurst, has already said, the Australian

women's team recently won the World Cup, an event second in prestige to the Olympic Games. The team holds a staggering record: 167 matches, 137 wins, 16 draws and 14 defeats. That is an amazing record for any sporting team and one I am sure the team will add to in these Games. We wish the team the best of luck. Our netball team will find it a tough competition because two outstanding teams will be playing against them—South Africa and Jamaica—but I have no doubt that the success shown by the women's netball team in the past few years will stand them in good stead at the Commonwealth Games this year.

A number of other women will be competing. I would like to draw the attention of the House to some of those women. It is a great shame that Cathy Freeman will not be competing, but Australia will be ably represented on the track by Melinda Gainsford-Taylor. Tania Van Heer Murphy will also be there, and I hope those two young women, as they always do, will give their all in their events, particularly young Tania, who has had a particularly difficult preparation for these Games. She has had some pressure on her so we wish her particular luck.

**Mr Hazzard:** Melinda is from North Balgowlah.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** As the honourable member for Wakehurst points out, Melinda Gainsford-Taylor is a northern beaches girl.

**Mr Hazzard:** And her poster is in Rocky Carlino's Plaza Barber Shop in Manly.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** Is the honourable member telling me that Melinda Gainsford-Taylor is the pin-up girl for Rocky in his barber shop?

**Mr Hazzard:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** I am sure she is the pin-up girl for a number of men in this country but I do not think that is her only attribute. She is an outstanding athlete and we are looking forward to her success.

**Mr Hazzard:** She is the pin-up girl of Manly.

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** I also point out to the House that Emma George is the outdoor world record holder for the pole vault. If I were to put my money on anyone I would be putting my money on Emma George, as she is going to win this event. The women's pole vault event is being held for the first time, and I would wager any money that Emma George will win. Over the years Australia has had a

number of outstanding swimmers. I look forward to Susie O'Neill continuing the great form she has shown. I think she was a little disappointed to find she had not broken the record for the highest number of Australian titles held by an individual. I am sure she will break that record next year. Again, we expect great things from Susie. She has a heavy program but she will cope with that. Samantha Riley is also in very good form. The tipsters have her at very short odds to win her events, but she will be looking at some competition, and I suspect some of our younger swimmers will be giving her that competition.

The Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur will provide some challenges for our athletes. It will be hot and we are a bit concerned that it will be wet. Nevertheless, I am sure they will cope with all that. Previous contributors to this debate have said—absolutely correctly—that the Commonwealth Games are the friendly Games. They provide opportunities for Australians to excel and to show that we are competitive on the world's sporting stage. These Games, being held only two years before September 2000, provide an opportunity for our athletes to compete in preparation for our own Sydney Olympic Games.

Many Australians will be watching these Games. Many Australians feel a part of the Commonwealth Games, and many young people look to our athletes for inspiration. We all hope that our team will not only do well but will, in the Australian tradition, compete in good faith, in clear competition and as clean athletes, untainted by many of the problems that have beset competitors from other nations of the world. We do not want our athletes to be seen to be part of the drug scandals that have encompassed other international competitors. Our athletes do not have that reputation and we hope that continues to be the case at these Games.

The athletes competing in the Commonwealth Games are an inspiration to us all. They are particularly an inspiration to young people. It is often said that one of the problems in our community is that young people do not have heroes any more. I am sure a number of heroes will emerge from these Games. All competitors are heroes in their own particular way. Some of them will be stars, and we hope that those people will become the heroes our young people are looking for. I am sure that some will provide inspiration to a particular young lady I know. I hope our diving team does wonderful things at these Games. I hope the team comes home with medals.

I have a young niece competing in Queensland at the moment. She is the under-12 diving champion of Queensland. Alice Young is a bit young for the Olympics in Sydney and she will probably be a bit young to compete in the next Commonwealth Games, but she is looking forward to representing her country at the Olympic Games in 2004. I know that the inspiration the diving team will give her by bringing home a couple of medals will encourage her to pursue her very time-consuming sport. She is only 11. Training for diving at her level takes up a lot of her day. I hope that by watching the athletes competing in Kuala Lumpur she will be inspired to continue with her training so that she too will have the opportunity to represent her country in the years to come.

I join honourable members who have already spoken in this debate in wishing our team all the very best. We in Australia are very proud of what our athletes do for this country. We look forward to our team's success both in terms of medals that are brought home and, more important, in the way our athletes represent our nation in Kuala Lumpur.

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [4.10 p.m.]: As Minister for Police I am proud that two police officers have set an outstanding example not only in the Police Service but also in the sporting arena. Constable Louise McPaul of the Sutherland Local Area Command will compete in the javelin throw in Kuala Lumpur. Louise already holds a Commonwealth Games gold medal and won a silver medal for her performance at the Atlanta Olympic Games. When I reminded the Minister for the Olympics of this, he told me that one of his proudest moments in the stadium was when Louise won her Olympic silver medal. I am equally proud that parking patrol officer Minh Do from North Sydney will also go to Kuala Lumpur to compete in the fencing event.

The dedication of those two officers to the competing demands of their work and their sport is an inspiration and they have the complete support of the whole of the Police Service. I personally wish them all the very best for success. I extend that wish to every other competitor in these very worthwhile Commonwealth Games. I have been interested to listen to the contributions made by honourable members. It is clear that women athletes have made outstanding contributions to our country. Often at times when contributions are made people mention only great names. I am sure that was not the intention of any honourable member. There have been great Australian performances at both Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games. I have



never forgotten the great performances of Betty Cuthbert; Shirley Strickland, also known as Shirley Strickland de la Hunty; and Pam Kilbourne, who won a gold medal for hurdling.

I think also of great swimmers such as Dawn Fraser. Of course, I must also mention Lorraine Crapp, Ilsa Konrads and Jon Konrads. Kids who trained at Bankstown swimming pool have certainly reaped rewards. Those people have gone on to represent Australia with great pride. Their achievements make every Australian understand that our athletes are world class and have world-class facilities. I wish every participant, particularly the two fine police officers Louise McPaul and Minh Do, every success. I look forward to greeting them on their return, hopefully with gold medals for their country and the Police Service.

**Mr SCHIPP** (Wagga Wagga) [4.13 p.m.]: As a representative from a country electorate I pass on my congratulations to the Commonwealth Games team. I note from the Commonwealth Games booklet that approximately 30 country towns are represented as the places of birth of our athletes. I am sure that honourable members who represent the towns of Yass—the honourable member for Burrinjuck is not able to be in the Chamber at present—Swansea, Ivanhoe, Narromine, Narrabri, Wagga Wagga, Casino, Gosford, Wollongong, Lismore, Ballina, Bowral, Dubbo, Barham, Albury, Parkes, Grafton, Tamworth, Taree, Tumut, Coffs Harbour, Queanbeyan, Young, Forbes, Lithgow, Orange, Leeton, Bourke and Barraba will be cheering on their area's home-born sons and daughters as they compete at the Commonwealth Games.

What a difference the modern days have made. I grew up in an era when one relied on the radio for a few snippets of news about what was happening at Games being held in far-off places. Sometimes one went to the Sunday matinee and saw news clips, about three weeks late. Television has brought Games into our lounge rooms and has made them much more personal for the lounge-room spectator. People of today have a greater affinity with the Games, although I point out that many of the names we have heard referred to in the House today were household names in our era. There is no doubt that they were our heroes. In my time sport was virtually one's only recreation. One played tennis or cricket or ran around a football field. There was not a great deal else to do. I believe that we were just as dedicated in our sporting endeavours as are today's young athletes.

One retains a closeness with athletics and other sports throughout life. I have kept a close connection with sport, having watched and participated in sport—although at nowhere near Commonwealth Games level—and have had some success in the local environment. I also ran a sports store, which kept me in close contact with the sporting fraternity. I spent a year as Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing. I know how today's Minister is feeling. In her position one gets a feeling of the build-up towards an event such as the Commonwealth Games. People go about their preparations in a very serious way. They are about to represent their country and they put their heart and soul into that. Many personal sacrifices are made, and we should recognise that there is a monetary cost as well. Not all sportspeople get the big money we read about in the papers.

I wish the whole Australian team well and I extend special congratulations to the three Wagga Wagga representatives in the team. Brennon Dowrick, the gymnastics representative, was born in Wagga Wagga. Our athletes need to go to larger centres for more intensive training and competition at a higher level. It is important to recognise, though, the sporting talent funding from the Department of Sport and Recreation that allows young people with sporting talents to pursue higher levels of competition and stretch themselves as far as they can go. Adam Commens, a member of the hockey team who has represented Australia in hockey previously, is a proud addition to Wagga Wagga's stable of well-known sporting people.

Wagga Wagga is the city of good sports, of course. I could spend a long time this evening giving a resume of all the young and not-so-young sports people from Wagga Wagga who have reached high goals, but, as the Minister says, we do not have time for that today. Patrick Dwyer, a member of 200 and 400 metre men's athletics team, also comes from Wagga Wagga. It has already been said in this debate that these Games are a build-up to the Olympic Games. They are a very important stepping-stone and testing ground for many young people who are really applying their minds to the event in 2000. The Commonwealth Games are important in their own right.

I am not sure whether the President of the Commonwealth Games Association chose particularly good timing for the statement that the Commonwealth Games need a revamp. That statement would seem to act as rather a dampener at this time, although there may be some background

to it. Nevertheless, the statement seemed to come from out of the blue and it did not seem quite right for someone to be talking about the Games as if they did not have as much merit as they might. Surely the President of the Commonwealth Games Association should be promoting the Games.

I pass on my personal congratulations to Arthur Tunstall on his 30 years as secretary to the Games and his involvement with them. In my opinion, we should not dismiss his contribution lightly. The fact that Mr Tunstall has not been as politically correct as some may think he should have been is not something I hold against him. Perhaps I have a rural sense of humour, but I think he has been a bit of good fun in certain circumstances. He certainly has put his heart and soul into his job. I wish him well for the future. Having been in Darwin last week for the trials between Australia and New Zealand, I feel a closer affinity to some of the athletes. A large crowd turned up for the trials. I saw Nova Peris-Kneebone, who is obviously a local heroine. I do not know what would have happened if she had not won but it was great to see her win well. My granddaughter, Erin, had her photograph taken with Melinda Gainsford-Taylor. I know Erin's mother has her sights set on Erin being a replica of Melinda later in life. She has declared her a future athlete.

The trials in Darwin gave a big lift to the Darwin community. It now has a closer affinity with the Games. I hope every one of the athletes achieves a good result. Medals are not everything. Often the success of the Commonwealth and Olympic Games is rated on the number of medals won. Generally if athletes come home proud of their team and their performance and, as the honourable member for Lane Cove said, clean of any involvement with certain substances, they can hold their heads high. Heading towards 2000, Australia is proud of its athletes. Australia has a reputation for doing extremely well in the Games, bearing in mind what might be expected on a pro rata basis of population. From a rural point of view I extend my good wishes to all athletes, no matter where they come from. I wish the three athletes from Wagga Wagga well. I notice that quite a number of athletes on the list were born overseas but now proudly represent Australia.

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [4.22 p.m.]: I add my brief congratulations to the Commonwealth Games team that will soon proudly represent Australia in Malaysia. I particularly congratulate Heather Turland on her selection. Heather lives at Bowral in my electorate. I wish her well. She is a marathon runner and an amazing

woman. She is the mother of four children. She became involved in athletics later than many others. About two years ago Heather competed successfully in the City to Surf, winning the women's division. The following year she competed in Athens. Heather has overcome injury, including a broken leg.

Heather is now ready to represent Australia in the marathon at the Commonwealth Games. She has the support of her husband Gary and her four children. A week ago I spoke to her at Bowral when she was given a send-off party. She told me that to try to replicate the environmental conditions in Malaysia she has put a running machine in her garage, turned on all the heaters, and filled the electric frypan with water to generate some heat and steam. She runs on the treadmill to get in shape for the Commonwealth Games. I am sure all honourable members join with me in wishing her the very best in the marathon at the Commonwealth Games.

**Ms HARRISON** (Parramatta—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [4.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank all honourable members for their thorough contributions to the debate. There will be a great deal more to talk about during the next few weeks. Stuart Rendell, who works for the Senate, has high expectations in the hammer throw, and I wish him luck. I will summarise some of what has been said about women and their tremendous performances in the history of the Commonwealth Games. Statistics are available from 1911 to 1990. One statistic sums up how well women have done. Women have made up 20 per cent of the team, yet have won 35 per cent of gold medals. I cannot let the occasion go without stating that statistic.

Of the 450 athletes who make up the 1998 national team New South Wales provided almost 100 athletes. The athletes extend across the entire range of sports which will be on show at the Games this year. Those local athletes, along with their team mates from around the rest of the country, will follow in the footsteps of many of our Australian sporting legends, some of whom have been mentioned individually today. Almost half of the athletes from New South Wales have come from programs run by the New South Wales Institute of Sport. New South Wales Institute of Sport athletes comprise: track and field team, 16; swimming team, nine; cycling, three; diving, two; gymnastics, three; hockey, six; and weight lifting, three. In addition, five coaches and an administrator complete the New South Wales Institute of Sport complement, which is a great return for a relatively new facility.

The Games will provide all our athletes with a great opportunity to test themselves on the

international stage in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics. I hope the experience and success the athletes gain in Kuala Lumpur will be a real confidence boost for many whose focus after 21 September, when the Games come to an end, will sharpen on to the Sydney Olympic Games, which are only two years away. I am sure all honourable members will join with me as I send a message on behalf of the New South Wales Parliament to the entire Australian team, and to the New South Wales competitors in particular. I congratulate each and every one of them on their selection. Our thoughts and best wishes will be with them for the next few weeks as they strive for victory for themselves, their teams and their country.

**Motion agreed to.**

**HARNESS RACING NEW SOUTH WALES  
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) [4.26 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Harness racing in New South Wales is controlled and regulated by Harness Racing New South Wales, a statutory body constituted under the Harness Racing New South Wales Act 1977. The board of Harness Racing New South Wales 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 Totalizator Agency Board has been privatised. That has resulted 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 so as to provide the racing industry and the TAB with the freedom to make properly considered commercial decisions in what they regard 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 more 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 Harness Racing New South Wales will have increased powers under the new arrangements and will be taking commercial decisions which will effect the viability of harness 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 harness racing industry participants have direct representation on the board of Harness Racing New South Wales.

At the same time, however, it is recognised that the maintenance of public confidence in the integrity of the racing product is essential to the ongoing viability and development of the racing industry and that public confidence is largely based on the perceived independence of controlling authorities. In that regard, it is clear the public expect that an industry offering a wagering product should be properly controlled and regulated so as to ensure the maintenance of contemporary standards of accountability and integrity. In order to address integrity concerns, and also to reduce problems associated with the existence of conflicting factional interests within the harness racing industry, it is desirable that some independence in the membership of Harness Racing New South Wales should be maintained in any restructure, with the appointment of a number of ministerial nominees to complement the industry representatives.

Following wide consultation with the industry and the consideration of a broad range of options, it was determined that the most appropriate structure to serve the harness racing industry in this State would be to retain a seven-member board with the composition to be determined as follows: one member nominated by the New South Wales Harness Racing Club, or Harold Park as it is more commonly known; two members nominated by other harness 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. It is proposed that the three members appointed on the nomination of the Minister will 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 Harness Racing New South Wales.

The full board of Harness Racing New South Wales is to be responsible for all other matters relating to the commercial management, promotion

and development of the industry, including the entering into contractual arrangements with service providers such as the privatised TAB. The separation of the functions of the board of Harness Racing New South Wales 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. This will not be the first occasion that the harness racing industry will have direct representation on the controlling authority. The original legislation which constituted the then-named Harness Racing Authority in 1977 provided for the appointment of an eight-person board, of which five were to represent particular industry groups.

Unfortunately, this arrangement did not prove successful with a 1982-83 committee of inquiry concluding that the authority was being hindered in its operations by the fact that most industry-nominated members lacked business management expertise and tended to act in the interest of the particular organisation they represented, rather than in the overall best interests of the industry. As a result, the legislation was amended in 1983 to remove the requirement that a number of board members be appointed to specifically represent industry groups. Some 15 years later, the Government is relying on the harness racing industry to adopt a more mature attitude and take full advantage of this renewed opportunity for direct representation on Harness Racing New South Wales and concentrate its energies for the collective benefit of the industry.

Finally, the bill will ensure that Harness Racing New South Wales will have protection from defamation actions in respect of the conduct of inquiries and will provide Harness Racing New South Wales with the discretion to hold its inquiries in public. In addition, Harness Racing New South Wales will be given the 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 and the Greyhound Racing Authority Act. While it would be extremely rare for Harness Racing New South Wales 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.

To alleviate any concerns that these far-reaching powers would be open to abuse by the controlling authorities, I have arranged for my department to consult with the authorities on the

development of appropriate protocols to be applied in the conduct of inquiries. The Government is confident that the provisions of this bill can only assist the harness racing industry in this State and will enable the industry to be well placed to capitalise on the benefits which will accrue to it from the sale of the TAB. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Smith.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (COMMUNITY LAND MANAGEMENT) BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr E. T. PAGE** (Coogee—Minister for Local Government) [4.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Local Government Amendment (Community Land Management) Bill, which makes necessary and desirable reforms to the community land management provisions of the Local Government Act 1993. The commencement of the Local Government Act in July 1993 resulted in the introduction of a new approach to the concept of public land management by councils. The previous prescriptive approach was replaced with a new system whereby councils, in consultation with their local communities, became responsible for deciding how public land in their areas would be used and managed. Public land was divided into operational and community land. Particular provision was made to protect valuable community land which included public reserves, parks, sportsgrounds, and other land set aside for general community use. A regime was set in place whereby councils had to prepare plans of management for all community land within their areas.

The system that was set in place provided a foundation for responsible and accountable management by councils of community land. By and large, the new system has worked well. However, since 1995, the Government has become aware that there is some community concern that the present provisions of the Act are too broadly cast. Community land cannot be sold. However, there is widespread concern that the present provisions leave too much scope for misuse of environmentally sensitive land, and for inappropriate alienation of community land for essentially private purposes by lease or licence. A corresponding community

demand for reinforcement of its right to participate in important decisions about how community land is used and managed has also become apparent. A number of significant court decisions have also illustrated the need for clarification, at least, of the existing provisions of the Act.

In view of those concerns, I issued a green paper on community land management in September 1997. The many responses to the green paper from all sectors of the community, including valuable submissions from councils and other local government organisations, convinced me of the need for reform. It is in that context that I now present this bill. One of the fundamental anomalies in the present provisions relates to the categorisation of community land in a plan of management. The Act at present requires a plan of management for community land to place the land in one or more of the categories of a natural area, a sportsground, a park, or general community use. However, the Act does not define those terms, and it does not specify in what way those categories should relate to or affect the way in which community land should be used or managed. The bill, accordingly, makes provision to identify what land should appropriately be placed in each category and prescribes a number of core management objectives that must apply to land in each category.

These definitions and core objectives are contained in a draft exposure regulation that I will release today for public comment. The definitions and core objectives have been developed in consultation with a number of government agencies that have a direct interest in environmental and land issues. A major consequence of defining the categories of community land and core objectives for each of them will be to enable environmental and other values of community land to be better identified and protected. It will also enable community land to be more appropriately managed to achieve a responsible balance between protection of relevant values and use of the land by the community. The bill introduces a fifth category of community land, namely, an area of cultural significance. This will enable specific measures to be developed for the protection and preservation of items of cultural, as distinct from natural, value. It will also remove any possibility of conflicting management objectives arising from cultural and natural items being covered by the same category.

New sections 36A and 36B apply specifically to community land that is affected by an instrument under the Threatened Species Conservation Act or the Fisheries Management Act. Under those sections, any land that is declared to be critical habitat or that

is directly affected by a recovery plan or threat abatement plan under those Acts must be categorised in a plan of management as a natural area. The plan must also include the core objectives prescribed by regulation for the category of a natural area. The plan of management will be required to take account of the existence of critical habitat or the council's obligations under the recovery plan or threat abatement plan, and otherwise be consistent with the objects of the Threatened Species Conservation Act or the Fisheries Management Act, as the case may be. The council will be required to send a copy of its draft plan of management or amended plan of management to the Director-General of National Parks and Wildlife or the Director of New South Wales Fisheries, as the case may be, and to incorporate in the plan of management any matters required by them.

The Act at present allows a plan of management to apply to more than one area of community land. These plans are commonly referred to as generic plans of management. The management objectives, performance targets, et cetera, in generic plans are, of necessity, quite general in nature. Such plans are considered inappropriate for community land that includes critical habitat or is directly affected by a recovery plan or threat abatement plan, which need quite specific objectives, performance targets, et cetera. Accordingly, the bill provides that the plan of management applying to an area of land that is critical habitat or directly affected by a recovery plan or threat abatement plan must apply only to that area of community land. Such land cannot be included in a generic plan of management.

Also, until such time as a new plan of management is adopted or an existing plan of management is amended, the use of the land must not be varied in a detrimental manner. Changes of use will be allowed for the council to comply with its obligations in relation to critical habitat, et cetera, to give effect to the prescribed core objectives or to cease an inappropriate use. No new lease or licence of the land may be granted in that interim period. New section 36C makes similar provisions with regard to land that is the subject of a council resolution declaring that the land has a known natural, geological, geomorphological, scenic or other feature that is considered by the council to warrant protection or special management considerations.

New section 36D applies to land that the council declares by resolution to be an area of cultural significance, and contains provisions similar to those in sections 36A to 36C. Land would be

declared an area of cultural significance because of the presence on the land of any item that the council considers to be of Aboriginal, historical or cultural significance. Any proposal by a council to change the category of community land from a natural area or an area of cultural significance to another category will require a public hearing. The types and purposes for which buildings may be erected or used under lease or licence on land categorised as a natural area will also be strictly regulated.

The bill makes other provisions relating to the quality and content of plans of management generally, including some restraints concerning approvals for major development, subleasing and construction of public roads on community land. Under the present provisions a council is required to exhibit publicly a draft plan of management. No further exhibition is needed if the council considers that amendments to the exhibited plan are not substantial. This has been a source of considerable community concern. There is significant scope for disagreement on the question of whether a particular amendment is substantial or not substantial, and the issue has already led to court action. The potential for further court challenge in any particular case is significant.

Community land management is now largely the responsibility of the council and its community. Therefore, it is important in terms of transparency in local decision making and community participation that such a relatively minor cause for dispute between a council and its community be removed. Accordingly, the bill amends the Act to require all amendments to an exhibited draft plan of management to be publicly exhibited for further submissions before the plan may be adopted. Only the amendments are required to be further exhibited, and submissions will be limited to the amendments. Re-exhibition of amendments will not therefore re-open the whole plan of management to further public comment. If the amendments are truly not substantial, the additional process should not unreasonably delay adoption of the plan of management.

The other main area of reform is that dealing with the granting of leases, licences and other estates in respect of community land. Particular provision is made to permit the granting of leases, licences and other estates in respect of community land for the provision of public utilities. Sometimes this was overlooked in the preparation of some plans of management, causing some unintended difficulties in the provision of these necessary works. At present the Act prohibits community land from being sold,

exchanged or otherwise disposed of. This will not change. However, in addition to providing for the granting of leases and licences for community land, the Act also currently allows the granting of any other estate in community land for any purpose and without any requirement for prior public notification. There is no real reason that the granting of other estates should be dealt with differently to leases or licences.

With some exceptions necessary for practical reasons, the bill will make the granting of other estates in community land subject to similar requirements to those applying to the granting of leases and licences. New provisions in the bill will limit the granting of leases, licences and other estates in respect of community land that is managed under a generic plan of management. Under the new provisions a generic plan of management will generally only be able to authorise the granting of a lease, licence or other estate in respect of the community land to which it applies for a purpose prescribed in the regulations. Prescribed purposes will be strictly low impact. Different considerations will apply to a plan of management that applies to only one area of community land.

At present an authorisation in a plan of management for the granting of a lease or licence of community land may be limited to the granting of a lease or licence for a public purpose or by reference to other matters. Under that provision it will be possible for community land to be leased for a purely private purpose not associated with any public benefit. This is widely regarded as unacceptable, and there is a strong feeling in the community that leases and licences of community land should only be granted for a public purpose. The Government supports that view. Accordingly, an important reform is that, with some exceptions either specified in the bill or to be prescribed by regulation, leases, licences and other estates in respect of community land may only be granted for what are essentially public purposes.

Councils will no longer be able to grant leases, rights of way, et cetera, for a purely private purpose, such as allowing vehicular access over community land to adjoining privately owned land. Another important reform is that, with some exceptions prescribed by regulation, a proposal by a council to grant a lease, licence or other estate in respect of community land for a term of five years or less must be publicly notified in the same way as is required for leases, et cetera, for terms of more than five years. A period for lodgment of submissions must be allowed, and the council will have to

consider all submissions lodged during the prescribed public notification period. Councils will generally not be required to obtain ministerial consent to the granting of leases or licences for terms of five years or less even if objections are lodged. However, there will be cases in which ministerial oversight of such proposals is desirable in the overall public interest.

Accordingly, new section 47A effectively empowers the Minister to require a particular proposal to be referred for prior ministerial consent before the lease, licence or other estate may be granted. Other less significant measures to enhance transparency, accountability and public participation in relation to leases, licences, et cetera, are detailed in the bill. The bill also contains provisions to close some loopholes with regard to the alienation of community land which have become apparent. These provisions allow the alienation of community land otherwise than in strict compliance with the provisions of the Act relating to the granting of leases, licenses and other estates.

Briefly, the bill provides that any lease, et cetera, for a term of five years or less that includes incentives for future councils to renew it upon expiry of the original term will be regarded as conferring an option for renewal for a term equal to the further term. This will ensure that the need for ministerial consent to such a proposal, on the premise that the lease, et cetera, is only for five years, cannot be avoided by use of that device. A second loophole allows the alienation of community land otherwise than by way of a lease or licence. At present a council may instead enter into a management arrangement with some person or body that effectively allows exclusive use of land or a building. Such an arrangement is not subject to specific statutory controls.

Accordingly, new section 47D prohibits, with some exceptions, any exclusive use or occupation of community land otherwise than in accordance with a lease, licence or estate granted in accordance with the Act. Appropriate transitional provisions are included in the bill to require existing plans of management to be brought into compliance with the new provisions in some circumstances to enable existing leases, licences and other matters to remain in place at least until their designated termination date, or to allow a reasonable time for compliance with the new provisions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Smith.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (OMBUDSMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS) BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr E. T. PAGE** (Coogee—Minister for Local Government) [4.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Local Government Amendment (Ombudsman's Recommendations) Bill 1998. This small bill contains an important amendment to the Local Government Act 1993. The amendment is aimed at enhancing the ability of the Government to achieve change in councils when an ombudsman investigation results in the Ombudsman recommending that change is necessary. The Ombudsman has expressed concern at the inadequacy of the present system of reporting the failure of councils to comply with the recommendations of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has sought an extension to the Minister's powers to enable him to enforce such recommendations. This bill has the support of the parliamentary Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission, which tabled its report in the Parliament on 13 November 1997.

Currently, where the Ombudsman investigates the conduct of a public authority, including a council, and finds that it is contrary to law or unsatisfactory for other reasons set out in the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman may make a report on the matter. The report may include recommendations about further action as necessary. In the case of local government, the report is given to me and the council concerned. If the Ombudsman is not satisfied that sufficient steps are taken as a consequence of the report, the Ombudsman may make a report to Parliament. I must make a statement to Parliament in response to the report within 12 sitting days. This is not, in every case, a suitable or effective method for dealing with a council's failure to comply with the Ombudsman's recommendations. On the other hand, when a council is investigated under the Local Government Act by a departmental representative, I may make binding orders on the council arising from any recommendations contained in the departmental representative's report.

In relation to local councils the areas of investigation undertaken by the Department of Local

Government and the Ombudsman are complementary. Officers of both agencies regularly confer with a view to maximising resources and avoiding duplication. In fact a recent examination of this very issue by the Ombudsman concluded that there is virtually no duplication. As a matter of practice the Department of Local Government tends to focus on general council administration while the Ombudsman targets individual issues. This allocation reflects the different range of enforcement provisions available in the Ombudsman Act, including the power to recommend payment of compensation. There may be occasions when I will need additional information from the Ombudsman before making an order. In fact, the practical aspects of the proposal will necessitate closer liaison with the Ombudsman, including in the preliminary stages of the Ombudsman's investigations.

I may also consider it appropriate to advise a council which has failed to take sufficient steps to address the recommendations in the Ombudsman's report of my intention to make an order and to consider the council's response. These are procedural aspects which will be developed during the course of implementation. It is important to note that the existing orders powers are invoked in respect of very serious matters only. It is envisaged that the order power provided by the amendment will also be used selectively. The vast majority of cases will continue to be satisfactorily dealt with by negotiation between the Ombudsman and the council. The amendments proposed in this bill will provide an additional means of resolution. In appropriate cases it will allow me to treat recommendations made in each report prepared by the Ombudsman in exactly the same way as a recommendation made in a report prepared by a departmental representative under the Local Government Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Smith.**

## **BANANA INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr AMERY** (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [4.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill continues the Government's program of modernising the legislation regulating primary production in New South Wales. It also ensures that

the legislation under which the banana industry operates complies with the State's obligations under the competition principles agreement. It may help honourable members to understand the bill if I give a brief outline of the New South Wales banana industry and of the legislation which has been enacted to assist the industry. New South Wales and Queensland are the major banana producing States in Australia. In New South Wales banana production occurs in two distinct coastal districts. These are located between Tweed Heads and Maclean in the north and between South West Rocks and Woolgoolga in the south.

Primarily as a result of disease control problems and inconsistency in product quality, statutory powers to regulate the marketing of bananas in New South Wales were introduced in 1969. In that year the Banana Industry Act constituted the banana marketing control committee. This Act was replaced by the current Banana Industry Act which established the banana industry committee—BIC. The BIC is provided with wide powers to regulate and improve the quality of bananas within New South Wales. It also controls the transportation and distribution of bananas to various markets in New South Wales. The BIC is also empowered to impose compulsory charges on growers to fund a range of functions. These include research, pest and disease control, advertising and promotion, market information and development, education, quality assurance and industry representation.

This bill proposes amendments to the Banana Industry Act in accordance with the recommendations of the competition policy review of that Act. The review was conducted to fulfil the New South Wales Government's commitment under the competition principles agreement. The terms of reference for the review required an assessment of whether the public benefits of the legislation establishing the BIC exceeded the costs. It also required an assessment of whether the objectives of the legislation can be achieved other than by restricting competition within the industry. The review group, on which the banana industry was represented, carried out a very comprehensive review of the Act and considered the many activities of the BIC on a case-by-case basis.

I commend the members of the review group for the thorough job they did and for the most informative report which resulted from their work. In carrying out its review, the review group prepared an issues paper outlining the review process and the key issues to be considered. The public were invited to make submissions to assist the review group in its



deliberations and, in addition, public workshops were conducted in Murwillumbah and Coffs Harbour. In considering the benefits and costs of the Banana Industry Act, and its anticompetitive effects, the review group divided the activities of the BIC into two simple categories. These were its industry service functions and its market powers.

Turning first to the industry service functions of the committee, the review concluded that there was strong industry support for compulsory charge powers for industry service functions, such as research and development and pest and disease control. It also concluded that these activities were an effective and efficient means of addressing industry-wide problems of free riders and spillovers and that they therefore yielded net public benefits. In accordance with this conclusion, the bill provides for the continuation of the committee's involvement in these areas, provided of course that there continues to be industry support. This is assured by providing for polls of growers.

On the other hand, the review group concluded that issues such as quality control and market assurance are primarily issues of competitive market advantage. Accordingly, it is this Government's view that the market should be allowed to either reward or penalise growers on quality grounds and that legislation in this area is not appropriate. Regulatory intervention is therefore unnecessary and the bill proposes to repeal those provisions of the Act that give the BIC powers over such matters. Product quality issues can be voluntarily addressed by the industry, for example by developing a quality assurance program or code of practice. Individual growers would then be free to decide whether participation in such schemes would give them a market advantage and therefore benefit their business.

Throughout the review process particular attention was given to the BIC's power to regulate the transportation of bananas. It does this by issuing a direction, under powers contained in the Act, which, in general terms, requires that bananas grown and sold in New South Wales must be transported on transport provided by the BIC or by a BIC approved person. In accordance with this direction, the BIC has appointed the BGF Co-operative Ltd as the sole transport operator. The transport direction is clearly a restriction on competition since it prevents individual growers from negotiating their own arrangements for the transport of bananas. If the Government is to meet its obligations under the competition principles agreement and thus receive payments from the Commonwealth Government, the transport direction power can be retained only if it is

demonstrated that the power results in a net public benefit.

This Government is not satisfied of the existence of any net public benefit from the transport direction power. There is no evidence that the transport direction and the power on which it relies addresses any form of market failure or provides any public benefit that could not otherwise be realised in the absence of the direction. The banana industry is divided on the issue of repeal of the transport direction power, but there is a substantial body of support for this move. This support is understandable given that the transport direction imposes costs on one sector of the industry in order to subsidise other growers. No other agricultural industry in the State restricts the transport of produce in this manner and the Government considers there is no good reason why the BIC should have the power to do so. Accordingly, this bill ends the current transport direction.

The bill also provides for the repeal of the BIC's power to issue future directions with respect to the transportation of bananas. After this bill becomes law growers will be free to negotiate their own arrangements for the transport of their bananas. In doing so, the Government expects that cost savings and efficiency benefits to the industry will result. Of course, all growers will be free to continue to use the transport services provided by the BGF if they so choose. The choice will be theirs. The power to regulate the transport of bananas is not the only power in the Act which regulates banana marketing. Other market powers include the power to impose supply or quality controls. The review group concluded that these powers also do not yield net public benefits. It concluded that the issues these powers were originally designed to address are either no longer relevant or can be addressed by non-legislative means.

As I have already said, this bill provides for the removal of these powers. These amendments are necessary to ensure that this Government complies with its obligations under the competition principles agreement. However, the Government also believes that these changes are in the best long-term interests of the New South Wales banana industry. The bill also removes the requirement that the BIC seek approval from the Minister for Agriculture for the setting of grower charges and the allocation of its annual budget. This will provide the BIC with more autonomy and increase its capacity to respond to unforeseen industry issues and demands throughout the year.

One other issue that the bill addresses relates to the voting entitlements of growers. Under the Act the voting entitlements of growers differ depending on the area of their farms. These amendments do not have any impact on the current voting entitlement of any grower. The amendments are in the nature of statute law revision and simply clarify the relevant parts of the Act. The bill does not affect the continued existence of the BIC. It ensures that the BIC can still provide many important industry service functions to New South Wales banana growers and that the Government's commitments under the competition principles agreement are fulfilled. It also restores to individual growers the freedom to make their own arrangements with respect to supply and quality control. I am confident that the bill will assist the banana industry in maintaining its position as a supplier of competitively priced quality fruit. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Smith.**

#### **LAW ENFORCEMENT (CONTROLLED OPERATIONS) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr WHELAN** (Ashfield—Minister for Police) [5.02]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The final report of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service recommended that legislation be enacted to overcome the difficulties for law enforcement agencies arising from the High Court decision in the case of Ridgeway. The Government responded by enacting the Law Enforcement (Controlled Operations) Act 1997, which came into effect on 1 March this year. The Act provides for the authorisation, conduct and monitoring of operations that involve what would otherwise be unlawful activities. It is a significant law enforcement tool in the fight against serious crime and corruption. Controlled operations are conducted with strict accountability.

As members of this House would be aware, there is extensive external monitoring. The Ombudsman reviews all the controlled operations conducted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the New South Wales Crime Commission, the New South Wales Police Service and the Police Integrity Commission. As part of her responsibility to monitor accountability, the

Ombudsman sought clarification in June 1998 about whether applications for controlled operations may be submitted by fax. It was always intended that the use of faxes should be available at all steps in the approval process for controlled operations. This is evident in section 8 of the Act and clause 5 of the Law Enforcement (Controlled Operations) Regulation 1998, which allow for decisions to approve or vary an application to be faxed.

However, the Crown Solicitor advised that because the Act is silent in relation to applications, an amendment will clarify that they may also be faxed. The bill puts the matter beyond doubt. The bill inserts in section 5 of the Law Enforcement (Controlled Operations) Act a new subsection 5(4) which states that, for the purposes of the Act, a copy of an application that has been faxed has the same effect as the original. The Government is serious about providing the tools needed to assist the police and other law enforcement agencies in their fight against crime and corruption. The bill exemplifies the Government's unwavering commitment to the safety and wellbeing of New South Wales communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Smith.**

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

#### **WATER ALLOCATION**

**Mr SMALL** (Murray) [5.05 p.m.]: I refer tonight to the importance of water in the south-eastern part of New South Wales. During the past week lengthy debate has taken place on the quality of Sydney's water. Honourable members would be aware that in the northern part of New South Wales there are ample water flows from the northern rivers into the Darling River. However, shortages of water in the upper catchments of the Murray River system are causing problems for irrigators in the electorate of Murray. I am pleased to note that the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation is present in the Chamber. I know that he also is concerned that irrigators in the Murray electorate have access to sufficient water to meet their needs during the coming season.

The Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme is greatly enhanced by water within the catchments, in particular Lake Eucumbene. At present the system holds about three million megalitres of water. I understand that the Minister intends to meet with members of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority in the hope of securing water from that

area, which will be of great benefit to irrigators. I was pleased to hear yesterday's announcement that the water allocation for the Murray Valley will be increased from 11 per cent to 30 per cent. However, that is still the lowest allocation I can recall in the history of the area since allocations were gazetted in the Murray Valley. The irrigators of the Murray are in a desperate plight as they prepare to plant rice and summer crops, water pastures and finish off cereal crops. Irrigators are geared up to move quickly to prepare their soil. Some are already preparing their land despite the limited availability of water, because they need to achieve results now.

I also raise the issue of off-allocation. Whenever flows exceed water requirements within the Murray River system, that water off-allocation would be made available to irrigators this year. Up-to-date allocation announcements are also important. Perhaps at this crucial time weekly announcements could be made so that irrigators know what will be available, and can prepare for planting. Perhaps announcements could be made at least up until the middle of January. Another important issue is the total flexibility for water transfers between States and river valleys. This will also help irrigators of the Murray Valley. The cap should not be tied this year, because irrigators are operating under the most difficult circumstances.

A large volume of water is coming down the Darling River system. It is pleasing to note that Menindie Lakes will fill, Lake Victoria is filling, and consequently South Australia's water needs will be met. The water flowing down the Darling River will probably last for another two or three months, thereby greatly enhancing water supplies to South Australia. However, I appreciate the requirements of the Hume Dam, the Dartmouth Dam and the Murray River system. At times off-allocation flows would occur as a result of water flowing from the Ovens and Kiewa rivers. That water will not need to be channelled to South Australia because South Australia's requirements will have been met.

I urge the Minister to do everything in his power to help irrigators at this time. On the present 30 per cent allocation very little rice will be able to be grown. The State relies heavily on the export market of rice from the Murray Valley, as well as from the Coleambally region and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Ricegrowers and irrigators are extremely dependent on the cash flows from crops produced. Any benefits provided to the State's economy will flow through to the national economy as well. I know the Minister will do everything in his power to help us. I look forward to the

assistance he can give us and I am willing to do everything I can do to help as well.

**Mr AMERY** (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [5.10 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Murray for his support of the irrigators in his region. Despite all the rain in northern New South Wales and the central west, irrigators in the Murrumbidgee and Murray are missing out. The Hume Dam on the Murray River is still only 41 per cent full and the Dartmouth Dam is 42 per cent full. But there is a glimmer of hope. A 30 per cent allocation is available for general security water users, which includes rice growers, in the New South Wales Murray Valley. High security water users, which includes horticulturalists and wine grape growers, continue to have 100 per cent allocation.

From an historical perspective the starting allocation of zero per cent for general security users announced on 24 July was the lowest initial allocation since the scheme was introduced. By 17 August the allocation had been lifted to 11 per cent, and it has now been increased to 30 per cent. Looking forward, there are nine chances in 10 that the allocation will rise to 40 per cent by the end of the season and there is a 50-50 chance of the allocation rising to 87 per cent. With these probabilities, irrigators should continue to plan and manage their water use very carefully.

As a precautionary measure, in the event that allocations do not go beyond the 80 per cent mark, the honourable member will be pleased to know that I have written to the chairman of the Snowy council urgently seeking water above the normal notified releases. A decision will be made at the council's meeting tomorrow afternoon, 11 September. I am confident that the New South Wales member on the council will enthusiastically present a strong case for the releases. Mr Kim Alvarez of the department, who I understand is well known to the honourable member for Murray, has been in close contact with both Murray Irrigation Limited and Mike Hedditch of the Rice Growers Association, developing a strong economic case to support the releases. I caution, however, that even if we are successful in gaining this additional water, realistically it will represent only 5 per cent to 10 per cent of allocation. I say again that irrigators should continue to manage their water use very carefully.

The honourable member for Murray has my assurance that, although resources are constrained, any off-allocation will be announced whenever

possible. I expect that access to off-allocation water will be available for some time in the lower river as a result of the Darling River floods. The upper river announcement will be dependent on the size of the Victorian and Murrumbidgee tributary inputs. I take on board everything the honourable member for Murray said, and I will report back to him by letter next week.

### **HUNTER REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION**

**Mr GAUDRY** (Newcastle) [5.12 p.m.]: Last year people in the Hunter region were shocked by the decision of Broken Hill Proprietary Limited to cut back on steel-making in the city. The response by the State Government was very welcome and the setting up of the Beyond 2000 Committee under the chairmanship of the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development was one of the initiatives taken to deal with the change that was going to occur. That is only one of the changes that have been occurring in the Hunter Region as it moves from heavy industrial activity based on steelmaking and coal mining to a much more diversified economy. That move was noted and prepared for by the former Federal Government by the setting up of regional development organisations.

The Hunter Regional Development Organisation was set up under the proposals found in the *Working Nation* document prepared by the former Federal Government. That regional development organisation, formed through a process of open consultation in the Hunter, brought together representatives of three levels of government, the education and training sector, the trade union movement, the Hunter business community, and key regional development organisations. From the beginning it focused on setting up a review of industry in the Hunter, seeking out the advantages that industry groups had in the Hunter, and building on those advantages to look to new industry in the future, to give the Hunter both employment and export potential.

One focus for the Hunter Regional Development Organisation was development of strategies around industry clusters. Such development has been a trend in many countries. Governments and businesses have found that in heavy industrialised centres, such as Pittsburgh, Glasgow and Minnesota, the best way forward is to look at strengths, link those strengths, and build in a co-operative way for the future employment potential of the region.

That cluster approach was emphasised by the regional employment summit held in November 1997. That summit was attended by more than 120 people representing business and the community, and it strongly endorsed the cluster development program that the regional development organisation was sponsoring. HURDO, as it is called, has devised and implemented a structured cluster development program in the Hunter region, and is proceeding in a structured, staged manner. First, it is mapping cluster capabilities and opportunities, and then noting barriers to cluster formation. It puts together a strategic plan, creates specific project plans, then launches the clusters and moves forward to monitor and evaluate their progress.

In the Hunter, some 17 cluster groups have been recognised and targeted. They are: agribusiness; arts and entertainment; building and construction; defence; education and training; engineering and fabrication; the equine industry; information technology and telecommunications; the marine industry; medical research; metals; mining; surfing; sustainable industries; tourism; transport; and wine. One feature is that once the clusters are put together they become part of a self-driving process. There is tremendous enthusiasm amongst the cluster groups and particularly amongst leading business people in those groups. They are aware of great potential if they co-operate and seek to build on advantages and opportunities both for the local market and for export.

Overseas experience has shown that from these clusters one can expect sustainable jobs, better customer and supplier links, development of specialised skills, and development of alliances and networks. Clusters become investment magnets. That Hunter region has adopted the approach developed by the Hunter Regional Development Organisation. I pay tribute to the former Federal Government for its foresight in setting up these regional development organisations.

### **KIDS 'N' CREEKS COMPETITION**

**Ms MEAGHER** (Cabramatta) [5.17 p.m.]: I wish to detail an important environmental competition involving schoolchildren that is currently taking place in the local government area of Fairfield, and in particular in my electorate of Cabramatta. The Fairfield Kids 'N' Creeks competition is sponsored annually by Fairfield City Council and the Rotary Club of Fairfield. The competition involves primary schools within the Fairfield local government area that are interested in restoring part of a local creek as an environmental

project. The competition was initiated by a Fairfield creeks and wetlands group in 1996 to improve the condition of the city's watercourses, many of which suffered from loss of native vegetation cover, reduced native animal habitat, weed infestation, bank erosion, and litter and solid waste.

Today the Kids 'N' Creeks competition involves six local primary schools and 195 students. More than 2,500 native plants and shrubs have been planted at the project sites and at least 200 metres of riverbank have been revegetated and cleared of weeds and rubbish. The aim of the competition is to increase the awareness and involvement of local primary school children in local creek and associated bushland environmental issues by undertaking a creek restoration project. The objectives of the competition are, first, to restore local creek areas to their natural state, directly revegetating the site with native species, controlling weeds and removing waste materials; second, to educate local primary school children in the value of local creeks and associated bushland, and, third, to improve the attractiveness of creek areas to students and encourage local community pride and ownership.

The competition started in 1996 with two schools. Harrington Street was the winner. In 1997 six schools took part in the program, and Canley Vale was the winning school. This year seven schools took part in the competition. Canley Vale Public School took interest in a site along Orphan School Creek on the corner of Queen Street and Sackville Street; Our Lady of Mount Carmel School took a spot along Green Valley Creek; Carramar Public School embarked on a project along Prospect Creek; Villawood Public School along Burns Creek at Villawood; Mount Pritchard Public School also along the Green Valley Creek; and Harrington Street Primary School along Green Valley Creek along Homebush Road at Cabramatta. Each school has planted more than 500 plants during this year's competition, as well as removed rubbish, carried out drain stencilling activities, recycled rubbish and mulched garden areas.

The schools are judged on their interest and enthusiasm, safety awareness, the level of skill in various activities, the level of direction required and level of achievement on a weekly basis. Each school also submits a report on the work it has carried out during the competition. The winning school will receive \$500, a worm farm and 30 native plants. The other schools will each receive \$200 and a worm farm. Each student will receive a certificate and a plant. As part of the competition, each student is invited to make a poster about what is wrong with the creek or how we can make our creeks better.

One winner will be selected from each school and will receive a \$20 prize. Prizes will be awarded on Monday by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Pam Allan. We are grateful for her attendance and contribution at this year's Kids 'N' Creeks program.

Following the judging, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary School in my electorate was selected as this year's winner. All four classes of year four took part in the competition, which included more than 116 students, and worked on a 300-metre area along Green Valley Creek. The school planted nearly 500 native trees, shrubs and ground cover, and removed 240 litres of rubbish from the site. Some of the litter has been sorted for recycling. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Primary School on its fabulous effort. I would also like to commend Fairfield Rotary Club and Fairfield council for continuing this program, which will only instil local pride and greater awareness about the need to maintain and rehabilitate the local urban environment.

#### UNLICENSED FINANCE BROKERING

**Mr MacCARTHY** (Strathfield) [5.22 p.m.]: I raise a matter of great distress to one of my constituents Mr Neville Murphy, an elderly gentleman who has lost a large amount of money. His case highlights that the courts can deny justice to individuals. He and his son have lost at least \$250,000. The law in New South Wales has prevented them from recovering their money. The events go back some time, and I have to simplify them in the interests of time. In the early part of 1990 the Murphys were approached by one Martin Comer, then an accountant in Five Dock, to lend money through him to other parties. I believe that Mr Comer now lives in St. Ives. Between May 1990 and March 1991 these gentlemen foolishly, as it turned out, trusted Mr Comer who, unbeknown to them, was a bankrupt.

He offered them the opportunity to lend money at high interest rates and foolishly they did so on a handshake, without the benefit of written records. They borrowed the money to onlend it. One may say they were foolish indeed to do it, but foolishness is not uncommon in our society. Comer the accountant did not inform the Murphys of the then provisions of the Credit Act and the Credit (Finance Brokers) Act which required them to possess a licence. More importantly, he did not tell them that if they lent money without possessing a licence they not only risked not getting any interest, but they also risked losing the principal. However, it seems that Comer

advised the borrowers that this was the situation and, therefore, they did not have to repay even the principal of the loans because the lenders were unlicensed.

Hampered by the legal provisions and the lack of written contracts, in the past seven years the Murphys have had no success whatsoever in recovering their money. Those who received the money deny it was received from them as loans, but rather that it was repayment of debts owed by Comer. One wonders how the Murphys could have owed money to Comer. One can only wonder how Comer, as a bankrupt, could receive money from the Murphys on the one hand and settle alleged debts to third parties on the other without the administrator of his bankruptcy knowing of it. The key features of the credit legislation which impact on this case were introduced in early 1995 with very little publicity. It is not surprising that the Murphys had no idea that they had to be licensed. Their punishment for their ignorance is the loss of \$250,000, maybe \$300,000, and bankruptcy.

Apparently, no-one in the Government has seen fit to prosecute Comer for acting as an unlicensed finance broker. Thus far no-one seems to have brought him to book for his role. The law of New South Wales as it then applied—and I believe it has changed since—has resulted in the Murphys having been legally defrauded. There would appear to have been a successful conspiracy between Comer and those who received the money. My representations to the Attorney General, and Minister for Fair Trading have evoked nothing but unsympathetic responses from his department. The Murphys have tried all sorts of things. They have tried to get legal aid to pursue their case.

They have tried the Department of Fair Trading, but were told that Fair Trading is to protect lenders from borrowers not, as in this case, a consumer of finance broking services from an unscrupulous bankrupt accountant. The law is clear. I am not a lawyer, but everything I have read seems to say that according to the law they are not entitled to recover their money because they were unlicensed. It may be the law of the land, but in my view it is not justice. Two people, albeit very naive and foolish, have lost their life savings—a quarter of a million dollars—and more. I hope the Attorney General might intervene to do something to help the Murphy family.

#### **WOLLONGONG HOSPITAL AND ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE**

**Mr SULLIVAN** (Wollongong) [5.27 p.m.]: I want to talk about official openings in the electorate

of Wollongong. On 31 August the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Health officially opened the new \$50 million clinical services building at Wollongong Hospital. At long last the notorious Greiner hole in the ground has been filled. The building is now functioning. The project originally began some time in the 1970s under the old Wollongong Hospital Board under the chairmanship of Jean Johnston, subsequently Tom Wren and, before the formation of the area health service board, Keith Davis. By early 1980 the hospital board had effectively established the need for an additional building on the site.

Subsequently, with the formation of the area health service and discussions with the Health Department in Sydney an extensive program was carried out to assess the needs of Wollongong Hospital. As a result of that assessment, what was to be a small additional building—an annexe to an existing one—became a significant building in its own right. Delays have occurred during the past seven years from the election of the previous Government in 1988 to its fall in 1995. A further assessment was then undertaken, which increased the floor space from just under 10,000 square feet to just under 13,000 square feet. That building has now been constructed and officially opened. No doubt all honourable members are aware that Hickman House, the oldest part of the complex, is scheduled for demolition and replacement at a cost of \$62.5 million.

The Premier performed the official opening of the entertainment centre at Wollongong, which took place on 3 September. Premier Nick Greiner of the coalition Government announced that Wollongong and Newcastle would get entertainment centres. That is largely all the progress that was made. Some movement was made under the subsequent Liberal Premier, but nothing great happened. The main reason for that is that money was not to be granted but was to come in the form of a loan. Bob Carr as Leader of the Opposition on 4 November 1994 announced that a Labor government if elected in March 1995 would complete the entertainment centre in its first term and that all funding from the State Government would be by way of a grant.

Construction of the centre commenced after March 1995. Wollongong now has a 6,000-seat entertainment centre. The State Government has made a contribution of just over \$18.5 million, all of which has come by way of grant. The trust has sought additional money. The new entertainment centre is most impressive. It will bring a great deal of pleasure to the community and will generate a great deal of economic activity. We are now able to see in Wollongong shows and entertainment for

which people would previously have had to travel to Sydney or Canberra.

The Michael Crawford show, for example, is attracting people from Victoria, rural and south-western New South Wales and the southern and south-western suburbs of Sydney as well as from Wollongong. I hope that show will form a typical pattern of shows using the entertainment centre for international performers to prepare their acts before hitting major metropolitan centres such as Sydney and Melbourne. I have a great deal of pleasure in reporting to the Parliament the official openings at Wollongong of the hospital clinical services building, on 31 August, and the entertainment centre, on 3 September.

### COLO VALE AND HILLTOP SERVICES

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [5.32 p.m.]: This evening I wish to speak about the plight of parents of school-age children, and the children themselves, in the northern villages of my electorate, namely Hilltop and Colo Vale. I wish to draw two issues to the attention of honourable members, and particularly to the attention of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. The first issue relates to access to the OOSH, the out of school hours care facility. The second concerns access to free school bus travel.

On the first issue, I first congratulate Vivian Rae and Jane Vainsar and their team, and particularly the principal of the Colo Vale primary school, Maree Tynan, on their hard work in establishing the OOSH service. This facility has enjoyed council support. I am pleased that the Federal member for Macarthur, John Fahey, has recently been able to provide the OOSH with extra help, to make sure that the service could continue. The OOSH is a vital service. I have visited it on several occasions. The OOSH provides after-school care for children from the Colo Vale school. Children just have to walk across the lane towards the sports facility, which acts as the OOSH after school.

The OOSH provides supervised activities for school-age children, who wait until their working parents come to pick them up later in the afternoon. The service satisfies a critical need yet, unfortunately, current school bus rules mean that the children from much of the northern beaches area cannot attend. There is need for a change to school bus rules. Two problems are created because of the present inflexibility. First, children living in Hilltop, only a few kilometres down the road, cannot use the

OOSH so they have to go home to an empty house rather than attend the OOSH. Second, it is very difficult to maintain numbers at the OOSH and keep the facility financial.

I ask that school bus rules be changed so that children can take a school bus to an approved after school hours care service, for example the Colo Vale OOSH, rather than their own home. Parental approval would be required. The result would be many children having better quality after school hours care, and many parents would feel much happier knowing what their children were doing in the hours between school finishing and parents arriving at home. I have written to the Minister for Transport on this issue. He refused to consider my first application. On 23 June I wrote to the Minister requesting a meeting and that a delegation of parents might come to see him about the matter. So far I am still waiting on his reply.

The second issue I raise this evening concerns school bus passes at Colo Vale and Hilltop. Late last year or earlier this year several parents in the Colo Vale area received advice from the Department of Transport that approximately 40 children who were previously eligible for school bus passes were no longer deemed eligible. The rules that govern free school bus passes contain the following condition:

To be eligible for free school travel under the School Student Transport Scheme, primary school students must reside more than 1.6km radial distance or 2.4km walking distance from the school attended. However, the safety of walking routes to a school for students, who are ineligible under the Scheme, are assessed on an individual basis.

Anyone who has walked around Hilltop and Colo Vale will know that there are no kerbs. Particularly in summer one finds long grass, snakes lurking, and ongoing council work. There are large ditches at the side of the road, full of fetid water. It is a big ask for some primary school students to walk to school, which is the only financial option for many of the parents in these villages. The community was successful in receiving a reprieve. On behalf of parents, the situation was reviewed. I congratulate the Colo Vale parents who contacted me about this issue and made such a fuss on behalf of all others who have been suffering. The appeals committee decided to grant free travel for the first semester of the 1998 school year until the problem was considered again. On 8 July I received the following advice:

The Appeals Committee recently concluded that the walking route to Colo Vale public school was considered to be safe and therefore all students, except those with medical conditions, were deemed ineligible.

Nothing has changed in the physical conditions at Colo Vale since a year ago. I urge the Minister for Transport to consider this issue carefully and to meet the delegation of parents who are particularly concerned about the 40 students presently deemed ineligible for free bus passes.

#### WEST GOSFORD TELEWORKING CENTRE

**Ms ANDREWS** (Peats) [5.37 p.m.]: On Monday, 7 September 1998, history was made at West Gosford in the electorate of Peats when the first New South Wales government-sponsored teleworking centre was officially opened by the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads, and honourable member for The Entrance and myself on behalf of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. Representatives from the Roads and Traffic Authority on this auspicious occasion included Mr Ulf Fraser, director, country operations; Mr Bob Sharpe, zone manager, Newcastle zone; Marie Edwards, senior policy officer, teleworking and Richard Horsburgh, manager, human resources—planning, analysis and equity.

The telecentre can accommodate as many as 20 workers using eight work stations set up on what is called a "hot desking" basis, a desk-sharing basis. The centre is located at the Roads and Traffic Authority's heavy vehicle inspection facility in Dell Road, west Gosford. The centre enables RTA employees who reside on the central coast to work locally one or two days per week in lieu of commuting to their usual workplace in either Sydney or Newcastle.

The lifestyles of these employees will be enhanced as they will benefit from a vast reduction in their travelling time and travel costs, they will be better able to balance their work and personal commitments and they will be working in a safe environment free from the usual distractions of office life. The RTA, as their employer, will benefit from increased productivity and business efficiency. The wider community and the environment overall will benefit from a decreased number of commuters using the Sydney-Newcastle transport corridor.

The RTA is to be heartily applauded for embarking upon this pilot initiative, and the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads is also to be congratulated on endorsing the concept. This initiative will provide a benchmark for future hot-desking initiatives within both government agencies and the private sector and will demonstrate that the benefits to the community, business and the environment can be considerable. The West Gosford site was chosen from a total of 35 sites around the

State, and was voted as the most appropriate because it has ample space in which to accommodate the hot-desking concept, and is ideally situated approximately half-way between the two major New South Wales metropolitan centres, Sydney and Newcastle.

The telecentre concept arose from a Roads and Traffic Authority teleworking pilot project conducted in 1993-94 which revealed that teleworking had great potential to reduce employees' travelling time to and from work, increase productivity and, most importantly, increase staff morale. Since then the RTA has commissioned and published market research, which was conducted by *Newspoll*, which found that 5 per cent of the New South Wales work force telework on a regular basis and that 65 per cent would be interested if it were available. In addition, 85 per cent of central coast commuters would prefer teleworking to the daily grind of travelling long distances to and from work.

It is worthwhile noting that the New South Wales trade union movement endorses the Government's flexible work practices, which provide the option of working either from home or facilities such as the new RTA telecentre at West Gosford. The union movement acknowledges that its policies need to be flexible to keep pace with the rapid technological changes occurring within our society. The telecentre is a big plus for the central coast. As the teleworking concept is close to the heart of central coast commuters, Mr Kevin Parish, long-serving President of the Central Coast Commuters Association, who has been driving this concept for some time, attended its opening, together with Mr Vince Martin, former Federal member for Banks, Gosford councillors Judith Penton and Mick Whalan and Mr Tom Rodwell of Narara, who is a vintage car enthusiast.

A number of RTA employees are already accessing the telecentre, including one of my constituents, Mr Ron Tonnet of Woy Woy. At the opening Ron became an instant television star when he explained to viewers of local television station NBN 3 the advantages of working from the telecentre rather than commuting daily to his RTA workplace in Newcastle. Those advantages included a flexible lifestyle and work patterns that enabled him to attend to personal matters, such as doctor's appointments or car servicing, et cetera, because of his close proximity to local facilities. I have no doubt that while the West Gosford RTA telecentre is the first of its kind sponsored by the State Government, it will not be the last. In the next few years I believe that telecentres will be popping up all over the State in major regional centres. The



success of this telecentre will be closely monitored because it represents a potential model for managing commuter traffic during the 2000 Olympics.

### LAND TAX

**Mr DEBNAM** (Vaucluse) [5.42 p.m.]: I want to address land tax, which is not only of concern to my electorate and the electorate of the honourable member for Bligh, but also to many other electorates throughout New South Wales, including the electorate of Mr Speaker. Yesterday the Government responded to the upper House land tax inquiry. As was expected, it was a pathetic response. The Treasurer said a few brief words in the other place, then produced a written response which had clearly been produced by Treasury. As expected, there was no response to any significant request from the land tax inquiry, although there was an acknowledgment of serious administration problems and a suggestion that the Government might do something to correct them.

Today the electorate is responding. It is extremely concerned not only about the direction the Carr Government is taking in the current crisis but also about the contempt that the Government has shown for the people who have been hit with outrageously high land tax bills, such as the mums and dads who invest in residential property. As we all know, the shortage of housing in Sydney is at crisis level. Increased government charges and taxes have made it extremely difficult to provide accommodation for low income earners. The land tax changes over the past couple of years have added to that crisis. The electorate is responding with absolute contempt for the Premier and the Australian Labor Party. The most significant recommendation of the upper House inquiry into land tax is recommendation 4, which stated that the land tax threshold on investment properties should be reviewed with a view to lifting that threshold. The Government has rejected that recommendation.

Recommendation 9 of the land tax inquiry sought an exemption for pensioners. Many pensioners who live in the electorate of the Minister for Local Government will be affected in the next few years. The Opposition understands that an exemption for pensioners would have cost the Government in the order of \$1 million out of the \$35 million collected from the tax on homes. The Carr Government has again refused to help pensioners. Recommendation 14 sought a small business impact statement from the Government. It also sought acknowledgment that the investment land tax is affecting families and small business across New South Wales. It is basically a tax on

tenants and on small business. The inquiry considered that the best way to address this concern was by an objective assessment, by way of an impact statement, of the impact on small business. The Government rejected that recommendation out of hand.

There is no doubt that for the past year and a half the Government has shown its contempt for the community on the land tax issue. In a letter in February 1997 the Treasurer's office informed me that there would not be a land tax on homes. Within a few months the Treasurer introduced a land tax on homes. The Carr Government cannot be believed. As I said in my speech last night on the motion of no confidence, it is an unfit, unsafe and, most important for the electorate, untrustworthy Government. The electorate will make a decision on the Government's future on 27 March next year.

Labor refuses to provide relief to the mums and dads who pay investment land tax. The coalition will announce changes to investment land tax before the State election. The Leader of the Opposition has already advised that that will take place. If re-elected, there is no doubt the Government will extend the tax on homes to a general property tax. The coalition will abolish Carr's tax on homes. The electorate of New South Wales has a clear choice: vote coalition for no tax on homes and relief for mums and dads and small business, or vote Labor for a general property tax on homes and small business.

**Mr E. T. PAGE** (Coogee—Minister for Local Government) [5.47 p.m.]: I must take a glove to that pathetic contribution, that great load of drivel, from the honourable member for Vaucluse. It is incredible how he exposes his stupidity to the House. The Treasurer has the job of justifying budget matters, and I will leave the justification of the tax to him. The honourable member for Vaucluse talked about the terrible effect the imposition of this tax is having on the popularity of the Carr Labor in the community. He must be asleep or too stupid to read the poll results that are published in the newspapers.

Recent polls have been extremely good for the Government. The honourable member for Vaucluse eulogises his leader, the honourable member for Willoughby, who is absolutely pathetic and has the lowest ratings of any Opposition leader. I hope he maintains leadership of the Opposition. If there is a leadership vote, please vote for him. The coalition provides no alternative. The coalition says that it will reduce taxes or abolish the tax on properties of the rich, but it does not say how it will replace that tax. If it does not intend to replace the tax, what

services and how many schools will be closed down? If it does not close schools and services it will not have the funds to justify abolishing the tax. The honourable member for Vacluse also said that his famous leader has indicated that he will withdraw the tax on \$1 million properties.

**Mr Debnam:** It is a tax on homes.

**Mr E. T. PAGE:** A tax on homes? But when the honourable member attended a public meeting in Vacluse, the Leader of the Opposition would not let him announce that withdrawal. When the honourable member stood in front of the people he represents they tore him apart because his leader did not give him the approval to say that the tax would be withdrawn. The Leader of the Opposition sold him the dump; he stood him up. He would not allow the honourable member to defend himself and his constituents tore him apart.

#### **COOKS RIVER COUNTY ROAD RESERVATION**

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury) [5.49 p.m.]: Today is a great day in the history of Cooks River Valley. It gives me great satisfaction to announce that the Government has granted approval for the lifting of the greater majority of the Cooks River County Road Reservation. With the exception of the Government's announcement that a new inner-west hospital would be built in Canterbury, no other decision of the Carr Government is more pleasing to me than the lifting of this road corridor. The Cooks River County Road corridor has existed for 47 years and has always posed a major threat to the entire Cooks River Valley. In fact, throughout the controversial lead-up to the planning of the M5 east extension I maintained that if there was to be an expressway in the inner south-west, continuing the M5 was much more preferable to the Cooks River County Road proposal.

Cooks River is not the most famous river in Australia but it is certainly the most historic. Captain Cook sailed down the river. For too long, until the Clean Waters Act was introduced by the Wran Government in the 1970s, Cooks River was regarded as a stormwater drain. Since that time there have been dramatic improvements in the valley, and particularly in the water quality of the river. If the Cooks River County Road had proceeded, the valley would have been reduced to a stormwater canal adjacent to a road. The approval comes as a welcome relief to 300 private property owners around the river, most of whom could not sell their homes. That was not a problem in the good old days under the Wran and Unsworth governments, when the Roads and Traffic Authority bought up

properties at market value if people wanted to sell.

Premier Greiner stopped that; residents could no longer sell out to the RTA. They were told that they could sell and the RTA would eventually buy their homes at market value if it ever wanted them. Who would want to buy a property on a road reservation? That is all behind us now. The threatening line on a map will be withdrawn today. The withdrawal is a big tick not only for those affected by the road but also for my electorate—the greater part of the road corridor being in the Canterbury electorate—and for the environment. The parkland surrounding the river has been increased and enhanced dramatically during the last 20 years. That will now be preserved for what it was always meant to be: public open space adjacent to a river. The preservation of that open space is extremely valuable to this built-up region of Sydney, which, like most urban areas, is greatly lacking in open space.

The only section of the reservation to remain will be a small portion of road which will be retained for a possible future Campsie bypass. Retention of that section has my support because it encroaches on only a very narrow concrete-lined upstream section of the river. It makes sense to maintain that small section of the corridor to provide for better traffic flows in Campsie suburb in the future. Since 1973, for 25 years, I have called, through both local government and this Parliament, for the lifting of this road reservation. It has taken the Carr Labor Government to do something about it. The Minister for Transport has today written to the mayors of Canterbury and Rockdale advising them of the Government's intention. The Minister has asked the councils to amend their planning instruments accordingly.

The mayors will welcome this decision. It will be particularly welcomed by the mayor of Canterbury, because the Canterbury municipality was largely affected by the threatening road. I congratulate the Minister on abandoning the route, relieving the uncertainty of property owners and providing great relief to residents living in close proximity of the corridor. The Minister for Roads promised me that the reservation would be lifted once the M5 east road was built, and he has honoured that promise. The Government is to be congratulated on this move.

#### **CHILD PROTECTION AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY LEGISLATION**

**Mr D. L. PAGE** (Ballina) [5.54 p.m.]: On 7 April this year I addressed the House on the excellent work being done by the Ballina community

in relation to the development of a crime prevention plan under the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act. The legislation was introduced by the coalition Government in 1994 and was amended by the current Government early last year. It enjoys bipartisan support. No community could have embraced the legislation with more enthusiasm than the Ballina community. Under the enthusiastic leadership of councillor Peter Moore, the Ballina crime management committee has worked extremely hard to put in place a set of seven strategies to assist young people at risk and generally to reduce the level of crime in the Ballina area.

In April I concluded my remarks by congratulating the 12 members of the committee on their wonderful work. I expressed my hope that the Carr Government would allocate the resources necessary to implement the strategies in the crime prevention plan. At that time I believed the Carr Government was genuinely committed to the practical implementation of the legislation and the Ballina crime prevention plan, which, if implemented, will be the first of its kind in the State. Regrettably, I no longer hold that view. The Government's resourcing of the legislation has been abysmal. The first thing that happened in Ballina when the operating area was declared, and young people at risk were to be escorted by the police back home or to a safe place, was that the local police advised that they did not have the resources to transport young people outside the immediate area of Ballina, for example, to travel five minutes to Lennox Head.

I emphasise that that was not because of a lack of commitment to the crime prevention plan or crime prevention on the part of the local police. On the contrary, the police support the plan in its entirety but are not able to take anyone beyond Ballina because of resource deficiencies. Why do the police not have the resources? Clearly, the reason is that the Carr Government is not providing those resources. As a measure of its determination to overcome that significant obstacle the committee, in conjunction with the police and the Department of Community Services, decided to employ street youth workers for seven days per week and to enable those workers to be approved persons under the Act following necessary screening and training processes. Street beat volunteers will also be approached to become approved persons after appropriate screening and training.

Whilst the Attorney General's Department has promised \$65,000—I acknowledge the assistance provided by Chris Shipway of the department in supporting the committee—additional resources

amounting to some \$70,000 a year are needed to train proclaimed persons to look after the young people at risk, to do follow-up work and to ensure that appropriately trained child protection specialists are available to handle cases. However, the Ballina office of the Department of Community Services cannot find the extra \$70,000. Frankly, the office does not have the resources to handle the existing workload, let alone find an extra \$70,000 for implementation of the crime prevention plan.

So far the Government has given no indication that the extra funding needed by the Department of Community Services will be forthcoming. Accordingly, despite the fact that Ballina Shire Council has been probably the most enthusiastic and hardworking council in New South Wales in trying to establish a comprehensive and workable crime prevention plan, the council has been frustrated at every turn by obstacles and bureaucratic delay. In addition, there is a funding commitment problem in both policing and the Department of Community Services to enable implementation of the plan.

The sad story is that 18 months after the Premier beat his chest about the legislation and its impact on reducing crime in country areas, not a single crime prevention plan has been put in place and crime continues out of control in country areas. Every time the Ballina committee has finalised the crime prevention plan for what it thought would be the last time the Government has imposed some other request and found something else for the committee to do. Finally, when the plan is in a form that is acceptable form, it appears that funds are not available to implement it.

Apparently the latest concern amongst some of the bureaucrats in Sydney is that the Aboriginal community may not support the plan. The Aboriginal community has been involved in the formulation of the Ballina plan from the beginning. The relationship between Aboriginal leaders, their community workers and the committee is close, and each supports the other. So, after 18 months of deliberations and amendments, it is high time the committee's efforts should show some results. The Carr Government must show a far greater commitment to the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act than it has to date.

Is the Premier full of empty rhetoric or does he want the legislation to work? Given his performance to date, and with nothing concrete in place, one would have to conclude, regrettably, that his words are mainly empty rhetoric. I hope I am wrong about the Government and that it sees its way clear to provide the funds, because no community

has worked harder than Ballina to try to put a crime prevention plan in place. I assure the community of Ballina that if the coalition is elected to office it will actively support the legislation with energy and with funding.

#### **GREEN VALLEY YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHOIR**

**Mr LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.58 p.m.]: On 27 June I attended a concert by the Green Valley young people's choir. Also at that concert was the Deputy Mayor of Liverpool, Wendy Waller, and Councillor Geoff Neville. The Green Valley young people's choir is a very important positive feature of Green Valley activity. For many years it has been a very important part of the lives of many young people. The success of the choir over that period of time is a good indication of the positive achievements that can be attained by young people if they have community support.

The 27 June concert was, in fact, a farewell concert for the choir, which was about to embark on a tour of Canada and Disneyland in the United States. There were more than 20 choir members on the tour and they included the superman, Corey Barnett. Other particularly significant people involved were the choirmaster, Rex Harris; the president, Russell Woodcock; tour organiser, Warren Barnett, and the choreographer, Emma Harris. A special mention should also be made of the secretary, Narelle Barnett.

A considerable amount of work and effort went into making this tour possible. I particularly remember a choir breakfast that was held on 21 February 1998 at the Two Door Coffee Lounge, Liverpool, which was attended by a number of people, including myself. The amount of funds that has been raised is a clear indication of the community support for the choir. The fundraising was even more important than would normally be

the case because, unfortunately, a large part of their equipment was stolen. Thankfully, Liverpool Council came to the rescue in that regard with \$15,000, largely organised through Councillor Waller. Councillor Waller, in particular, and the council in general are very supportive of the choir.

The choir has a very proud history over some 30 years. Its significance is now such that it is one of the most significant young people's choirs in the country. It was first established in 1968 under the direction of Mr Rex Harris. At that time only six children were involved. There are presently 25 active singers in the choir. Many hundreds of young people have passed through the ranks of the choir over the 30 years of its history. It has had many significant achievements and had many significant performances, supporting performers such as Mariah Carey, Michael Jackson and Peter Allen. The choir has also performed a number of musicals, such as *Godspell*, *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dream Coat*, and *The Witness*. Touring has also been a significant activity of the choir, which has toured extensively within Australia. There have been four previous overseas working visits by the choir. It toured New Zealand in 1985, Israel in 1986, America in 1982, and went on a four-week tour of Britain, America and Canada in 1992.

At times many in Liverpool will be critical of young people in the Liverpool-Green Valley area. The effort of this choir is a good example of the very good things that are achieved by the young people in the Liverpool and Green Valley areas. I note in particular the contribution of four sisters—Trina, Faye, Maureen and Helen Fiso—who call themselves the group Mahogany. They have been winning singing competitions all over Sydney and raising money to go on the trip with the choir. I am very happy to draw such a good news story to the attention of the House.

**House adjourned at 6.00 p.m.**

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