

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 4 May 2000

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Urgent Motion: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the resumption of the adjourned debate on the motion for urgent consideration on STD call zones and to allow the member for Murray-Darling to speak for 10 minutes.

SUBSCRIBER TRUNK DIALLING CALL ZONES

Urgent Motion

Debate resumed from 3 May.

Mr BLACK (Murray-Darling) [10.02 a.m.]: I thank the Leader of the House for giving me the opportunity to address the House on this urgent motion. I represent the seat of Murray-Darling, which covers just on 45 per cent of New South Wales. The electorate has great advantages but it also has some peculiarities. Murray-Darling is the only seat in New South Wales that has three area zones. We have 08 in the west, 03 all the way up and down the Murray River in the south, and 02 in the east and the north. There is a body of evidence to suggest that the fact that these three zones exist is a major impediment to business. Irrespective of what people might say about the reducing costs of phone calls, the fact is that phone calls between the area zones of 02 and 03, 03 and 08, and 08 and 02 are far dearer than local calls in the eastern portion of the State. In addition to the impediments caused to businesses in the Murray-Darling by the three area codes, in the south of Murray-Darling, right along the 800 river-mile stretch of the Murray, the analog service that we have enjoyed for some period is being switched off and replaced by an inferior code division multiple access [CDMA] service.

I have to report to the House that following the debacle of the western division conference at Menindee of the Shires Association of New South Wales on 8, 9 and 10 March—the debacle being the switching off of the service that was established in Menindee for the purpose of the conference—Country Labor held a meeting with Telstra. At that meeting Country Labor was able to demonstrate, on a map provided by Telstra, vast areas of the southern portion of New South Wales that formerly enjoyed a mobile phone service with analog, but which have now lost that service due to the switching off of analog and the failure to replace it with an adequate and equivalent CDMA service. I acknowledge Telstra's efforts, however, in the sense that following that meeting, Telstra indicated that it will provide a CDMA service in the communities of Bourke, Nyngan and Cobar before the end of June. Regrettably, I also inform the House that Telstra has indicated that so far as western New South Wales is concerned—despite any pledges that the Deputy Prime Minister has made and despite any pledges that the National Party made at the time of the sale of the first tranche of Telstra shares that money would be spent in the bush—the rollout highway program will not be extended to western New South Wales, for the reason that the traffic densities of western New South Wales highways are not high enough.

I also report to the House that originally it was announced that 10,000 workers in Telstra would be sacked, principally in regional and rural Australia. That figure has now been increased to 16,000. What a dreadful indictment of the Federal National Party, which, under the leadership of a member from New South Wales, has been pontificating on the virtues of competition policy. Its leader agreed to the initial reduction in the first Howard budget of \$150 million for regional development—a leader who has done nothing whatsoever to enforce the proposition that \$150 million from the first sale of Telstra shares would be spent in regional and rural New South Wales to improve Telstra and other carrier services. It is a matter of great regret that apart from people in New South Wales the only people supporting a better service for the bush happen to be the

Queensland National Party, who have come on board with the Federal Labor Party and Country Labor. What do other people say about the situation in western New South Wales and other areas of regional and rural Australia? I should like to refer to a statement from the National Farmers Federation [NFF], which reads in part:

But NFF farm business management committee chairman Geoff Crick said although the cost of timed calls in extended zones would drop from 25 cents for five minutes to 20 cents, the system was still unfair.

"Residents of the Extended Zones will welcome the reduction in their timed pastoral calls ... but the inequity in costs between some rural customers and all urban residents will remain," he said.

And rightly so. What is happening under the leadership of the Federal National Party is the entrenchment of differences between regional and rural Australia and urban Australia. Let us go further and look to see what the conservative Western Australia Government had to say in a report of the Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Legislation Committee which was published in March last year:

A fixed rebate to such customers [outside standard call zones] was a welcome short-term measure but quite inadequate long term response ... Untimed local call access should be provided to all customers in the current extended charging zones, in the same manner that local calls are provided to customers in standard zones ... The need is highlighted by the fact that customers in extended zones do not have the same alternatives to the telephone as are available to standard zone customers. For example, extended zone customers cannot use as a substitute for the telephone call a five minute walk or drive to the called party, be it a shop, school, doctor, post office or neighbour.

What an incredible alliance between a conservative government, such as Western Australia unfortunately has, and an esteemed body such as the National Farmers Federation, in supporting what Country Labor and Federal Labor has to say about this matter and, indeed, in supporting what Country Labor's Coalition colleagues in Sydney, or coastal Labor, have to say about the matter. Why is it that in this day and age we still have these rather peculiar call zones? Any amount can be spent on the citizens of Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide but when it comes to the \$150 million pledged by the National Party to improve call zones in regional and rural areas nothing was spent, except in Tasmania. A deal was made with the Independent senator from Tasmania during the former Federal Parliament.

We must pursue the proposition that call zones be cancelled, in toto. It is a nonsense to play around with margins, to attempt to adjust margins for various call zones, in an endeavour to have a better system. Whichever way call zones are readjusted, or redistributed, electorates such as Murray-Darling will continue to have an 03, 02 or 08 prefix unless all call zones are abolished. In this day of equity, of improved communications and of reduced costs for communications, services should be equally delivered to the people of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. I again welcome the support of the National Farmers Federation and tell the National Party members of this House to get on with it, and get their Federal counterparts to support this quite reasonable proposition.

Mr CRITTENDEN (Wyong—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.12 a.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members who have contributed to the debate and I wish to respond to a number of matters raised by them. The honourable member for Lachlan did not come to grips with this issue at all. Yesterday in this Chamber he said:

Companies in the country are coping quite okay with the cost of communications ...

His words confirm that he does not have a grip on reality, because he was concerned about transport. Certainly transport is an issue, but he is living in the past. His contribution is symptomatic of the wider malaise affecting the National Party. He mentioned jewellers from his electorate who work across Australia and the company in Tenterfield that manufactures purses. That is all very well; he is looking at what exists at present. The Labor Party and Country Labor are intent on building up business in the bush and providing employment opportunities for the people in the bush and other regions of the State. The honourable member for Lachlan said that he is satisfied with what he has; is it any wonder that with that approach the National Party is grovelling around a 4 per cent support level!

If we juxtapose the contribution of the honourable member for Burrinjuck against that of the honourable member for Lachlan, we can see that it is obvious that the honourable member for Burrinjuck has a much better grip on this matter. She canvassed a range of issues in her contribution including the current Besley inquiry and STD call zones within her electorate. The contribution of the honourable member for Gosford was also rather bizarre. When this House debated the goods and services tax on mobile home parks he was nowhere to be found, but I suppose it can be said that at least he came into the Chamber for this debate. I am pleased to note that in the first half of his contribution he mentioned that the Central Coast Economic Development Board was pursuing this matter, and that is certainly the case.

The honourable member for Murray-Darling alluded to the fact that the current Federal Government ripped out funding for the regional development corporations in its first budget. The State Government established, and continues to fund, the Central Coast Economic Development Board as a means of supporting and enhancing business opportunities in that area. I have spoken to a couple of recent appointees to that august body, and they are well aware of the need to address call zones. They have a business background and know that the Central Coast is missing out on business because of the cost of telephony in that area.

The member for the Federal electorate of Robertson, within which the State electorate of Gosford is encompassed, has failed to adequately represent his constituents. He is a member of the Howard Federal Government but has done nothing to support the people of the Central Coast by ensuring that this ridiculous call zone notion is removed. Under the previous Labor Government advances were made with STD community call zones. Obviously at that time the envelope was pushed, and what is now required of the member for Robertson is to push it that much further. The matter must be progressed. It is sad that the honourable member for Gosford cannot get the Federal member for Robertson, whom he installed in the preselection process, to do his job. I urge honourable members to forward individual submissions to the STD call zones inquiry before the end of May.

Motion agreed to.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Electronic Transactions Bill
Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Sentencing Guidelines) Bill
Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION AND PRINCIPLES OF MULTICULTURALISM BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 3 May.

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [10.18 a.m.]: I support the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill. The Ethnic Affairs Commission, which has existed for 24 years, has pioneered the provision of language and other services for migrant people in New South Wales. It has been active in promoting the benefits of multiculturalism and community harmony while fighting against racism and intolerance. Its continued existence and success is a great tribute to the wisdom of former Premier Neville Wran and to the collective wisdom of the two major parties that formed governments since his time in continuing and encouraging the commission in its task. I state a personal interest in this matter because 30 years ago I married a young Dutch girl. In the early 1980s my wife was a part-time commissioner of the Ethnic Affairs Commission [EAC], and I know at close hand people with a non English-speaking background and of their settlements and life in Australia. I am also a member of the Dutch-Australia Concordia Society and the Migrant Resource Centre of the Hunter region.

Having stated my personal interest, I will now examine the term "ethnic", which increasingly is regarded as divisive, setting one section of the community apart from the mainstream. People who have migrated to Australia and their Australian-born children do not wish any more to be labelled ethnic. In April last year, Premier Bob Carr announced that the Ethnic Affairs Commission would be reconstituted as the Community Relations Commission. As part of the process of change a program of consultation was undertaken to permit public input into the setting up of the new commission. I welcome the bill, which I believe is part of a sensitive political response to the racism and intolerance that was being preached by the One Nation party, by its leader and her miserable State acolytes.

At first, there was some resistance to dropping the word "Ethnic" from the name of the commission because of the concerns of many people over a possible loss of continuity in the direction of the commission and in the services provided by the State Government to assist migrant communities as well as a diminution of their lifestyle and their identity in Australia. However the Commonwealth Government and most State governments have dropped the word "Ethnic" from the name of agencies that have responsibility for cultural diversity issues. The setting up of a new Community Relations Commission will once more place New South Wales to the forefront of policy development of a multicultural society.

The new commission will be responsive to the needs of migrant communities. Commissioners and commission staff will maintain ongoing contact with community organisations and government agencies. The new Community Relations Commission will be able to build on the achievements of the Ethnic Affairs Commission and add some vigour to the promotion of cultural diversity as an asset for New South Wales. I congratulate the Ethnic Affairs Commission on its outstanding work over the past 23 years. It has built an acceptance of cultural diversity in the community and of development of the principles of multiculturalism in assisting immigrant communities to achieve equality of access through the provision of language services and cultural development grants. There have been only two chair persons of the Ethnic Affairs Commission throughout its existence. Dr Paolo Totaro was the first, and the current chair is Stepan Kerkyasharian. I offer my commendations to both gentlemen for the leadership they have shown in their management, promotion and encouragement of the commission and its ongoing development. They have done a great job. The State of New South Wales has been well served by them.

The Hunter region has been represented continuously on the Ethnic Affairs Commission by a part-time commissioner. Dr Con Karanges served from 1976 to 1981; Trudy Mills-Evers served from 1981 to 1985; Violetta Walsh served from 1985 to 1991; Ching Marchich served from 1991 to 1993; Lorraine Norton served from 1993 to 1996; and the current part-time commissioner from the Hunter is Mr Duilio Rufo. All have made a strong contribution to the commission and have assisted in various ways in the development of the multicultural society that exists in the Hunter region. The diversity of their backgrounds is evident when it is considered that Greece, Holland, Lithuania, the Philippines, China and Italy are their countries of origin. Their backgrounds reflect a large range of multicultural groups and people from non English-speaking backgrounds who live happily in the Hunter region. It is a new day in the multiculturalism debate. It is worthwhile reiterating the principles of multiculturalism that are enshrined in this legislation. In Part 1, Preliminary, clause 3, the four principles of multiculturalism are outlined. Principle 1 states:

All individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life.

Principle 2 states:

All individuals and public institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.

Principle 3 states:

All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales.

Principle 4 states:

All public institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.

The bill refers to citizenship in subclause (2) of clause 3, which is headed "Principles of multiculturalism." The definition of citizenship is interesting because the bill states that citizenship is not limited to formal Australian citizenship, but refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a multicultural society in which there is a recognition of the importance of shared values within a democratic framework governed by the rule of law, and an overarching and unifying commitment to Australia, its interests and its future. Subclause (3) of clause 3 states:

The principles of multiculturalism are the policy of the State.

Subclause (4) states that, accordingly, each public authority must observe the principles of multiculturalism in conducting its affairs. If people consider that some elements of a bill of rights exist in the expression of citizenship in these principles, I certainly welcome that approach. As Australia's multicultural society continues to develop and prosper, I believe that approach will be very important.

It is interesting to consider some changes that have occurred recently in relation to citizenship. Some years ago, the Federal Government changed the oath of allegiance to Australia. I welcomed that change. I know most of the people in the Dutch community in the Hunter region. Many of the elderly among them who came to Australia in the 1950s were reluctant to become Australian citizens, and they gave a surprisingly simple reason

for their reluctance. In the first place they were somewhat reluctant to renounce their former allegiance to the Queen of Netherlands. They are very comfortable with the idea of monarchy and with having a queen as head of a nation. For well over 100 years Holland has had only female leaders of the monarchy.

When considering whether they could swear their allegiance to the Queen of England all of them remembered one single act to which they took offence. During a visit to Holland in the late 1960s the present Queen of England broke protocol and walked in front of the Dutch Queen. In spite of being tugged back, she went forward again. It seemed such a simple thing, but the Dutch did not take kindly to the lack of consideration that the breach represented to their queen. That feeling spread throughout the Dutch community with the result that there was a great reluctance on the part of the elderly to choose to swear allegiance to another queen. They were not very keen on Queen Elizabeth of England. Consequently, Australia missed out on citizenship allegiance from many people, and that was a pity. A few have changed their minds since the oath of allegiance now requires swearing loyalty to Australia and its people. I applaud the new oath.

The functions of the new commission are listed in clause 13 and bear some analysis. Multiculturalism will become the official policy of the State. An inclusive and proactive Community Relations Commission will be established that will build on the achievements of the EAC, but will set a clear direction towards inclusiveness in its activities. There is a recognition of cultural diversity as a strength and places a greater emphasis on community participation. The Community Relations Commission will have new powers to work with local communities to resolve local issues. Clause 13 (a) states:

The functions of the Commission are as follows:

- (a) to undertake systematic and wide-ranging consultation with people and groups with respect to its objectives

The commission can be more proactive in identifying and responding to community needs. Clause 13 (h) provides the commission with specific powers to assist in resolving issues associated with cultural diversity. The commission will be able to form task forces to respond quickly to the needs of communities in a given area and to bring in experts to work with the local community. Under the provisions of clause 13 (e) for the first time the commission will have legislative power to facilitate co-operative arrangements between government agencies and business, education and community groups. The commission will be able to act as a catalyst to bring people together and will have a mandate to monitor quality and delivery of services to the community.

Under clause 13 (g) the commission will be given legislative power to monitor government departments and agencies. Clause 13 (h) recognises the importance of language services. That vital role will be required for many decades to come, even if the patterns of migration change. It is well known that elderly multilingual people often revert to their mother tongue. They need continued language services into their old age. Many people of non-English speaking backgrounds are reaching that stage, and many more will require such services for many decades to come. The bill introduces a broader definition of "citizenship" and sets up regional advisory councils, which will give communities a greater say at the local level. The re-establishment of regional advisory councils will be beneficial to the Hunter region where the councils can work to resolve issues at the local level and to improve service delivery to ethnic communities.

Although many people in the Hunter come from a non-English speaking background, the ethnic communities are smaller than those in Sydney. Therefore, the Hunter region must take a different approach to the needs of its ethnic communities. The ethnic communities in Sydney are of a sufficient number to form a critical mass and individual services can be provided to individual communities. The Hunter needs to be more flexible in its approach. The legislation also includes stronger powers to fight racism. The Premier, in his speech, referred to views of various community organisations to the change of title from the Ethnic Affairs Commission to the Community Relations Commission. In a letter to the Premier, a group of Chinese community organisations stated:

We believe that the Bill is beneficial to the Chinese Australian community. We believe that Multiculturalism is already a fact in NSW and to have it enshrined in legislation is beneficial to all Australians.

The Australian Croatian Community Council, the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and the Australian Lebanese communities have also shown support for the change of title. A letter to the Premier from the Islamic Centre, and signed by Imam T. H. Al-Hilali, Mufti of Australia, stated:

The word "Ethnic", or "Ethnic Communities" always imposed upon a large section of the Australian community a variety of negative impressions that threatened Multi-Culturalism.

The letter further stated:

We regard this change as a brave step that adds depth, height and strength to the Multi-Cultural structure that rightly makes Australia proud.

The Australian Arabic Association has supported the bill. The Premier quoted from a letter signed by Pino Migliorino, President of Co.As.It, the Italian Association of Assistance, which also supports the legislation. Whilst he has some reservations about the name change, Mr Migliorino stated:

... what is most important is the need for public icons which reflect the presence and importance of ethnic communities in NSW... our preference would be for the new body to be known as the Multicultural and Community Relations Commission.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [10.33 a.m.]: I support a number of aspects of this bill. I draw the attention of the House to the objects of the bill. Paragraph (b) states:

... to promote the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of New South Wales...

Importantly, the concept of equity has been incorporated in the legislation that no group or individual is entitled to special treatment and that citizenship involves responsibilities as well as rights. As we commence the millennium, it is important that Australia moves forward and that we all move forward as Australians. The focus that has been given to citizenship in Australia is welcome. A panel set up by the Federal Government has released a report on citizenship. I commend that report, which would be available from the offices of Federal members, to all honourable members of the House and to the general public.

To see the success of multiculturalism, one should look to the Roman Empire and its concept of citizenship. The Roman Empire straddled much of Europe and large parts of Asia. A person who became a Roman citizen was entitled to all the rights that a person born in Rome received. It did not matter whether a Roman citizen was from Spain, Britain or Syria, he was entitled to be treated according to the rules of law. For centuries that concept provided great strength to the Roman Empire and to its successor in the east, the Byzantine Empire. When one looks at the government of those empires, one sees that racism was not so much a problem, despite the various nationalities that were encompassed by those empires.

The concept of citizenship entails stability. Australia would not have advanced as a modern nation if people had merely exercised their rights as citizens. We have made progress only because people have been prepared to act above and beyond the call of duty. It is essential that when people come to Australia they ascribe to two concepts: first, the concept of democracy—we live in a democratic society and nothing should be done to undermine our democracy—and, second, an observation of the rules of law. We are all entitled to the protection of law in relation to our person and property. No-one should have unwarranted interference to his or her person or property because of disputes that have occurred in other parts of the world. Those disputes should not be played out in Australia in such a way as to infringe the rights of other people. The concept of equity and citizenship responsibilities are a welcome part of the legislation and a step forward in multiculturalism in our State.

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [10.38 a.m.]: I support the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill. I wish to bring a slightly different perspective to the bill in terms of its relevance and importance to the people of New South Wales. The seat of Tweed, which I represent, would accurately be described as an area of relatively low ethnic diversity. A small percentage of people in the electorate come from a non-English speaking background or migrant origin. The seat of Tweed is not unique in that sense. Other seats would have similar statistics on ethnic communities, which can be derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics prolific publications. Unlike many seats that are represented by honourable members in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, the number of people in my electorate who speak a language other than English or come from migrant backgrounds is relatively low.

This bill is important to the electorate of Tweed and to any electorate with a similar multicultural composition. The bill is important for the community at large and for people from different backgrounds. The bill enshrines an acceptance in our society that newcomers will be welcome and it ensures that minorities have security when they move into our society. My electorate is traditional and conservative. Migrants who speak little English, whatever their background, would find it daunting to move to an area such as the Tweed because it does not have the many support organisations that are found in inner-city and larger urban areas. The migrant may be the spouse of an established person, or perhaps a family of migrants will see opportunities in the Tweed.

However, if they know that multiculturalism is enshrined in legislation and accepted within the community they will have a little more security and a little more affinity with the area because they will know that they will not come up against any prejudices.

As I have said, the Tweed has a small number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. However, the Tweed has a long association with diverse community and cultural groups, particularly on the North Coast. For example, there is a strong association with the Italians, Indians, Filipinos, Dutch and Germans. There are Italian communities along the North Coast, particularly around Lismore. In my role as Federal member for Richmond I had a lot of contact with the Italian community in Lismore. Honourable members may be familiar with an area known as new Italy, which is to the south of Lismore towards the coast on the Pacific Highway, where the Italian community has established its own cultural centre to celebrate the history of the arrival of a group of Italians two centuries ago. New Italy celebrates the contribution of the people who are descendants of that community, including the Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti.

A few weeks ago the honourable member for Lismore acknowledged the great contribution that Dr Floriano Volpato and his family have made to the community over the years. I support his comments. I was shocked when I heard the honourable member announce the death of Dr Floriano Volpato because I was not aware of his death. I worked closely with him when I was the Federal member for Richmond because Lismore was in my electorate. I valued our great friendship, short though it may have been. I found him to be a very fine man.

There is a strong and relatively large Indian community in the Tweed. The Indian community has been accepted by and has contributed to the community for a long time. Two weeks ago the Indian community hosted a visit to Murwillumbah by the Indian hockey team. It played on the new turf pitch as part of its preparation for the coming Olympics—I just hope it is not too well prepared! Nevertheless, the Indian team was welcome in the community. The Indian community did a great job hosting the visit. The Indian community has established a temple at Woolgoolga on the North Coast. Some years ago I attended a ceremony with the local Indian community in the Tweed. The Indian community was keen to build a community temple on its own land. However, that has not come to fruition because of a number of delays, but I am sure the community is still keen to have a temple.

Last week I was privileged to attend a presentation in my electorate by the Australian Racing Industry Training Centre [ARITC]. The campus is located at Tanglewood and Murwillumbah. ARITC trains people for the racing industry, including students from Japan. The students are put through a 12-month training course in riding. There is also a second-year course. I attended the first graduation and presentation night for ARITC. ARITC has been accepted into the community. Some years ago ARITC felt the need to re-establish itself from Brisbane to the North Coast of the Tweed. Some great facilities were established at Tanglewood which are second to none. ARITC deserves praise for the international standard at which it operates. The students also use the facilities at the Murwillumbah racecourse. The second-year students prepare horses for the local races.

I congratulate Debbie Souter, the manager of ARITC, for her fine work. The 65 students who graduated the other night are boarded out in the local community through a program called home stay. In addition to the financial rewards to the local community, there is a great deal of cultural awareness and acceptance of the Japanese culture. There is a great interchange of cultures. I congratulate the Murwillumbah community on taking in the students in such large numbers, giving them a home and looking after them. On the night of the presentation the students received nothing but praise. The families that had boarded the students for 12 months beamed as their students graduated. The fathers, mothers, grandparents and young children of those families had photographs taken with the students on their graduation night. The course had been a great success for the entire year.

I would like to mention a couple of the awards the students received simply to indicate how much the Japanese students embraced the Australian culture. The students were not here to take on surfing, but Tetsu Watanabe, who found the surf at Cabarita irresistible, became infamous as the surfer of the class and won the surfing award. Tetsu had a tendency to turn up a little bit late for classes because the surf at Cabarita was a bit too attractive. Unfortunately, the master of ceremonies did not know that Tetsu's parents had travelled from Japan for his graduation. I do not know how he explained to his parents what the award was about, but let us hope his parents did not speak English too well. If they did Tetsu may have been in a little bit of trouble with his parents when they found out that his award for the night was for surfing and not for riding horses.

The most Aussie student award—obviously, these are the fun awards for the night—went to Hayato Ito, or "Harry" as he is known. He is a real character. He picked up quite a bit of the lingo and quite a bit of the culture of Australia. For example, on one occasion Hayato was at a meeting at Murwillumbah, although he was not required to be there. He knew that the meeting would take another half an hour, so he stood up and told the rest of the class that they could pick him up at the pub on the way home. I congratulate Debbie Souter, the manager, on her good work and the Murwillumbah community on accepting the students into their families. I commend both the Murwillumbah community and the Japanese students for their contributions to the cultural interchange. It was a fantastic night. I am sure that future graduations will be well received.

The manager's award for the dux of the class went to Katsumi Honma, and the trainer's award from Darren Graham, the senior trainer, went to Ken Ogashira. I congratulate all those students on their awards. I mentioned earlier how multiculturalism was important to our society because it leads to an acceptance in our society of, and gives security to, all migrants. This acceptance of diversity in culture and cultural origins is very important. One of the spin-offs of multiculturalism is that our society is able to develop and accept a diversity of ideas and opinions. We can therefore accept that diversity without conflict. Multiculturalism has great benefits, one of which is making our society one of the safest and most free societies in the world.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [10.53 a.m.]: I do not oppose the bill. The first two objects are:

- (a) to recognise that the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and
- (b) to promote the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of New South Wales within a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society in which diversity is regarded as a strength and an asset, individuals share a commitment to Australia, and English is the common language.

I do not think that anyone in this House could possibly oppose such objectives. I certainly could not, because the electorate of Burrinjuck is built on a community spirit that multiculturalism has provided, particularly in the past few decades. The Gold Rush days were fundamental to the establishment of Burrinjuck. The Chinese settled themselves well in areas from Yass right up to Bathurst, which take in quite a lot of my area. The Gold Rush areas of Tuena and all around Bigga and Binda were really established thanks to the Chinese and the heady Gold Rush days of the mid-1800s. On the Easter weekend I attended the Gold Rush Festival and the Easter Parade at Tuena. Every year the people of Tuena revisit their heritage. The Gold Rush Festival is attended by thousands of people, many of whom travel from western Sydney into Tuena, which is just south of Bathurst and north of Goulburn. It is a fantastic part of the world, and I would certainly encourage members of the House to visit Tuena if they ever have the chance. Next Easter could be the prime opportunity. A great day is to be had by all.

The electorate of Burrinjuck also has a strong Greek community in the Goulburn area. The restaurants in the city certainly reflect that. The Vietnamese community is quite strong right throughout the electorate of Burrinjuck, thanks to Australia's policy of allowing refugees who fit certain criteria to stay in Australia. I am pleased that several Vietnamese families have chosen to settle in the electorate of Burrinjuck and make it their home. They have taken great steps to assimilate into the community by learning the language, sending their children to our local public schools and working very hard within our community. A lot of Vietnamese restaurants and a number of small businesses have been created thanks to our Vietnamese community. I would encourage people of all diverse backgrounds to move to the electorate of Burrinjuck, as country people tend to welcome those of different backgrounds with open arms. I hope that people who are settling from different countries feel that they can do so comfortably in Burrinjuck.

I would like to emphasise how hard a lot of these communities have worked to assimilate into our traditional English-speaking background, and I commend them for doing so. English is the common language within the electorate of Burrinjuck. It is the language that the vast majority of people speak at home. I am very pleased that the communities that are settling into our area feel that they can take up the language and work very hard within the community. It is also important to note the pride of the people settling in the electorate of Burrinjuck at their citizenship ceremonies. I have not met a new citizen who is not proud of his new status. It certainly gives me and the mayors of the towns in the electorate of Burrinjuck, particularly Max Hadlow, the Mayor of Goulburn, great joy. I have never seen a man's face beam so profusely as Mayor Hadlow's in the photograph of the last citizenship ceremony in the *Goulburn Post*. He was terrific!

For many years within the electorate of Burrinjuck several marriages have involved people from different ethnic backgrounds. I can safely say that many towns are becoming a melting pot. People are no longer noticeably ethnic. We all seem to fit into the one pot rather nicely. Gone are the terrible days when there was racism or a person was criticised because of the colour of his skin, his accent or his different eating habits. I am

so pleased that those days are finally disappearing. As a previous speaker in the debate mentioned, the days when One Nation was at its strongest, forcing racism down the throats of the people of Australia, were an absolute disgrace. I hope that we never hear those sorts of comments again from anybody in our community, particularly someone aspiring to be a member of Parliament.

As I mentioned earlier, mixed marriages—the melting-pot effect—are a feature of communities within Burrinjuck. But it is not happening just within the electorate of Burrinjuck, it is a global phenomenon. It would not surprise me if, in 10 or 20 years, other countries did away with the attitude that people must be a particular colour, they must speak a particular language with a particular accent and they must eat a particular type of food at home. I hope that we can have community acceptance of all different races of all different ethnicities across the globe within the not too distant future.

I turn now to my own political party, the National Party of Australia. I am proud of the way in which my party welcomes people of different backgrounds not only as members of the political party but also as members of Parliament. Two of the most notable of such members in the current Parliament are our dear friends the Leader of the National Party, George Souris; the honourable member for Lismore, Thomas George and the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, Adrian Piccoli. We welcome them, particularly the honourable member for Murrumbidgee and the honourable member for Lismore not only because they come from different cultural backgrounds but also because of the special attributes they bring with them to Parliament. They bring diversity to our outlooks and lifestyles, not to mention more variety in foods, through the different aspects of their upbringing. Those things add to our own growth and our view of the world, making the world a smaller place, which must be a good thing. In summary, I repeat that I am not opposed to the bill. I commend the electorate of Burrinjuck for the community spirit it has shown in pulling together and not acting in any prejudicial manner regarding multiculturalism. I certainly hope that that attitude will continue in years to come.

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [11.00 a.m.]: This bill was introduced into the Parliament by the Government in September last year. To allow its full consideration by all interested parties and people generally, it has lain on the table of the House for nearly eight months. It would have been a mistake to have pushed it through Parliament at the time it was introduced because the Opposition was then trying to stir up division and create dissension about it in various sections of the community. So the legislation has been on the table: that is, in effect, it was out there in the community, being assessed and weighed up by those who would be affected by it, or potentially affected by it. That process has been going on for the past eight months.

Consultation and inclusion are hallmarks of the Government, and the Community Relations Commission and the Principles of Multiculturalism Bill is a classic example of the usefulness of that consultative approach. The bill introduces many firsts into the multicultural policy in New South Wales. Firstly, multiculturalism will become the official policy of the State. New South Wales will be the first State in Australia to enshrine principles of multiculturalism in law, and multiculturalism will become the official policy of the State. Indeed, the Government has put forward an amendment to the original bill to put that position very clearly. Under the heading of "Principles of Multiculturalism" the Government proposes these words:

Parliament recognises that the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, who, either individually or in community with other members of their respective groups, are free to profess, practice and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage. It does so by supporting and promoting the following principles of multiculturalism:

The bill goes on to enumerate four fundamental principles. For the record, I will quote those principles. Principle 1 is:

All individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life.

Principle 2 is:

All individuals and public institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.

Principle 3 is:

All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales.

Principle 4 is :

All public institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.

There is no disputing the fact that Australia is so much the better for being a true multicultural society, possibly the most diverse on the face of the earth. The electorate of Rockdale is an excellent microcosm of the real Australia of today. Nearly 40 per cent of families in the Rockdale district come from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is a great diversity of cultures, and we are so much the richer for it. It makes our district, our city, our State and Australia much more interesting and stimulating and a far better place to live. The preamble to the legislation recognises this cultural diversity as a great strength and asset for our community. The preamble states:

This Act:

- (a) recognises that the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and
- (b) promotes the equal rights and responsibilities of all the people of New South Wales within a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society in which diversity is regarded as a strength and an asset, individuals share a commitment to Australia, and English is the common language.

In setting up an inclusive and proactive Community Relations Commission, New South Wales is showing the way forward for the rest of Australia. The commission will build on the achievements of the Ethnic Affairs Commission but will set a clear direction towards inclusiveness in its activities and put an end to the marginalisation of ethnic communities. I think that is an important point. As the representative of a multicultural electorate I have often heard criticism of the term "ethnic". Many migrants and their children say they do not want to be referred to as ethnic Australians. The term is often used in a pejorative manner, as an insult. It has become, in fact, increasingly divisive and separates and alienates those of migrant backgrounds and their families from the mainstream. The term "ethnic" had a purpose once, but times change and it is time to move on.

Under the legislation the Community Relations Commission will have new powers to undertake systematic and wide-ranging consultation with people and groups in respect of its objectives. This will enable the commission to be more proactive in identifying and responding to community needs. This new legislation will cause the Community Relations Commission to put greater emphasis on effective participation by all members of the community in the public decision-making process. For the first time, New South Wales will have legislation that will encourage people, as set out in clause 12 (a) of the bill, to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations regardless of their linguistic, religious, racial or ethnic background.

Under clause 13 (h) the commission is given specific powers to assist in resolving issues associated with cultural diversity. This means the commission will be able to form task forces to respond quickly to the needs of communities in a given area and to bring in experts to work with the local community to resolve issues. Clause 13 (e) gives the commission power to facilitate co-operative arrangements involving governmental, business, educational and community groups. This will allow the commission to act as a catalyst, bringing people from the community and government together to address the needs of people of non-English speaking backgrounds. Under clause 3 (2) there is a broadening of the meaning of citizenship in the context of the proposed Act, so that it does not simply mean the strict legal concept of naturalisation. It also embraces the multicultural nature of our modern community. I quote part of clause 3 (2):

The expression *citizenship* is not limited to formal Australian citizenship, but refers to the rights and responsibilities of all people in a cultural society in which there is:

- (b) a recognition of the importance of shared values within a democratic framework governed by the rule of law, and
- (b) an overarching and unifying commitment to Australia, its interests and future.

The principles of multiculturalism are to be construed accordingly.

I am very pleased that the bill also extends the commission's powers so that it is able to refer to the Anti-Discrimination Board matters relating to discrimination and racial vilification. This also is a first. It is the first time such initiatives have been put into law in Australia, and it confirms New South Wales as a leader in multiculturalism, not only in Australia but in the world.

In my opinion there is no worse crime than racism. I utterly abhor racists and racism. That is another reason why I welcome and embrace this legislation. There has been an enormous amount of consultation on this issue in the broad community. The Government's bill has strong support across all sections of society. The Government, in putting this progressive legislation before the Parliament, is maintaining the proud record of

State Labor governments in New South Wales in showing the way forward for the rest of the country. I will refer to a number of letters that have been addressed to the Government, for the most part to the Premier, in relation to this bill. I quote first from a letter addressed to the Premier on 28 January from representatives of various Chinese organisations, which stated:

We wish to advise you of our unanimous support for the Bill for the reasons that the Bill would enshrine the principles of multiculturalism in legislation; expand the functions of the Commission; expand the Commission's consultative structures; and create more cooperative structures between government agencies, business and community ...

A further letter dated 10 March, again from various representatives of the Chinese community, stated:

We stand firm on our decision to support the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill 1999 ... We also stand firm on our proposal for the by-line for a multicultural New South Wales.

That refers to a suggestion which the Government has taken up that the motto of the Community Relations Commission will be "Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural Australia". A further letter dated 17 April, which was received from the Australian Croatian Community Council, stated:

We believe that the proposal to change the name of the Ethnic Affairs Commission to the Community Relations Commission is a timely one and it will bring a great benefit to the community at large. As Australians we all need to pull together and be proud of our multicultural society. Through its activities the Croatian community has always sought to bring benefit and enrichment to the broader society.

The inclusion of the Principles of Multiculturalism is also to be commended as it represents a significant strengthening of the current policy. For the first time we will have a law recognising that while we are proud Australians we are free to preserve our Croatian heritage.

That sentiment, which was expressed by the Croatian Community Council, has been expressed also by many people in my electorate from all sorts of different backgrounds. The New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, in a letter to the Premier dated 13 April said *inter alia*:

I confirm that the wording of the new preamble to the statement of the four Principles of Multiculturalism is agreed to by the Board.

The letter then stated:

I take the opportunity to commend you and the Government for consulting with the ethnic communities in detail about the specific provisions of the Bill in order to arrive at a consensus. The passing of the Bill into law will, I am sure, be seen by the whole community as a milestone achievement.

I have another letter from various representatives of different Lebanese community organisations. My electorate has within it quite a large Lebanese community. The views expressed in this letter have the strong support of those members of the community in my electorate. The letter to the Premier, which is dated 1 May and is signed by five different people, each representing a different organisation, stated:

On behalf of many Lebanese Australian community organisations in New South Wales, we are writing to express our support for the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill 1999.

We applaud the intent of the Government's proposed Bill in seeking to broaden and strengthen the participation of people from all backgrounds in the life and work of this state, whilst promoting a strong sense of inclusiveness. We along with the Government, believe strongly in the benefits a culturally diverse community can bring to our state.

We thank your Government for the opportunity that it has offered for community consideration and discussion of this Bill. In our community's discussions regarding the proposed legislation, there has been overwhelming support for the intent of this legislation.

Finally, I will quote from a letter dated 11 August 1999 to the Premier, which is signed by Sheik Al-Hilali, the Mufti for Australia and New Zealand. The letter stated:

I have examined the booklet proposed by yourselves titled: "The Way Forward: A Consultation Document leading to a Community Relations Commission - June 1999."

This document gave me the sensation of a dawning of a new era over the state of New South Wales. The suggestions and recommendations that were contained in this booklet have given Multi-Culturalism in Australia a new robe that confirms the sincerity of this policy and gives it a more fitting identity. It has also added a new dimension and sealed the cracks and plugged the gaps that were emerging in the previous policy.

The word "Ethnic", or "Ethnic Communities" always imposed upon a large section of the Australian community a variety of negative impressions that threatened Multi-Culturalism.

Towards the end of the letter is the following statement:

We regard this change as a brave step that adds depth, height and strength to the Multi-Cultural structure that rightly makes Australia proud.

Obviously, I strongly support, embrace and advocate the passage of this bill.

Mr IEMMA (Hurstville - Minister for Public Works and Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [11.16 a.m.], in reply: I thank all honourable members who contributed to debate on this bill. I particularly thank Government members who spoke in the debate and who represent electorates with large migrant communities, as well as those in the National Party and Liberal Party who expressed support for the bill. I welcome their bipartisan support. Some Opposition members said that they supported the broad principles of the bill. I will refer to some of the comments made by some honourable members and refer also to the theme running through their expressions of support. However, some honourable members had qualifications.

There would be no prizes for guessing what the major qualifications will when the bill reaches the upper House. Amendments were foreshadowed but, interestingly, were not made available for debate and vote in this House. The Opposition will move amendments to this legislation only in the upper House. No doubt an upper House amendment will be moved to change the name of the proposed commission. If that is the path that the Opposition wishes to go down in the upper House it is contrary to the spirit of some of the things that have been said in this Chamber. Opposition members would then be throwing their hats into the ring, along with a small minority of people and organisations who want to sink the legislation.

They will not seek to alter the content of the bill, the functions and powers of the new commission, the statement of principles in the bill, or the strong preamble and philosophy behind the bill. They will play around with the legislation and the proposed name of the new commission in an attempt to sink the legislation. That debate and battle will occur in the upper House. It is disappointing that it did not occur in this Chamber. I refer to some of the things that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said in his contribution to debate on the bill. Without going over the ground covered by the Premier in his contribution, I will go through the consultation process that was undertaken. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition claimed that we had gone through a Clayton's consultation process. For the benefit of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I will detail and place on the record the sequence of events.

The proposals were announced in April, shortly after the ministry was sworn in. The proposals were put forward as the way the Government thought we should go. From there the Government clearly signalled that we would be going through an extensive process of consultation and that these were proposals. From the April announcement we flagged that a document would be prepared and entitled *The Way Forward*. It was called a consultation document and it would form the basis of consultation with migrant communities across New South Wales. That document was produced in late May. There were two print runs. More than 4,000 copies were distributed to ethnic community organisations and individuals and to a number of mailing lists and databases held by the Ethnic Affairs Commission. After that we had a number of consultation meetings. It is worthwhile reading out the places where the consultation meetings took place.

The consultation meetings took place throughout late May, June, July and through to August. They took place in Ashfield, Fairfield, Bathurst, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Newcastle, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour, Nowra and the Shoalhaven, Punchbowl and Canterbury. They were held in city and non-city areas, Newcastle and Wollongong, and rural and regional areas. I attended all bar a couple of those meetings. Except for two or three dissenting voices at the Wollongong meeting, which was attended by almost 100 people, not one person at the Coffs Harbour, Nowra-Shoalhaven, Dubbo, Bathurst or Orange meetings of ethnic community organisations and individuals raised objections to the proposals. Some of those people had constructive comments to make and some had constructive suggestions to make, as did a number of other organisations during last year and this year, some of which have been picked up, as other honourable members have noted.

In late September or early October the draft bill was made available to Parliament and to the public for debate, feedback and consultation. Since that time there has been feedback and further consultation with ethnic communities about the proposed name, the proposed commission, the change in the Minister's title from Minister for Ethnic Affairs to Minister for Citizenship, and a whole range of issues to do with this bill. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition calls that a Clayton's consultation. It has been almost 12 months from the

flagging of these proposals to debate and an ultimate vote on the legislation. That is anything but a Clayton's consultation process. Throughout the process of consultation suggestions were made about the bill, and the Government has picked up on those suggestions. Suggestions were made by Neville Roach, as other honourable members have revealed, the Chairman of the National Council for Multicultural Australia. He had some suggestions to make. So too did the Jewish Board of Deputies and a long list of Chinese community organisations.

As the Premier indicated in his contribution, those suggestions were picked up and form the basis of the package the Government has now presented to Parliament. Not only has it been an extensive consultation process, contrary to the claim of a Clayton's consultation process, it has been a consultation process in which the Government has modified the proposals that it put on the table in April 1999 and improved the legislative package that is now brought forward. The Government listened to and has now acted on the suggestions. It has been a worthwhile process that we have gone through to finally come up with this package. The Premier also rebutted the other point made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Various honourable members have referred to letters of support, and they were worthwhile contributions.

I want to read for the first time a list of organisations that have given support to the bill. If members of the Liberal Party want to throw their hats into the ring with the Angela Chans and Tom Berams of this world, they are welcome to do so. Those on this side of the House are more than happy to refer to the list of organisations that have expressed very strong support for the legislation. Those organisations include the Jewish Board of Deputies, and I have already referred to Neville Roach. Another is the Committee for the Community Relations Commission [CRC], which comprises the presidents or vice-presidents of the following Chinese organisations: the Australian Chinese Community Association, the Australian Chinese Forum, the Australian Chinese Services Society, the Australian Council of Chinese Organisations, the Chinese Australian Youth League, and the Chinese Australian Union. Those organisations are part of the CRC committee.

Individual organisations which support the legislation include the New South Wales Chinese Hakka Association, the Sydney West Elderly Welfare Association, the Friends of Hong Kong Association, the Western Region Chinese Association, the Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, the Chinese Australian National Network, the Australia China Friendship Society, the Wah Sing Table Tennis Academy, the Australian Nursing Home Foundation, the Hainan Association, the Indonesian Ethnic Chinese Association, the Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association, the Australian Longyan Association, the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Masonic Society, the Chungsan Society of Australia, the Guangzhou Association, the Hubei Association, the Australia Asia Federation of Commerce and Industry, the Chinese Sports Foundation of Australia, the Association for All Nationalities in China, the Australian Chinese Basketball Association, the Sydney Chinese School, the Australian Chinese Descendants and Mutual Association, the Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, the Australian Chinese Academic Association, the Fuqing Association, and the Australian Chinese Cultural Promotions Association. They are only some of the Chinese associations.

The United Croatian Club of New South Wales incorporates the following clubs: the Jadran Hajduh Club, the Punchbowl Croatian Club, the King Tomislav Club, the Dalmacljo Club, the Braca Radic Club, the Bosna Club and the Istra Club. They support the legislation. In the Lebanese community the following organisations have given support: the Lebanese Cultural Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Australian Lebanese Association of New South Wales, the Lebanese Community Council of New South Wales, the Australian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Lebanese Christian Federation, Lebanese Moslem Association, the Islamic Council of New South Wales, the Moslem Women's Association, the Beirut Charitable Association, and the Riverwood Arabic Association. Further support came from the newspapers *An Nahar* and *El Telegraph*; the Mufti of Australia, Tajeddine Al Hilali; the Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council chairman and, to throw in a country organisation, the Queanbeyan Multicultural Centre.

The Government is more than happy to have their support. We are more than happy to stand with those organisations and leave the Opposition with the handful of individuals who were referred to by Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The only other comment I wish to make is in relation to the contribution by the honourable member for Hornsby, which cannot be left without rebuttal. His contribution was limited mainly to attacking the Government over the provision of disability services to people from non-English-speaking backgrounds. He should have checked his facts. For the record, the Government funds numerous multicultural programs and services under the home and community care [HACC] program, which draws its funding from the Commonwealth, the disability services program and the ageing program. These include multicultural services that provide accommodation and support, respite, food services, home help and neighbour aid to young people with disabilities from a non-English speaking background.

In addition, the HACC program funds education and training, and co-ordination of mainstream services, to provide conclusive support to younger people with disabilities. All services funded by the Ageing and Disability Department are required to have in place access strategies to ensure that people from non-English speaking backgrounds can access these services. That is something that the honourable member for Hornsby should note next time he makes a contribution to debate on services and access programs for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

Amendment by Mr Iemma agreed to:

Page 2, clause 3, lines 18-21. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead "Parliament recognises that the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, who, either individually or in community with other members of their respective groups, are free to profess, practise and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage. It does so by supporting and promoting the following principles of multiculturalism:".

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 27 and schedules 1 to 4 agreed to.

Bill reported from Committee with an amendment and report adopted.

GAMBLING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (GAMING MACHINE RESTRICTIONS) BILL

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of the amendments referred to in message of 3 May.

No. 1 Page 8, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AK). Insert after line 10:

- (3) The Licensing Court or Board is required to give its reasons for any decision to dispense with the need for a social impact assessment.

No. 2 Page 8, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AL). Insert after line 33:

- (e) the availability of problem gambling services in the local community,

No. 3 Page 9, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AL), line 4. Insert "including the action proposed to be taken to protect children)" after "community".

No. 4 Page 9, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AL). Insert after line 4:

- (f) any likely change in the demands on public transport, any likely employment consequences for other businesses in the local community and any likely change in the demands on welfare, health and housing services in the local community,

No. 5 Page 9, Schedule 1. Insert after line 17:

88AM Consultation on application and social impact assessment

- (1) After the applicant has furnished the Licensing Court or the Board with a social impact assessment in connection with an application to which this Part applies, the applicant must:
 - (a) place a copy of the application and the social impact assessment on public exhibition at the premises to which the application relates, and

- (b) publish an advertisement about the application in a local newspaper circulating in the area in which those premises are situated, and
 - (c) provide a copy of the application and social impact assessment to the Director of Liquor and Gaming and the local council at or before the time the advertisement is published.
- (2) The advertisement must:
- (a) be in the form approved by the Board, and
 - (b) state that a copy of the application and social impact assessment will be available for public inspection at the premises specified in the advertisement, and
 - (c) invite any written submissions on the matter to be made to the Board within 30 days after the publication of the advertisement.
- (3) The application cannot be determined by the Licensing Court or Board until after the expiration of that 30-day period.

No. 6 Page 9, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AM), line 18.

Insert "and submissions" after "assessment".

No. 7 Page 9, Schedule 1 (Proposed section 88AM), line 21.

Insert "and any written submissions made on the matter within the 30-day period referred to in section 88AM" after "applies".

No. 8 Page 9, Schedule 1. Insert after line 28:

[2] Section 79B

Insert after section 79A:

79B Approved gaming devices not permitted in retail shopping centres

- (1) In this section:
- retail shopping centre* means a retail shopping centre within the meaning of the *Retail Leases Act 1994*, and includes:
- (a) any adjoining building, or
 - (b) anything declared to be a retail shopping centre by the regulations,
- but does not include anything excluded from this definition by the regulations.
- (2) An approved gaming device cannot be authorised under this Act to be kept (or used and operated) in any part of the premises of a registered club:
- (a) that are part of a retail shopping centre or proposed retail shopping centre, or
 - (b) that were part of a retail shopping centre within the previous 12 months.
- (3) If an application is granted under this Act that results in any part of the premises of a registered club being moved or extending to a retail shopping centre or proposed retail shopping centre:
- (a) any entitlement under this Act to keep approved gaming devices in that part of the premises of the club ceases, and
 - (b) the entitlement revives if:
 - (i) that part of the premises of the club is moved to premises that are not within a retail shopping centre or proposed retail shopping centre, or ceases to be part of the premises of the club, or
 - (ii) that part of the premises of the club ceases to be part of a retail shopping centre for at least 12 months.
- (4) Subsection (2) does not apply to any authority given as a result of an application that was finally determined before the commencement of this section (whether or not the premises of the registered club are or become part of a retail shopping centre).
- (5) Subsection (2) does not apply to any authority that does not result in any increase in the total number of approved gaming devices authorised to be kept in the registered club.
- (6) An authority given after the commencement of this section (whether in respect of an application pending at or made after that commencement) has no effect if it contravenes this section.

(7) This section extends to a device kept in a registered club on a trial basis as provided by section 79A or by section 167 of the *Liquor Act 1982* (as applied by Part 10A).

(8) Damages or compensation are not payable by or on behalf of the Crown because of:

- (a) the enactment or operation of this section, or for the consequences of that enactment or operation, or
- (b) a representation or conduct of any kind about any limitation on the keeping of approved gaming devices in retail shopping centres.

In this subsection, *the Crown* means the Crown within the meaning of the *Crown Proceedings Act 1988*, and includes the Board or any officer, employee or agent of the Crown or the Board.

(9) This section has effect despite anything to the contrary in this Act.

No. 9 Page 13, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171C). Insert after line 11:

(3) The Licensing Court or Board is required to give its reasons for any decision to dispense with the need for a social impact assessment.

No. 10 Page 13, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171D). Insert after line 34:

(e) the availability of problem gambling services in the local community,

No. 11 Page 14, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171D), line 4. Insert "(including the action proposed to be taken to protect children)" after "community".

No. 12 Page 14, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171D). Insert after line 4:

(f) any likely change in the demands on public transport, any likely employment consequences for other businesses in the local community and any likely change in the demands on welfare, health and housing services in the local community,

No. 13 Page 14, Schedule 2. Insert after line 14:

171E Consultation on application and social impact assessment

(1) After the applicant has furnished the Licensing Court or the Board with a social impact assessment in connection with an application to which this Part applies, the applicant must:

- (a) place a copy of the application and the social impact assessment on public exhibition at the premises to which the application relates, and
- (b) publish an advertisement about the application in a local newspaper circulating in the area in which those premises are situated, and
- (c) provide a copy of the application and social impact assessment to the Director of Liquor and Gaming and the local council at or before the time the advertisement is published.

(2) The advertisement must:

- (a) be in the form approved by the Board, and
- (b) state that a copy of the application and social impact assessment will be available for public inspection at the premises specified in the advertisement, and
- (c) invite any written submissions on the matter to be made to the Board within 30 days after the publication of the advertisement.

(3) The application cannot be determined by the Licensing Court or Board until after the expiration of that 30-day period.

No. 14 Page 14, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171E), line 15.

Insert "and submissions" after "assessment".

No. 15 Page 14, Schedule 2 (Proposed section 171E), line 18.

Insert "and any written submissions made on the matter within the 30-day period referred to in section 171E" after "applies".

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

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

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

FUNERAL SERVICES INDUSTRY (DAYS OF OPERATION) REPEAL BILL**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 12 April.**

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [11.35 a.m.]: The purpose of this bill is simply to repeal the Funeral Services Industry (Days of Operation) Act 1990. The Act was the considered response of the Greiner Government to concerns that industrial parties in the funeral industry would introduce a general closed day off per month and thereby add to the burden of the bereaved. Therefore, the Act required that the full range of funeral services be available Monday to Friday excluding public holidays.

This bill repeals the Act because it is considered redundant now that relevant awards provide for a rostered day off per month and the industry is sufficiently competitive. The New South Wales Coalition consulted the Australian Funeral Directors Association and Service Corporation International, and was advised that the bill is supported by the New South Wales funeral industry. Also, the Coalition is in favour of removing unnecessary statutes and red tape. For those reasons, the Coalition does not oppose the bill. Our position will be given more detailed treatment by the shadow Minister in the other place. As I said, the Coalition does not oppose the bill.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [11.37 a.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Ballina for indicating the Opposition's support of the bill. As the honourable member said, the major industrial parties and the Funeral Industry Council have expressed the unanimous view that there would be no objection to the Act being repealed. Therefore, the Government proposes that the Funeral Services Industry (Days of Operation) Act 1990 be repealed as part of its commitment to removing unnecessary and outdated regulations placed on business activity. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.**Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.****PROTECTED ESTATES AMENDMENT (INVESTMENT) BILL****Second Reading****Debate resumed from 12 April.**

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [11.38 a.m.]: The purpose of the bill is to provide the Protective Commissioner with the same investment powers as a trustee under the Trustee Act 1925. The Coalition parties do not oppose this bill. However, we have ongoing concern about the administration of the Office of the Protective Commissioner and the Office of the Public Guardian. We welcome the recent decision of the Public Bodies Review Committee to inquire into both of those offices. Considerable public concern has been expressed and complaints have been made about the administration of estates held by the Protective Commissioner. This legislation responds to and is a partial attempt to ameliorate many of those concerns. In that sense the Coalition supports the legislation. However, we look forward to the inquiry as we believe that many other matters need to be addressed by the Protective Commissioner and that the Government is the ultimate body responsible for the Office of the Protective Commissioner.

The Protective Commissioner is entrusted with about \$1.75 billion in assets—\$800 million in cash, and the rest in property—belonging to people deemed at law to be incapable of administering their own affairs. The majority of these funds are invested in safe but underperforming investments in government loans and bank and building society deposits. This is despite the amendments by this Parliament to the Trustee Act in 1997 that replaced a list of authorised investments with a broad investment power allowing trustees to invest in any kind of investment so long as it is determined to be prudent. As a result, the Protective Commission averaged only a 9.6 per cent return in the 1998-99 financial year, compared with a 13.7 per cent average return for other investment companies. Approximately \$35 million in extra income could have been generated had the Protective Commissioner invested the funds at the same level as other benchmark organisations. Of course, that money is not lost to the Office of the Protective Commissioner, which continues to take its percentage; it is lost to the thousands of estates for which the Protective Commissioner is responsible.

In September 1999 the Auditor-General's performance audit recommended increased transparency in decision making and trust account operation, and the establishment of a simple, inexpensive external appeal mechanism to review the organisation's decisions. This followed a number of publicised cases in which staff of the Protective Commissioner misappropriated or embezzled funds. Media attention has also turned to the investment process. In one case, for example, \$3 million was placed in government bonds, despite the fact that the person in care made many requests for the money to be invested in a block of managed apartments. The Coalition acknowledges that this legislation is a partial response to these factors, and for that reason we support it. However, we are concerned about the continued administration of the Office of the Protective Commissioner and expect the parliamentary inquiry to investigate the matter.

Under the proposals the Protective Commissioner may use the "prudent person" principle, established in the 1997 amendments to the Trustee Act, to invest in a number of diversified investments, provided the commissioner acts prudently, observes the duties imposed upon a trustee, and has regard to determining whether or not an investment is appropriate. Section 5A of the Act will allow the commissioner to delegate powers of investment and management to a suitably qualified person when specialist expertise may be required for components of the collective investment fund. Section 28 will provide for the Protective Commissioner to invest in a particular form of investment if so preferred by the protected person. That amendment is much needed and long overdue, and is strongly supported by the Coalition. It arises as a result of the many complaints received, and I am pleased that the Government is acting on those complaints.

Hundreds of letters of complaint have been received by my office, and I am sure by other members' offices, about the fact that until now the Office of the Protective Commissioner has simply ignored requests from protected persons about the form of investment that their funds have been placed in. The provision imposes a form of obligation on the Protective Commissioner. It will obviate tragic cases such as I have referred to, in which the person in care was unable to have his wishes taken into account about how \$3 million would be invested.

The provision that costs be met by clients is retained, but section 55 introduces a new requirement that such costs may not exceed a certain amount. That is a welcome measure to protect estates. The legislation provides that the determining body is not to be the commissioner himself but the Director-General of the Attorney General's Department. This imposes an outside check to ensure that estates are properly administered and that it is not a case of Caesar appealing to Caesar, as happened hitherto. It ensures that an outside body will be able to look after the public interest and call the Protective Commissioner to account. Section 42 empowers the Protective Commissioner to complete any transaction commenced prior to the death of a client.

Last night in this House I raised concerns about the Protective Commissioner's administration of funds in his care on behalf of boarding house residents. I received a very welcome response from the honourable member for Wollongong, the Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister, that he agreed with the thrust of my concerns and would seek an urgent answer from the Minister. I invite the Minister's assurance that the Protective Commissioner will investigate what happens to the funds he pays out on behalf of boarding house tenants over and above their board and lodging fees. The Protective Commissioner pays out to boarding houses 87 per cent of the pension that residents receive. However, the commissioner pays out further amounts for additional services without checking whether those additional services have been provided. I now welcome the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Wollongong, the Parliamentary Secretary, with whom I was able to have an interchange last night on this important matter. The Office of the Protective Commissioner is there to protect people in care. If no investigation is undertaken as to whether these benefits are being received, the Office of the Protective Commissioner is not discharging its proper statutory function.

Accordingly, the Coalition welcomes this legislation. It believes that more work is required to be done in the Office of the Protective Commissioner if he is to discharge his duty to protect the people of this State who require protection. We acknowledge that there are many thousands of such people, and that many of them have small estates that may not give the office a return. But the office is not in place to secure a financial return; its task is to look after the interests of the little people, if I may use that term, the forgotten people, people who are incapable of looking after themselves, especially those who are residents in boarding houses. The Protective Commissioner needs to adopt a proactive role of protection instead of simply acting as some sort of trustee company or superannuation fund. The Protective Commissioner manages the small estates of people in care, and he should protect their interests. The Coalition does not oppose the legislation but wishes to see further improvements in the Office of the Protective Commissioner.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [11.48 a.m.], in reply: The changes to the Protective Commissioner's investment powers proposed by the bill will enable the Protective Commissioner to diversify the spread of collective investments across a broad range of asset classes and to facilitate the use of investment strategies designed to meet individual client needs. This greater flexibility in the investment of clients' funds should enhance income return and capital growth. The honourable member for Gosford has indicated on behalf of the Opposition that it will not oppose the legislation, and on behalf of the Government I welcome that. It is intended that, prior to the commencement of this legislation, an investment advisory committee be established to advise the Protective Commissioner in relation to investment policy.

The membership of the advisory committee will reflect both financial and investment expertise, as well as experience and understanding of the needs of people with disabilities. It is proposed that the committee will include a representative nominated by the Attorney General, a representative nominated by the Treasurer, and at least two persons who have an understanding of disability issues and financial or investment expertise. During the past two and a half years since benchmarking against the present indices began, the Protective Office's investment performance has clearly bettered all of the indices against which it has been benchmarked. That performance should assure the public of the competence of the Protective Office in funds management.

While the proposed introduction of several unitised funds to provide clients with more diversified investment options will present challenges to the Protective Office, those challenges will be met with the same professionalism which has been displayed in the management of the present Common Fund. I conclude by indicating to the honourable member for Gosford that the Attorney General, in response to the inquiry he made during the private members' statements debate last night, has requested the Protective Commissioner to urgently investigate the claim from the Central Coast Disability Network concerning the payments made to boarding house owners by the Office of the Protective Commissioner. The Attorney General will convey the results of that investigation to the honourable member for Gosford as quickly as possible. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

ALBURY-WODONGA DEVELOPMENT REPEAL BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 12 April.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [11.51 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the bill. At the outset, I make it clear that the Opposition does not oppose the proposed legislation. The bill is the culmination of the activities of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation which was established in 1974 following complex legislative arrangements between the Commonwealth, Victoria and New South Wales. I inform the House that my colleague the honourable member for Albury, Ian Glachan, will speak during this debate as a businessperson as well as the parliamentary representative of the Albury electorate over many years. I have no doubt that he will provide a detailed description of the activities of the corporation and its successors or otherwise.

The Albury-Wodonga Ministerial Council agreed in 1995 to wind up the corporation and to dispose of its land and assets. The council resolved in February 1997 that the best way to progress the winding up was for New South Wales and Victoria each to repeal its own legislation and withdraw so that the Commonwealth could take sole control of administering the winding-up process. Bearing in mind that the majority of the assets have already been disposed of, very little core business remains to be resolved. The legislation will set up a mechanical process that needs to be undertaken. I commend that process and believe that it will proceed satisfactorily.

The agreement represents an interesting development because it was formulated to accelerate regional development. Many arguments could be advanced about whether or not it has worked, but there is no doubt that it has brought enormous national and international prominence to Albury-Wodonga while simultaneously presenting a challenge to other towns and cities in the region, such as Wagga Wagga. At various stages, Wagga Wagga's growth actually outstripped that of Albury-Wodonga. The competition created between those two major centres has probably been healthy of itself.

Although one could argue about whether or not the corporation has been successful, the bottom line is that the exercise has been undertaken and the corporation has been in operation. Those of us who will have responsibilities for regional development in the future should not let the agreement pass into history without taking note of the pluses, the minuses and the economic, cultural and social development that occurred during the Albury-Wodonga program. It should be remembered also that although Albury is in New South Wales and Wodonga is in Victoria, both towns are on the State border. It is now patently obvious that Australia's founding fathers, in creating the federation and determining that Australia would have States, were wise at the time, but their decision has caused problems for modern Australia.

Albury-Wodonga is a classic example of two towns that, from a social, cultural and employment point of view, are actually one town, yet they compete with each other. Recently harness racing experienced some difficulty in Albury. The New South Wales Harness Racing Authority reviewed harness racing across the States. It looks as though Wodonga will become the harness racing centre for Albury-Wodonga because of the different regulations that operate under the TAB program in Victoria. That is just one example of the problems associated with State borders. In conclusion, I must say that Albury-Wodonga is located in one of the most beautiful areas in Australia, the upstream region of the Murray River. I should add that downstream from Albury-Wodonga are some of the best golf courses in Australia. I commend them to the House.

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [11.55 a.m.]: I support the bill and acknowledge, in common with the honourable member for Lachlan, that the program was successful. The bill operates in conjunction with complementary legislation in the Commonwealth and Victorian parliaments. Amendments to the Albury-Wodonga Development Act have been passed in the Commonwealth Parliament and legislation to abolish the Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation is expected to be introduced in the Victorian Parliament in the near future. Because my wife has family in the Albury-Wodonga area—she is a Yackandandah girl from way back—from time to time I visit the area. The growth that has taken place in the area during the short time that I have been visiting is significant and the industries that have developed are not necessarily those that one would expect to find in an inland location. They certainly have made a difference to the social climate of that part of the Murray River district.

The intention of the Albury-Wodonga Area Agreement 1973 was to build up the population of Albury-Wodonga to 300,000 persons by the year 2000. In 1978, the target was revised to approximately half that number and the current population is approximately 96,000 persons. While the original population targets were not reached, there is general consensus that the scheme has had a positive impact on the economic development of the area. That would certainly be true. It is a very pleasant area which is well serviced by public amenities on both sides of the river. The area also has been a generator of significant regional employment throughout the period of the agreement.

Legislation enacted in the New South Wales, Victorian and Commonwealth parliaments implemented the agreement and constituted the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation, the Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation and the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation respectively. The legislation also established the Albury-Wodonga Ministerial Council to oversee and provide direction to those three corporations. Originally that approach gave the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation a wide-ranging commission, including planning, provision of construction services, establishment of business areas, accommodation services and promotional activities. Changing expectations over the years have impacted on the corporation's roles. Its functions reflected changing views on the role of government. All three governments agree that the original approach to the development of Albury-Wodonga is no longer appropriate, and I think that is generally accepted.

The corporation's core function is now to dispose of its assets in an orderly manner. The economic development functions are being carried out by local organisations such as the local councils, Investment Albury-Wodonga, Hume Riverina Business Connect and the Murray Regional Development Board. The passage of this legislation will result in the abolition of the two State corporations, and one corporation constituted under the Commonwealth Act will remain. The States will be able to withdraw from the project as it is wound back. The disposal of all assets and the return of the proceeds to the Commonwealth will be managed by a single streamlined body. This is a sign of progress. The competition between the major regional centres was raised by an earlier speaker, but the benefit to southern New South Wales has been significant. The experiment may not have gone exactly to plan but it certainly provided great assets and a definite future for that region. I support the bill and I wish Albury-Wodonga every success in the future.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [12.01 p.m.]: The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation began with great fanfare and high hopes in 1973 but not without opposition from many people in the area. People were apprehensive and concerned about what would happen with the corporation's sweeping powers, particularly in relation to the acquisition of land. When the corporation was first established it was said that Albury-Wodonga would become a second Canberra. It was also proposed that all land in the development area would be acquired by the corporation and no-one would be able to own freehold land because it would be leased on a long-term basis. Many people who owned land that was to be resumed were concerned about acquisition, but they were all paid at market rates and many of them did quite well.

The local council was concerned that it would lose its planning powers. The area was designated as a growth centre when the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, the then New South Wales Premier, Robert Askin, and the then Victorian Premier, Rupert Hamer, met in Albury-Wodonga on 25 January 1973—significantly, the day before Australia Day. Many people believed that Albury-Wodonga would become a second Canberra. However, many people may not have realised that a site near Albury was investigated by the Founding Fathers of the Commonwealth when they were looking for a site for the Australian Capital Territory. Although the district had much to offer on the day of the inspection a dust storm blew in and that ended the possibility of the three districts becoming the site for the national capital.

The commitment to the growth centre was formalised on 27 October 1973 when the Prime Minister and the two premiers met again in Albury to sign the Development Agreements at the Albury Civic Centre. Another story is that the delay in signing was because the New South Wales Premier refused to leave his hotel until the Commonwealth also agreed to the Bathurst-Orange development growth centre. I do not know whether that is true but the Bathurst-Orange growth centre was designated anyway. The Commonwealth Albury-Wodonga Development Act became effective on 21 December 1973. Complementary legislation was passed in Victoria in that same year and in 1974 in New South Wales. The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation was responsible to an Albury-Wodonga Ministerial Council which was established on 30 May 1974.

There was confusion because there were three Albury-Wodonga corporations—the Commonwealth Albury-Wodonga Corporation, the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation and the Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation. This bill will repeal the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation, Victoria will repeal its Act and that will leave the Commonwealth Albury-Wodonga Corporation in existence. Those three corporations acted as one integrated organisation. The first chairman of the corporation was Mr Gordon Gray. The New South Wales chairman was Mr Les Muir and the Victorian chairman was Mr Mel Read. When Mr Read ceased being chairman of the Victorian corporation he was appointed by the Kennett Government as Chief Commissioner of the rural city of Wodonga council when local government was reorganised in Victoria. After representative local government was restored in Victoria he resided in Albury and at the last city election was elected to Albury City Council as Deputy Mayor. He has had quite a career and an interest in development in the area.

The composition of the corporation was changed to include representatives appointed by the Albury-Wodonga council and a businessman of "national standing" was also added. The high hope of the corporation was to increase the population of the two centres to 300,00 by 2000, but that was not achieved. It was reviewed and the projection was reduced to 150,000—simply cut in half—but that has not been reached yet either. Currently the population of Albury city is 42,500 and Wodonga 35,000. When the corporation was first established Albury had a population of about 28,000 and Wodonga had a population of about 12,000. It is easy to see that most of the growth has occurred in Wodonga, although Albury has grown. Many people on the Albury side of the border believed that the deliberate policy of the corporation was to assist growth in Wodonga and limit growth in Albury but that may or may not have been the case. However, it seems as though that actually happened.

The current chairman of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation is Mr William Hanrahan and the ex officio chief executive officer is Mr Ron Dennis. The Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation chairman has recently been Councillor Alan Fifield—currently Mayor of Culcairn Shire—and the ex officio chief executive officer, Mr Ron Dennis. The Albury-Wodonga (Victoria) Corporation had Mr Charles Stitz as chairman, Mr Graham Crapp, was Mayor of the rural city of Wodonga, and Mr Ron Dennis was again an ex officio member.

The total outlay by the three governments to 30 June 1998 was \$139,320,000. The income to 30 June 1999 was \$327,244,980. The value of assets to 30 June 1999 was \$138,447,000. At present the corporation has 25 full-time staff and eight staff have been retrenched since 1998. The expenditure for the purchase of land to

30 June 1999 was \$71,427,057 and capital works, including community facilities, was \$389,615,657. During the years the corporation, at the direction of the Ministerial Council, has acquired 24,079 hectares in New South Wales and 15,237 hectares in Victoria. By June last year that was reduced to 12,155 hectares, of which 3,758 hectares were in New South Wales and 8,397 hectares were in Victoria. That has been from sales and from the transfer to parkland and other public purposes.

Some time ago the process of winding down the corporation began and its development role is now non-existent, planning powers having been given back to the local councils. The corporation now simply sells the land that it holds on behalf of the Federal Government. Between 1971 and 1996 the population growth in the Albury-Wodonga statistical district was 431,310 people in Albury city and 17,580 people in Wodonga city. Between 1973 and 1997 private investment in the area amounted to \$3,302,300,000—a very significant amount. So, after a beginning with great fanfare, with the high hopes of the many people involved, but with some opposition, we come now to the winding down of the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Development Corporation. In some ways the corporation has disappointed some people. In other ways it has met the expectations of others. It has achieved much. Perhaps the most important change it has brought about is that, when it first began, we talked of Albury and Wodonga, but we now talk about Albury-Wodonga.

A number of valuable institutions have been brought to the area through the work of the corporation and, of course, others. I think about the fact that the area now has two TAFE colleges, one on each side of the border. It also has two universities, one in each State. That might seem something of an overkill, but at least those institutions were established in the area, sometimes as a result of the efforts of the corporation. All I can say now is that an era ends and a new era begins for the people of Albury-Wodonga, especially those on the New South Wales side of the border.

Mr KNOWLES (Macquarie Fields—Minister for Health) [12.11 p.m.]: I speak opportunistically in this debate to say vale to the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. As some honourable members would be aware, I had responsibility for this legislation in the late 1980s. Indeed, I was one of the officers responsible for the beginning of the demise of the corporation in that I was required to sort out the labyrinth of cross-loans between the three jurisdictions—the Commonwealth, Victoria and New South Wales. I have vivid memories of travelling to Albury, on an almost daily basis at one stage, staying at the Thurgoona hotel and enjoying the company of characters such as Gordon Craig and Richard Howell. Those memories will live with me forever.

As the honourable member for Albury said, the establishment of the corporation, its operations and its disappearance over the years from Whitlam to today create great topics for discussion and conversation that have reverberated around the region for the past two decades. Nonetheless, it would be unfair not to recognise the enormous commitment of the many individuals who came its way. I want to place on record my gratitude for the opportunity to have worked with so many great people who, back in the mid-1970s, had enormous vision and commitment to regional development in Australia, cities programs, of course a national approach to population and settlement, and the provision of services and employment to communities out of our major metropolitan areas.

Albury-Wodonga was always an experiment. In fact, discussions with Gough Whitlam that I have had subsequent to working down there tell me that in a perverse way—in many cases, in ways that only Gough Whitlam could understand—he deliberately established the corporation across two State jurisdictions, across the borders of Victoria and New South Wales, and compelled an attempted collaboration and co-operation. Press the fast-forward button to the time I got there in the late 1980s. I was present at a meeting convened by one John Mant, who was attending the signing ceremony referred to by the honourable member for Albury. I was there to revisit some of the work that he had commenced.

The seven local government areas involved were the Albury and Hume shires in New South Wales, and the five Victorian areas of Wodonga principally but also Yackandandah, Tallangatta, Chiltern and Beechworth. We got the six shire engineers together for a discussion about regional collaboration, only to discover that that had been the first time in 20 years that they had ever sat in the same room together to talk about regional imperatives and regional co-operation. I guess that says it all. The grand building on the hill at Thurgoona—a building that was the source of so much consternation for the regional community—is no longer the headquarters of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. But it is fair to say that that building is not the only legacy that remains of the efforts of the many men and women who went its way. This is the end of a chapter that has a proud history. We wish it well.

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [12.14 p.m.]: It was very interesting to listen to the honourable member for Albury and the Minister for Health reflecting on historical perspectives of the Albury-Wodonga area. Their comments were very interesting indeed. In an agreement entered into between the Commonwealth, New South Wales and Victoria in October 1973 it was agreed that a great complex would be developed in the Albury-Wodonga area. The intention was to develop an urban centre with a target population of some 300,000 people by the year 2000. The Albury-Wodonga Development Act 1974 put the agreement into effect and established the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation to acquire and develop land in the New South Wales portion of the Albury-Wodonga area.

The Commonwealth and Victoria also established corporations for the purposes of the agreement. The three corporations have common membership, operate in conjunction with each other and are overseen by a ministerial council comprising Ministers responsible for regional development in the Commonwealth and the two States. The two States and the Commonwealth now agree that this approach to regional development is not appropriate. The use-by date is up. The Albury-Wodonga Ministerial Council resolved at its 1995 and 1997 meetings to wind up the scheme and abolish the corporations. It was agreed that, to maintain an orderly disposal of assets, property would not be sold below Valuer-General's valuation and that market forces would determine the rate of asset sales.

It was further agreed that the States would withdraw from the scheme first, to allow for more streamlined management of the scheme in that critical phase. This bill will abolish the Albury-Wodonga (New South Wales) Corporation and allow New South Wales to withdraw from the scheme. The assets, rights and liabilities of the New South Wales corporation will transfer to the Commonwealth corporation. Similar legislation is soon to be introduced to the Victorian Parliament, and amendments to the Commonwealth legislation have been passed to facilitate those changes. The Commonwealth corporation will become solely responsible for the disposal of assets and eventual wind-up of the scheme.

There will be no revenue accruing to New South Wales as the acquisitions of the New South Wales corporation were funded by the Commonwealth for the purposes of the scheme. The bill also allows for an Albury-Wodonga Area Development Winding-up Agreement to be negotiated between New South Wales, Victoria and the Commonwealth to replace the current agreement. The new agreement will deal with a range of transitional arrangements. That agreement, to be tabled at a later date, will be a document that can be set aside by the Parliament. I commend the Albury-Wodonga Development Repeal Bill to the House.

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.18 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate, particularly the honourable member for Albury, who told the inside story, or the real story. I agree with the comment made by the honourable member for Lachlan that the degree of success of the Act is arguable. However, I believe there is general agreement that the scheme has had a positive impact on economic development in that area. I thank you also, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the benefit of your inside knowledge on Yackandandah. I am told that Mel Gibson had a farm there at one time. I thank also the honourable member for South Coast and the Minister for Health for their contributions to debate on the bill. In effect, what we are saying is that the Albury-Wodonga Development Repeal Bill represents the agreement of the three involved governments that the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation has run its course after nearly 30 years of operation. This bill will repeal the Act and abolish the corporation. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Private Members' Statements: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Woods agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the taking of private members' statements up to 1.00 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEORGES RIVER ELECTORATE LIONS CLUBS

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [12.22 p.m.]: Today I speak about the contribution of local Lions clubs in the Georges River electorate. Specifically, I refer to a number of events that I have attended in recent weeks organised by both Oatley and Lugarno Lions clubs. I refer, first, to the Lugarno Lions Club and to a function I attended at Evatt Park—Jazz in the Park. The event, which was co-ordinated by Mr Bryce Turner, was a magnificent opportunity on a beautiful afternoon for the communities of the greater Lugarno area to attend a picnic at Webbs Dam, Evatt Park—a facility provided by Hurstville City Council at which the Lugarno Lions Club organises a number of social functions each year. This picnic celebration, which enabled families to come together and listen to jazz music provided by local groups, was a fundraiser for the Lugarno Lions Club.

I congratulate Bryce Turner and the Lugarno Lions Club subcommittee on the way in which they encouraged other community groups to come together. It gave me great pleasure to talk to a number of families as they sat on the edge of Webbs Dam and listened to the music. I congratulate Lions Club members on their support for that event. Lugarno Lions Club is well known not only in the Georges River area but throughout New South Wales for the magnificent work that it does in raising funds for various charitable organisations. This function was successful financially for the Lugarno Lions Club. I also had an opportunity to attend a Lugarno Lions Club meeting. I congratulate President Reg Walker not only on the way in which he conducted the meeting but also on the way in which he welcomed me to that meeting. I certainly felt very welcome. It is great to be able to participate with groups that are so encouraging and so friendly. I certainly enjoyed my time there.

I also had an opportunity to join members of the Oatley Lions Club at a function held recently to raise funds for a Hart walker—equipment designed by Professor Hart from England. The Oatley Lions Club was raising funds to purchase this equipment to assist the disabled in the local community. The Right Hon. Ian Sinclair, who was is known to all in this House, was the guest speaker on the evening. He flew to Oatley and addressed members of the Oatley Lions Club and their guests. My wife, Frances, and I enjoyed that function. In recent times I have been pleased to attend a number of Oatley Lion Club functions. Members of that club are always very welcoming and they take the time to make people feel that the club is the body that is being assisted when it is really providing the greatest assistance to the community through the work that it does.

This event, which was attended by approximately 80 to 90 people and which was a financial success for the Oatley Lions Club, will assist in its fundraising for this Hart walker. Community organisations such as Oatley and Lugarno Lions clubs provide not only a great financial contribution to our society but also a great contribution to other social aspects. They provide to our community a great centre for bringing people together and for engendering a sense of community, a particularly important factor in the Georges River electorate.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS ELECTORATE RAIL SERVICES

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [12.27 p.m.]: I speak today about the crisis facing rail services in the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly areas. I will give the House a report of the maintenance problems I observed when I took a fact-finding trip on 10 March on one of the local train services to see for myself many of the matters that have been raised with me by local rail commuters. When I got on the train I asked the driver what he thought of the system. He said, in one word, "Stuffed." That is a damning disgrace for a rail Minister who says that our system is "pretty darn good". I travelled from Bowral to Mittagong. The first thing I discovered was that signal wires had been cut by a rock fall near the Mittagong end of the tunnel at Bowral. Wooden sleepers were still in place in the lead-up to Mittagong and there was mud on the track at Mittagong station.

At Mittagong, I found a wavy top track—the track comprised a combination of wood and steel. There were holes in the railroad and the track was tied to the sleepers—a tie-in that is described as a band-aid solution. At Aylmerton concrete sleepers had been erected up and down the track, which is good, but the upper concrete sleepers were falling apart before the track reached the tunnel. I received reports of stone throwing by children that caused dangers on the tracks. The railroad then reverted to a section of wooden sleepers and there was evidence of rail rubbish not having been taken away. A rock fall north of Yerrinbool had not been properly cleaned up. A water main at Bargo was apparently causing a blocked culvert at the overpass south of Bargo station. There were holes and drops under the second overpass in a 60-kilometre area.

There was rubbish near the track at Tahmoor. Apparently rail staff tried to get the area fenced to prevent vandals putting rubbish on the tracks. Some of the rubbish that has not been taken away is maintenance debris as a result of work done by maintenance crews. There were also problems with oil on the track and water coming into the tunnel entrance north of Tahmoor tunnel. Drainage is a big problem along the entire Southern Highlands line. A patch of 300 metres of wooden sleepers had been left on the track between stretches of concrete sleepers. One has to ask why that 300-metre patch has not been completed.

South of Picton station, where a derailment occurred some months ago, there is a 40 kilometre speed limit. The clips that were broken off the concrete sleepers were glued back rather than the complete assembly being replaced. They are starting to pop out and some are missing. Effectively, the track is not attached to the sleepers and the State Rail Authority is managing that with a 40 kilometre speed limit. I am sorry to say that the Minister for Transport, despite having been advised by me that I would be making this private member's statement today, has not come to the Chamber to listen to it. I am very disappointed, because my constituents in the Southern Highlands are desperate to have these concerns heard and acted upon. Every nine kilometres there is a speed restriction. That means there are 27 speed restrictions in 256 kilometres of track. Before going through some of the litany of complaints from people in my area, I point to something that was said by Simon Foster of the Rail Access Corporation [RAC] in relation to the Southern Highlands. He said:

I am satisfied with the maintenance of the line.

So we are not getting any serious response to this problem from the RAC or from the Minister. I have received complaints from Mrs Ann Jenkins of Yerrinbool, who talks about the lateness of many services. She says:

We have a totally inadequate Rail Service, and so much of the time, the trains have broken down.

I have received a complaint from Mrs Josie Smith of Bowral, who talked about overcrowding of the carriage on the 3.47 p.m. train. I have a complaint from Mr Colin Coxhead regarding an incident on Wednesday 12 April which basically related to the lateness of the train. He said:

I would like you to use your good authority to determine why this chain of events were permitted to occur and what recompense is available to my wife and I. \$15.60 paid for a pathetic, untidy, incompetent and unreliable service ... May the Lord protect us all during the Olympics?

Mr Hal Woodward of Douglas Park is still waiting for a response from the Minister. He has asked for the engineering report relating to the Douglas Park derailment that occurred some months ago, and he has received no reply. Mrs Jan McCauley of Bowral has complained about a passenger who was ranting and raving and causing all sorts of disturbances to those on the train. The driver spoke to the man, went back to his cabin and the journey continued with the offender still on board and the passengers shaken. Another incident relating to lateness was reported by Mr Ian Brown. He said:

I understand that passengers are a nuisance to the running of a good rail network but unfortunately we can't be dismissed.

There is another complaint from Mrs Jennifer Noakes—and the list goes on. The system is in crisis. The Minister is ignoring it, and it is about time he did something. The system is not "pretty darned good", as he suggests; it is falling apart. [*Time expired.*]

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.32 p.m.]: I note the remarks of the honourable member for Southern Highlands and I will refer them to the Minister for Transport for comment.

PELICAN FORESHORE RESERVE EROSION

Mr ORKOPOULOS (Swansea) [12.32 p.m.]: I speak about a unique foreshore reserve in the electorate of Swansea which is in danger of disappearing because of significant erosion. I am, of course, referring to the beautiful Pelican Foreshore Reserve on the shores of Lake Macquarie. While this popular reserve is crowded on weekends and on school and public holidays, the community is literally witnessing the rapid deterioration of the foreshore through significant erosion. The community wants action. The Lake Macquarie estuary management study, which was commissioned by the Lake Macquarie City Council and the Department of Land and Water Conservation, identified the management issues of the Pelican Flat foreshore as:

Foreshore erosion is resulting in the loss of public parkland and amenity of the foreshore. Erosion at the end of the Aeropelican runway has resulted in the loss of the Crown Reserve and is severely restricting access to the point that public access past the end of the runway is not possible at high tide.

The study reported that the level of community concern was high and recommended the carrying out of emergency protection works to halt further erosion and prevent ongoing wave erosion. I report to the House that emergency works were duly carried out at the portion of foreshore reserve in front of the Aeropelican runway. Clearly, more substantial work needs to be done to further stabilise the foreshore and beautify the area. The point is that the area in greatest need of work and where the most visible effects of erosion are evident is on the foreshore reserve, which is beloved by locals and tourists alike. There one will find adequate parking, electric barbecues, picnic tables, a playground, and a beautiful protected beach that is wonderful for young kids and their families. That is what people risk losing in this environmental disaster.

Tree roots are exposed and locals say yet another row of trees is in danger of falling into the lake because of erosion. The groynes that were placed at strategic points along the foreshore to mitigate wave erosion are either rusted and dangerously exposed to bathers and recreational boats or have entirely collapsed underwater and are dangerously invisible to people using the waterway. I have twice organised inspections, first with the Department of Land and Water Conservation and second with the Lake Macquarie and catchment co-ordinator. Neither the Department of Land and Water Conservation nor the Lake Macquarie City Council appears to want to accept responsibility for fixing the problem. While the Premier's task force identified that erosion along the Pelican Foreshore Reserve had a high priority, the body established to oversee the spending of both State and local government moneys to remediate the lake under the estuary management program has not allocated money towards the project.

The lake and catchment co-ordinator has cogently argued that replacement of the groynes is a maintenance problem for the appropriate authorities to administer. Lake Macquarie City Council has referred my submissions to the Department of Land and Water Conservation and has asked me to contact the department as the appropriate authority. Accordingly, I have made submissions to the Minister for Land and Water Conservation for moneys to replace the groynes and such works that would prevent further erosion of public lands. The Pelican Foreshore Reserve is a great public asset. It is a beautiful family reserve that deserves our attention. I thank local community leaders Cliff Noonan, Bill Holt and Bill Gray for bringing the concerns of the community to my attention and for working co-operatively with me and all of the organisations charged with responsibility for the foreshore reserve as well as the waters beyond. It is time for concerted action, and I appeal to the Minister to consider the matters I have raised.

Mr BRAD ARTHUR AND THE STATE RAIL AUTHORITY

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [12.36 p.m.]: On 21 March Mr Brad Arthur, a constituent of mine from Mt Colah, discovered that while his car had been parked at Waitara railway station a tree had collapsed onto it and a number of other cars. Mr Arthur's car, a white Nissan Pintara, sustained the major damage. Shortly after the incident occurred I happened to be driving past on my way around the electorate and I noticed a number of State Rail Authority employees and others inspecting the damage, cutting up the tree and trying as best they could to protect the car using a tarpaulin. It was a scene of some sadness as I realised a number of cars had been damaged. It was not long—and I predicted this would happen—before Mr Arthur, the owner of the vehicle, was on the phone to me requesting my assistance in dealing with the State Rail Authority to get some recompense for what had happened. His wife had parked the car there during the day. This is the only family car; suddenly they had no vehicle at all.

Initially the State Rail authority was fairly positive. It promised it would try to assist as best it could. Within hours of receiving the phone call from Mr Arthur, I faxed a letter to the Minister for Transport, asking him to make sure that the State Rail Authority immediately paid Mr Arthur the cost of repairing his car and assisted him with the cost of a rental vehicle while repairs were being carried out. As I mentioned, this car was the only family car. Mr Arthur has a number of children and he has to get to work, so transport is important to the family. I also asked the Minister to try to make sure the matter was dealt with expeditiously. As I pointed out in my letter, the State Rail Authority was not dealing with another government authority or a company; this was a family from our community with no experience in dealing with these kinds of matters and with no resources to do so.

If there were any questions about who was ultimately responsible for the damage caused by a tree falling on State Rail Authority land, the authority should sort that out. Meanwhile, my constituent should have his car repaired and be back on the road within a short time. Big Brother government should not do what Big Brother governments do in other countries around the world, that is, tough it out to the exclusion of individuals in our community. I am sorry to say that 1½ months later Mr Arthur has been advised that the State Rail Authority accepts no liability. It has provided no assistance whatsoever. Mr Arthur has even told me that in one

discussion he was allegedly told by one of the legal representatives of the State Rail Authority that, because he had been calling the office and making a fuss, they would not be as kind to him as they might otherwise have been.

As I said in my letter to the Minister, if that is the case it is appalling. It is inexcusable. The Ombudsman should investigate the matter. Indeed, we reserve our right to refer the matter to the Ombudsman at a later date. A letter dated 12 April from Wyatt Gallagher Bassett, legal advisors to the State Rail Authority, confirms that the tree was on land owned by the State Rail Authority. It states that Wyatt Gallagher Bassett has made inquiries about the incident involving the tree dropping its branches, and that those inquiries did not lead it to find any evidence of negligence on the part of the State Rail Authority. The letter stated:

We must confirm our denial of liability on behalf of the State Rail Authority.

The legal advisors then invite my constituent to refer the matter to his solicitor. My constituent has engaged a solicitor; so far it has cost him \$140, which he cannot afford. However, he should not have to argue about liability with the State Rail Authority. The facts are that some time ago, earlier this year, work was carried out around the roots of the tree; a trench was dug and the roots of the tree were cut. An arborist has said that in his opinion there is no doubt that the work that was carried out contributed to the tree dropping its limbs in March of this year. As I stated in my letter to the Minister back in March, if there are questions about passing that liability to someone else, the State Rail Authority should sort that out separately. However, in the first place it should make good what has happened to my constituent. The car has now been repaired. Together with the cost of hiring a vehicle in the interim, my constituent's costs are about \$4,000. For the sake of about \$4,000, I implore the Minister to help my constituent in the short term.

ENERGY SMART HOMES POLICY

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.41 p.m.]: On Monday in Newcastle at Western Suburbs Leagues Club I had the pleasure of launching the energy smart homes policy for Newcastle City Council, Maitland City Council and Port Stephens Council. That means that across that area of the Hunter energy efficiency standards are now in place for all new residential developments. That will contribute tremendously to cutting back the production of harmful greenhouse gases. Through the commitment of those Hunter councils, more than 4,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases will be eliminated annually. That is equivalent to removing some 950 cars from New South Wales roads for good. This is an excellent outcome of the Government's policies, which have been implemented through the Sustainable Energy Development Authority [SEDA].

SEDA was established in 1997 when the Government launched the New South Wales Tackles Greenhouse statement. Since that time SEDA has been instrumental in delivering sustainable energy solutions to every sector of the New South Wales community by working co-operatively with local government. It is a pleasure to learn that more than 50 councils across New South Wales have made a commitment to implementing the energy smart homes policy. It is an interesting policy. It does not cost an arm and a leg for either the councils or individual development applicants to take into account ways to make homes energy smart by using passive solar technology and better insulation methods and by having architects orient houses in terms of solar insulation and the use of building materials. That will cut down the cost of energy use and produce much more comfortable homes in a way that will, over time, make great savings in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.

It is a positive program. I congratulate the three councils on implementing the policy. In particular, I congratulate Newcastle City Council on its leadership since the Pathways to Sustainability conference. That was a world conference held by the council in 1997. As a result of that conference, the council has become a leader on the issue of sustainable energy and sustainable development. Indeed, the council, through its AMEF program, is educating councils throughout Australia about energy smart solutions. I compliment Port Stephens council on its work with the bedminster system, which turns waste from the area into a usable product for improving land. Councils in the Newcastle and Hunter Valley area are utilising energy smart policies and waste management techniques to improve the environment.

I turn to the Building Better Cities program and its impact on Newcastle. One aim of the program is to produce housing design manuals that incorporate the environmental standards to which I referred. Once again that is providing leadership to the development community in Newcastle to utilise sustainable energy approaches in housing design. So the programs are very positive. Once again I congratulate the three participating councils. I have spoken to the Mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council, Councillor John Kilpatrick, and he told me that the council will also be signing up to the program. I hope that all councils across the Hunter

will link to the energy smart homes policy through SEDA. The Hunter Valley is a major producer of greenhouse gases through the coal-fired power stations in the area. The energy smart homes policy will enable councils to obtain credits in all new construction and major renovations that occur across the community. Once again I congratulate the participating councils.

Mrs ROBYN HILL MEDICAL TREATMENT

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [12.46 p.m.]: Once again I highlight the inefficiencies of the health and medical services in the Coffs Harbour electorate, particularly those at Coffs Harbour Base Hospital. I draw the attention of honourable members to the case of Mrs Robyn Hill of Urunga, who, on 2 March 2000, was diagnosed with a tumour in her left kidney. In a letter to me she said, "I had to wait until 28th March for a cystoscopy which showed the tumour is malignant." When Mrs Hill approached the hospital to have her malignant tumour of the kidney removed she was told that she would have to wait until 23 May, although she has been classified as an emergency surgery case. The Government, which has allocated insufficient funds to the Mid North Coast Area Health Service, saw fit to close the theatres at Coffs Harbour hospital for two weeks over Easter and to close the theatres for two days a week until the end of June.

I wrote to the Minister urgently on 20 April, and I corresponded with the patient access co-ordinator at Coffs Harbour hospital to explain the gravity of Mrs Hill's case. All we have been able to do is get the operation brought forward to 9 May. That is an absolute disgrace. The Government and the health service have abrogated their responsibility to provide urgent medical care to a patient in the Coffs Harbour Base Hospital catchment area. This case does not involve a non-malignant skin cancer on an arm or a leg, or a benign tumour; it involves a malignant tumour that has been diagnosed by a doctor. Surgery to remove the tumour has been classified as urgent. The best we can do is bring Mrs Hill's operation forward by only two weeks, although it was noted on 2 March that she has a tumour. The malignant tumour was diagnosed on 2 March, and Mrs Hill had to wait until 28 March to have that confirmed. She was then told that she must wait eight weeks to have the malignant tumour removed.

What sort of pressure and stress would that inflict on a person who has a malignant tumour? We are told that stress is the worst thing for a person who has a tumour or cancer of any sort. The fact that Mrs Hill was told that she had to wait eight weeks for surgery must have added to her stress and, I dare say, contributed to her condition. I wrote to the Minister about the matter on 20 April. However, at this stage I have not received a response. As I have said, the only response I have received was in a phone conversation with Ann Cowling, the patient access co-ordinator, who arranged for Mrs Hill to be reclassified for emergency surgery.

However, even given her reclassification for emergency surgery, Mrs Hill still must wait until 9 May to have her operation. I could rant and rave, because I am angry about this. I dare say that other people are in situations similar to Mrs Hill. I simply say to members opposite, including the Premier and the Minister for Health, that this is not good enough. The health service has failed Mrs Hill. The nonsense about the North Coast receiving part of the \$2.3 billion in additional health funding is nothing more than a smokescreen. Indeed, the AMA has already branded it as such. I cannot accept that this sort of service is being offered to constituents of the Coffs Harbour electorate.

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.51 p.m.]: I will ensure that the remarks of the honourable member for Coffs Harbour regarding Mrs Hill are conveyed to the Minister for Health for comment.

BATEAU BAY BOWLING CLUB

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [12.51 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the situation of Bateau Bay Bowling Club following the introduction of legislation placing a freeze on gaming machines throughout New South Wales. In raising the issue I do not seek to criticise the legislation or the Government's attempt to put a brake on gambling in our society. The action of the Government, and the Premier in particular, in introducing the measure are to be applauded. There is widespread community concern about the negative impacts of gambling in our society. I believe Bateau Bay Bowling Club falls within the hardship provisions of the legislation. For the past four years the board of directors of the club has been working on a proposal to upgrade the club's facilities. The history of the club goes back to 1961, when the Bateau Bay Bowling and Recreation Club was formed. In December 1969 a small permanent clubhouse was opened. The clubhouse has been extended a number of times as the club's needs have increased and funds have become available.

However, the building has outgrown its usefulness and does not meet the current needs of its members. The growth in the membership of the club has been substantial. In May 1996 the club had 1,017 members. In March 2000 its membership had increased to 3,193. That represents more than a twofold increase over that four-year period. It is important to consider the situation of the club in the context of the area it services. The club is located in what could be described as a retirement area which contains about six residential retirement villages. The fact that the club has more than 3,000 members clearly indicates that it is a relevant part of the social fabric of that community. The women's bowling club is the second largest in New South Wales. The club possibly has the largest overall membership of any bowling club in New South Wales, if not Australia. I emphasise that the club plays a specific role in the context of the local community.

The club's board of directors made a commitment to a \$6.9 million extension to the club. The project started some four years ago and the board has already raised funds totalling \$1.6 million. In 1999 the club negotiated a contract with Premier Club Constructions Pty Ltd and has already expended about \$500,000 to get the project to the development application stage. The contract was to be signed the week after the announcement of the freeze was made by the Premier. The club's plan is based on the provision of a certain number of poker machines, as people who understand the industry would be aware. According to information provided by the ANZ Bank, which is financing the loan, the current freeze means that the plan is no longer viable. I raise the matter in the context of hardship. I have written to the Minister about the matter and look forward to hearing his comments about the status of the club with regard to the poker machine freeze.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [12.56 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for The Entrance for bringing this matter to my attention. In implementing the freeze the Government acknowledges that a substantial proportion of clubs and club premises provide important community facilities. In view of that, the Government believes that the freeze should not imperil a club's future viability. The bill recently passed through the upper House and was returned to this House with amendments, which I accepted. It provides that a club may be excepted from the freeze arrangements if it demonstrates to the Licensing Court or to the Liquor Administration Board that its financial liability will be seriously threatened if it is prevented, by reason of the freeze, from acquiring any additional gaming machines. As I said in my second reading speech, individual members of Parliament are now coming forth on behalf of their constituents because the matter is of concern to them.

I have made arrangements with the Chairman of the Liquor Administration Board for those matters to be put aside until such time as the bill is assented to. It is hoped that will be within the next two weeks. In the light of what has happened, and with the approval of both Houses of Parliament, an affidavit-type document will be made available to each of the clubs in this situation. As I indicated in my second reading speech, there will not be a repetition of what happened some time ago when taxes were increased and people jumped up and down and claimed they were in peril and that they would not be able to sustain their growth or service their debt. The claims made in the affidavits will be dealt with by the Liquor Administration Board and the Licensing Court as independent authorities. I believe that is the only way the matter can be dealt with.

Some people in the hotel industry will slip through the net. I have already received representations from members with regard to at least two hotels that were either under construction or in relation to which development applications have been approved. Because the legislation could put those hotels in financial peril, I have advised the members that there will be a review of their situation. However, that review will depend on affidavit evidence that they are involved in tender negotiations. The honourable member for The Entrance should advise the board of directors of Bateau Bay Bowling Club to start preparing the material for the affidavit that will be made available to them as soon as possible.

AUBURN COTTAGE CLOSURE

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.58 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the closure of Auburn Cottage at Goulburn. Until recently, Auburn Cottage in Goulburn provided an important service to the city of Goulburn and the surrounding area. Auburn Cottage was what is known as a living-skills house. It provided a venue at which mentally disabled people who live in the region could socialise with one another. In addition, the people who used the centre were taught basic living skills. I am sure that honourable members would agree that the ability to socialise with others and learn basic living skills is vital for mentally disabled people. Auburn Cottage had a steady client base of between 30 and 50 people. After funding cuts to Auburn Cottage by the Southern Area Health Service, those people are now without that service. For some time, services to Auburn Cottage have been gradually disappearing.

Clients of Auburn Cottage used to be transported from their homes to the facility and returned to their homes, and they also used to receive regular visits from nurses. The clients of Auburn Cottage also went on monthly bus trips out of Goulburn. They used to have regular lunches and regular social dinners. The cottage itself and all of those services enhanced the lives of those 30 to 50 mentally disabled people from Goulburn. They looked forward to their regular lunches, social dinners and monthly bus trips that took them out of town. As I mentioned, those services have gradually disappeared during recent months. Auburn Cottage has now closed altogether.

Reverend Bob Gray is a Minister at the Anglican Church in Goulburn. Before the abrupt closure of Auburn Cottage, Reverend Gray was a regular visitor to that vital facility. While he was there, he provided assistance to its staff and clients. During his regular visits, Reverend Gray was able to witness at first hand the big difference that Auburn Cottage made to the lives of those 30 to 50 people from Goulburn who used it. Reverend Gray also witnessed Auburn Cottage's effect on the families of those 30 to 50 mentally disabled people who visited the cottage. Many of Auburn Cottage's clients have ageing parents who work extremely hard to look after their children. Any break that they receive is welcome.

Until recently Auburn Cottage provided those parents with a small break—perhaps for a few hours or even a day. Reverend Gray still has contact with some of the former clients who used the services provided by Auburn Cottage. Many of them have expressed their dismay at the closure and have made comments such as "Auburn Cottage was the reason I got up in the morning." Unfortunately, as well as the expressions of dismay, Reverend Gray has also witnessed the physical and emotional decline of other former clients of Auburn Cottage caused by no longer having regular contact with other clients.

The New South Wales Government claims that it has increased health funding, yet up to 50 mentally disabled residents of Goulburn and the surrounding district find that they no longer have a living-skills house to attend where they can learn basic living skills. The New South Wales Government claims that it has increased health funding, yet up to 50 mentally disabled residents of Goulburn and the surrounding district find that they no longer enjoy regular social events such as lunches and dinners. I call on the New South Wales Government to ensure that the Southern Area Health Service reinstates—nothing less would be acceptable—the services provided by Auburn Cottage in Goulburn.

GOING FOR GOLD CONCERT

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [1.03 p.m.]: During my first term as a State member of Parliament I have attended many interesting and entertaining events which mostly feature local people who have great talent, ability and organisational skills. One of the most recent events was a spectacular night at Mollymook Golf Club. The Entertainers and their Going for Gold concert would be among the most enjoyable performance events I have ever attended, especially as all who were involved were local people and were supported by local organisations. I accepted an invitation for my wife, Kerry, and me to attend the opening night. The tickets were obtained by Gail Thompson of Mollymook. To her credit, she joined hundreds of eager enthusiasts and lined up for the tickets a few days prior to the event. The tickets went on sale on a Sunday morning at 9.30 and people had lined up 48 hours beforehand to purchase them. Such is the demand for tickets that there is a limit on the number of tickets that can be purchased by an individual. Gail's shift in the line began at approximately 3.30 on Sunday morning. I thank her very much for making the effort to obtain tickets for my wife and me. Obtaining tickets for that show reminded me of when I obtained tickets for a U2 concert when I was a teenager.

On the evening of the concert, my wife and I arrived and joined Gail. We were shown to our seats where a posy for Kerry and a tiny motif of a koala in a pouch had been placed on the table by Margaret Sheedy as a welcoming gesture. I mention this because that was a delightful commencement of a wonderful evening of dynamic entertainment which featured more than 70 talented performers and musicians who were aged between 16 and 70. The theme, Going for Gold—which was set against a background of Australia's green and gold—represented the spirit of taking on a challenge to succeed. It was an abstraction of the means that led to Sydney hosting the Olympic Games. But it was the performances that really astounded me—the dancing, the singing, the costumes and the selection of music which appealed to all ages and tastes. It was truly a striking event and one could not help but be enthralled by the brilliance of it. For more than three hours the audience was entertained by such diverse classics as *Eagle Rock*, *42nd Street* medley, *Heartbreak Hotel*, *A Hard Day's Night*, a Supremes medley, *Down Under* and many more great pieces of music.

Seven shows were presented over two weeks and more than \$20,000 was raised for charities, including the Bendalong and Conjola Bush Fire Brigades, Ulladulla Family Support Service, State Emergency Services,

the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Davenport Cottage, the domestic violence service and Alkira Lodge. On the night I attended, \$3300 was raised for Davenport Cottage which provides services for people with intellectual disabilities. Many people deserve a special mention. Nevertheless, I must praise the musical director, Patti Yates, who led the team from beginning to end. The five-piece band was extremely professional and tight. It sounded more like a 10-piece outfit than only five talented musicians.

The Entertainers have been presenting their concerts since 1998. They began as a small cabaret group which performed at Hackets Restaurant in Milton. Patti Yates tells me that the concert has become so popular that there are more people wanting to participate than there are places for them. She said that there is an incredible amount of talent in the area but it is simply not possible to give everyone a part in the concert. That shows how much this type of event means to the people of the Milton and Ulladulla communities. The training and rehearsals begin in September. By opening night in March, performers are exacting and skilled, which is certainly evident from the moment the curtain opens until the very end of the concert. The seven months of rehearsals and preparation really show through. This year some students from the Ulladulla High School participated as performers and as stage crew. I congratulate those young people. Patti also tells me that many of the cast and crew take a break from their jobs so that they can dedicate their time to the event.

I am extremely privileged to have been given this opportunity to see such professionalism and extraordinary style exhibited by the people of my electorate and to once again be reminded that South Coast communities are up there with the best of people when it comes to the performing arts. The Entertainers provide a fine example and they deserve great praise and recognition, not only from within their own communities but also from among their more famous peers who feature on billboards in cities and on the entertainment pages of major publications. I express some disappointment that The Entertainers do not receive the media credit that they deserve. But while tickets are in such demand, perhaps they do not need support. The Entertainers could take their show on the road and enjoy great success. Of course, the performers would have to give up their day jobs to do so, which would be impossible. But the quality is just so good.

Private members' statements noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Mills) left the chair at 1.08 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the British Consul-General to New South Wales, Mr Peter Beckingham, and welcome him to the Parliament. I also welcome students from Orange Christian School.

PETITIONS

Drug Reform

Petitions praying that the establishment of heroin shooting galleries be opposed and that consideration be given to the introduction of legislation for drug reform, received from **Mr Nagle** and **Ms Saliba**.

Transmission Facilities

Petition praying that a policy be established to prevent the siting of transmission structures within close proximity of certain buildings, received from **Mr Brogden**.

McDonald's Moore Park Restaurant

Petition praying for opposition to the construction of a McDonald's restaurant on Moore Park, received from **Ms Moore**.

Surry Hills Policing

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

Bondi Pavilion Olympic Stadium Proposal

Petition praying for opposition to the construction of a stadium at Bondi Pavilion for the volleyball event during the 2000 Olympic Games, received from **Ms Moore**.

North Coast TAFE Funding

Petition opposing funding cuts to TAFE, and praying for the reinstatement of funding to TAFE services in the North Coast region of New South Wales, received from **Mr Fraser**.

TAFE Funding

Petition praying for opposition to any funding cuts to TAFE, received from **Ms Moore**.

Disorderly Houses Act

Petition praying that the Disorderly Houses Act be amended to confer on councils and shires the right to ban the establishment of brothels in towns of less than 20,000 people, received from **Ms Hodgkinson**.

Cardiff Railway Station Disabled Access

Petitions expressing concern at the difficulties experienced by disabled and elderly patrons in accessing Cardiff railway station platform, and praying that Cardiff railway station be included on the Easy Access program and a lift or ramp installed, received from **Mr Hunter** and **Mr Mills**.

Windsor Road Upgrading

Petitions praying that Windsor Road be upgraded and widened within the next two financial years, received from **Mr Merton**, **Mr Richardson** and **Mr Rozzoli**.

Oxford Street Pedestrian Crossing

Petition praying that an additional signalised pedestrian crossing be installed on Oxford Street, Paddington, received from **Ms Moore**.

Moore Park Passive Recreation

Petition praying that Moore Park be used for passive recreation after construction of the Eastern Distributor and that car parking not be permitted in Moore Park, received from **Ms Moore**.

Moore Park Light Rail

Petition praying that consideration be given to the construction of a light rail transport system for Moore Park, received from **Ms Moore**.

M5 East Air Quality Investigations

Petition praying that the construction of exhaust stacks for the M5 East be suspended pending air quality investigations into stack emissions, received from **Ms Moore**.

Old-growth Forests Protection

Petition praying that consideration be given to the permanent protection of old-growth forests and all other areas of high conservation value, and to the implementation of tree planting strategies, received from **Ms Moore**.

Northside Storage Tunnel Gas Emissions

Petition praying for the installation of an acceptable system to address health risks associated with the discharge of sewage gases from the northside storage tunnel, received from **Mr Collins**.

Animal Experimentation

Petition praying that the practice of supplying stray animals to universities and research institutions for experimentation be opposed, received from **Ms Moore**.

Animal Vivisection

Petition praying that the House will totally and unconditionally abolish animal vivisection on scientific, medical and ethical grounds, and that a new system be introduced whereby veterinary students are apprenticed to practising veterinary surgeons, received from **Ms Moore**.

Willoughby Paddocks Rezoning

Petition praying that the Legislative Assembly will advocate for the retention of all vacant land in the area historically known as the Willoughby Paddocks and its development as public parkland for the enjoyment of the community, received from **Mr Collins**.

Oyster Creek Management

Petition praying for the implementation of a plan covering all aspects of the management of Oyster Creek and the lifting of restrictions on properties currently affected by section 149 certificates, received from **Mr Collier**.

Septic Tank Inspection Fees

Petition praying that septic tank owners be exempted from inspection and registration fees, received from **Ms Hodgkinson**.

White City Site Rezoning Proposal

Petition praying that any rezoning of the White City site be opposed, received from **Ms Moore**.

VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES 1999-2000

Mr Aquilina, by leave and on behalf of the Treasurer, tabled the variations of the payments estimates and appropriations for 1999-2000 in relation to the Premier's Department and the Department of Information Technology and Management, in terms of section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Routine of Business**

[During general business]

Mr SPEAKER: Due to the extended time available tomorrow for general notices, and in view of the large number of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices), rather than call over all 132 notices, with the consent of the House, I will continue the callover until 20 members indicate that they wish to proceed. This, of course, will not prevent members from moving a motion to reorder any of the general notices listed, in the usual way, at the conclusion of the callover.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Reordering of General Business**

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [2.33 p.m.]: I move:

That General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 127 have precedence on Friday 5 May.

I am sure that honourable members will be happy to debate and agree to my motion, the effect of which is that Hornsby should have a fair go.

[Interruption]

From the reaction of Government members it is clear that they want to debate this motion. I thank the Leader of the House for just indicating to me that my motion will take precedence.

Motion agreed to.

REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Nagle, as Chairman, tabled the report entitled "Report on the Adoption of Codes of Practice under the Construction Safety Amendment (Amenities and Training) Regulation 1998".

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

STAR CITY CASINO PATRON TAN GIA QUACH

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. Is Tan Gia Quach, an unemployed storeman from James Street, Leichhardt, who placed bets worth over \$28.6 million at the Sydney casino in just six months in 1996 the same Tan Gia Quach who was yesterday charged in connection with a multimillion dollar interstate heroin trafficking ring?

Mr FACE: Yesterday I wrote to the honourable member for Port Macquarie and indicated what my attitude would be in relation to ongoing investigations in this regard. I call upon the honourable member for Port Macquarie and the Leader of the Opposition to provide any material they may have to the Casino Surveillance Division of the Casino Control Authority, my ministerial office or my department. I checked with each of these departments before I came into this Chamber—

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

Mr FACE: —but to date neither member has supplied any information.

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

Mr FACE: The honourable member should go back to Mr Wells and obtain better information than he has obtained in the past.

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

Mr FACE: I am concerned about my safety and the safety of those who are close to me because of what has been occurring between the honourable member and Mr Wells.

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

Mr FACE: If I am or members of my family are affected by this I will hold the honourable member responsible.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Mr ANDERSON: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. What is the Government doing to protect the community from influenza viruses?

Mr KNOWLES: I am sure that the honourable member for Londonderry, coming as he does from Irish ancestry, would be aware that last winter the Northern Hemisphere experienced a severe outbreak of influenza with devastating effects. The predominant A Sydney virus, together with two other strains, A New Caledonia and B Beijing, are estimated to have contributed to more than 20,000 deaths in the United States alone. In the United Kingdom, Europe and Canada one could hardly pick up a newspaper without reading about heavy bouts of flu. For example, in the United Kingdom the National Health Service established mobile flu vans to help distribute its health programs and services in an attempt to combat the epidemic.

This week in Sydney a little baby, less than a year old, was admitted to a Sydney hospital with what tests have now revealed to be influenza, one of the first of our oncoming winter season. Vaccination is not recommended for infants. However, they will benefit from a well-immunised and healthy community. Whilst laboratory tests are yet to be concluded on the samples from the little child, I am advised that the virus culture is manifesting all the similarities of the A-Sydney strain. This report presents us with a timely warning to people who are vulnerable in our community to go to their general practitioners and have their flu vaccinations as soon as possible. As has been demonstrated in the Northern Hemisphere, influenza can be life-threatening. In particular, I appeal to elderly people and those who are more prone to risk to go to their doctors, get their flu shots and take all the necessary precautions. It is not just the elderly who are more at risk; it is people with chronic conditions associated with lung and heart illnesses, and people with depressed immune systems.

Equally, as we have learned from the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, one does not have to be in a high-risk category to get the flu. Even those with high resistance may find that a dose of the flu can be extremely debilitating. Influenza will cost people a lot of time off work, for example, and certainly will present them with a miserable few weeks while they are recovering. In February this year the Department of Health wrote to all general practitioners encouraging them to participate in a comprehensive immunisation program for at-risk groups and to fully assess chronic patients. In addition, nursing homes and aged care hostels have been contacted to arrange direct delivery of vaccine, with the public health unit conducting systemic and systematic follow-up.

Since March, risk groups have been offered vaccine when visiting outpatient clinics in our health system. All health staff have been provided with the opportunity for vaccination, to protect the medical work force. Since the commencement of our program, approximately 750,000 vaccinations have been distributed to general practitioners, nursing homes and aged care providers. For the most vulnerable, those over 65 years of age, vaccines are free, and we anticipate that more than 100,000 vaccine units will be used. However, reports indicate that despite almost three-quarters of a million vaccinations, many thousands of elderly people are yet to take advantage of a free flu vaccination.

I repeat that they should go to their doctor and get their flu shots. A simple injection is an excellent insurance policy for the coming winter. Even for those not on the free list, a \$20 or \$25 investment in one's own health is a smart decision. We do not want to see the flu epidemic that hit the Northern Hemisphere invade Sydney or New South Wales or, indeed, anywhere in Australia. By taking the simple precaution of a flu shot we can at least reduce the risk.

Despite the coughing and spluttering and background noise in this Chamber, I am sure that all members will take the opportunity of reminding their constituents that by taking the simple precaution of having a flu shot, they can minimise their risk this winter. I advise the House that in the Parliamentary Theatre on 23 May I will provide medical practitioners to administer flu shots to all members who front up, so that they can demonstrate to their communities that they are willing to take the necessary precautions.

All they will need on 23 May is \$25 in their pocket. If necessary, I will go first—and the Leader of the Opposition can go second. I am more than happy to extend the offer to parliamentary staff members and to the parliamentary press gallery. I can see Mr Frank Walker senior in the gallery. He will be telling his son to get along to the theatre on 23 May to get his shot as well. Although we will be charging \$25, all profits over and above payment for the vaccine will be donated to medical research. I am sure all members will want to get behind this and I look forward to seeing them in the theatre on 23 May.

STAR CITY CASINO PATRON TAN GIA QUACH

Mr OAKESHOTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. Since 1996 has recently arrested alleged drug dealer Tan Gia Quach, who has been listed as the fourth-highest roller in the 1996 Endeavour Room top 1000, ever been excluded from your high rollers room at the Sydney casino?

Mr FACE: Firstly, I do not have a high rollers room; it belongs to the casino. That is where the honourable member got the document he is waving around these days. I have told him and I will tell him again, he should go down and give his evidence. I will repeat what I said to him before. He is dealing with Mr Wells. It is a very dangerous situation. He is making himself a party to what is going on. He has already blown a tax investigation. He should get himself down there. Mr Wells did not tell him that he is going to be the recipient of a percentage of money in an action he is in cahoots with the casino about. I am concerned that I have had three phone calls today saying that Wells is obsessed with me. The honourable member is perpetuating the problem.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY REGIONAL JOBS CREATION

Mr MILLS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Roads. What is the latest information on the Government's efforts to move jobs to Newcastle and other regional centres?

Mr SCULLY: Last year the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] began a process of relocating jobs to country areas of New South Wales. At the time it was announced that about 170 positions would be created in the Hunter and the Central West, and on the Northern Tablelands and the North Coast. I am delighted to inform the House that the RTA now expects to increase this to 225 jobs in regional centres of New South Wales. Since the RTA carried out its initial assessment more positions have been identified as suitable for relocation. As a result, a number of additional positions will go to Newcastle and Dubbo. The remainder of jobs will go to Glen Innes and Grafton. Relocating these jobs to country areas has been made possible by new technology. Email, the Internet and computer links mean that people can work hundreds of kilometres from their colleagues and still get their jobs done. These jobs make a huge difference to country communities. Giving a breadwinner a job means the whole family can stay in town. It is a significant boost to local communities, and shopkeepers, real estate values and local industry all benefit.

The people of Grafton are extremely excited about the RTA's decision to move the driver and vehicle administration unit to their town. The Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs knows how excited his community is about this move. Today the RTA has advertised 23 positions in regional newspapers and will advertise another two positions shortly. They are jobs for local people. Interested applicants can attend an information seminar in Grafton on 18 May. In addition, 20 existing RTA staff from around the State have indicated they will take up additional positions at Grafton. That is an extra boost for the local economy. As well, the unit's new headquarters is being built at the corner of King and Fitzroy streets and is expected to be completed in August this year. That is more construction jobs.

Also, the RTA is getting on with its plans to merge the Sydney and Newcastle call centres and to locate that centre in Newcastle. To date, a total of 24 call centre trainees have been hired. A further 76 are in the process of being recruited, following successful information sessions for job applicants. That project also has significant support in the Newcastle community. Another 28 staff will relocate from other parts of the State. Again, that is a big boost for Newcastle: new workers and their families, and new jobs for Newcastle. The honourable member for Wallsend will be delighted to learn that the new call centre in Argyle Street, Newcastle, is nearing completion. Computers have been installed and telecommunications links have been laid. Indeed, links have been put in place to connect the call centre to RTA premises around the State. That call centre will provide assistance to motorists from all over the State who need assistance with registration and other information.

I am also pleased to tell the House that the call centre will also house the DRIVES help desk. Help desk staff will provide assistance to other RTA Motor Registry staff on driver licensing and vehicle registration matters. A heavy vehicle regulation unit previously based in Sydney recently moved to Glen Innes and commenced operations only last month. That means 13 new jobs for Glen Innes. A total of 12 jobs have been filled, including six from the local community. I am advised that a further job is being advertised in the local area. Dubbo is also set to benefit from the RTA's country jobs program. Pending negotiations to secure a suitable office site, the finance and administrative unit will be transferred from Sydney to Dubbo later this year. That means a total of 42 positions, including eight permanent full-time staff and up to 34 permanent part-time staff. The RTA expects most of those jobs to be filled by Dubbo locals. The Government is delighted yet again to be supporting country New South Wales, creating jobs in the bush, at the same time that John Howard and Telstra are ripping the guts out of country New South Wales.

CASINO CONTROL AUTHORITY MANAGEMENT

Mr SOURIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. In light of the serious revelations over the past week about the Minister's mismanagement of the Casino Control Authority and the casino surveillance division, does the Minister think that a section 31 inquiry can be truly open and independent when it is being run by three employees of the two bodies whose performance is under question?

Mr FACE: Yes.

CITRUS INDUSTRY EXPORT MARKETS

Mr BLACK: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. How is the Government helping New South Wales citrus growers gain access to Korean and Japanese markets?

Mr AMERY: I thank the honourable member for his forceful question. As usual, his question caught me completely by surprise. Once again the Leader of the National Party asked a question about Sydney, and a Country Labor member asked a question about the bush. It is great to see that contrast continue.

Mr Souris: And a jumped-up shop steward to answer it.

Mr AMERY: The Leader of the National Party should take it easy. He should have someone sitting behind him yelling "Four" every time he gets to his feet. I must admit that I did not expect National Party members to ask me any questions until after the party's annual conference. And honourable members know that the National Party annual conference always produces hard-hitting policy statements. The honourable member for Murray-Darling will be interested to hear, perhaps this June, what the National Party might say about the citrus industry. At the National Party conference last year I think members talked about me tapping into the water that fell on Papua New Guinea, seeped under the ocean and bubbled up somewhere in New South Wales. They also gave us "tunnelling through the mountains" and "turning round the Clarence".

I can advise the House that the Australian Broadcasting Corporation will be covering the National Party conference at Tweed Heads in June this year. The conference will be televised over three days and will be subtitled "Talking with Dinosaurs".

[Interruption]

And right on cue comes stegasaurus. The citrus industry is important to New South Wales. It is worth some \$80 million to the New South Wales economy. The honourable member for Murray-Darling will be interested to know that some 12 per cent of the produce is export. The Leader of the National Party would love to have 12 per cent support in the polls, rather than 4 per cent!

Unlike the National Party, the citrus industry is trying to improve that percentage. It is not an exclusive industry; it wants to spread its product throughout the world. New South Wales is the biggest citrus producing State in Australia, with about 900 growers and 40 per cent of total plantings. Our main growing areas are in the Riverina and Sunraysia regions, but we also have smaller growing areas in Gosford, Windsor, Forbes, Narromine, Bourke and along the North Coast. Australiawide, the industry is worth about \$250 million, with total exports now worth \$150 million.

New South Wales Agriculture contributes to the industry in the form of research and development work. Departmental officers work with the industry in areas of crop improvement, quality management, pathology, virology, fruit fly control, variety evaluation and marketing. For far too long the people who work in our research stations have not received the recognition they deserve. We often talk about our industries doing very well in both the domestic and international markets, but many of these people, who are perhaps unsung and unnamed, are often in the engine room behind these great successes of our industries.

That work continues to pay off as we improve our product domestically and also open up new markets overseas. In 1995 our research work secured citrus exports to Japan. That is now worth \$3 million to the Australian economy each year. In 1996 we expanded our citrus exports to America—an agreement now worth \$40 million per year and rising, \$8 million of which comes to New South Wales. New South Wales Agriculture scientists have now secured another citrus export market, this time to Korea. The scientists are based in Camden and Gosford, and should be congratulated on their work in this area.

Dr Pat Barkley, Nerida Donovan and their team at New South Wales Agriculture's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in Camden conducted extensive surveys on a wide range of citrus diseases. That demonstrated to the Korean authorities that Australian citrus was free of fruit and leaf pathogens, which were of particular concern to them. Further research was carried out by a team of New South Wales Agriculture scientists led by Andrew Jessep. That team is based at New South Wales Agriculture's Horticultural Research and Advisory Station at Gosford. Their task has been to demonstrate that disinfestation of fruit fly is of a sufficiently high standard for the Korean authorities and would not pose a threat to their own industry.

All this research work has been going on for a number of years and clearly it is paying off. The Korean Agriculture Ministry has signed off on the import of Australian citrus, and the Korean Cabinet is expected to give its full and final endorsement within the next few weeks. We then anticipate that the batch of Australian citrus exports will leave our shores for Korea and set the scene for a permanent new market for producers both in New South Wales and in other States. This market could be worth \$1 million a year in the short term—that is, about 1,000 tonnes—and more than \$4 million in the long term. New South Wales producers will then be assured of their share of this potentially lucrative market.

I thank the honourable member for Murray-Darling for his question. As members of this House would be aware, he has been leading the fight for the citrus industry, in particular its fight against the number of imports coming into this country. He has also been extremely outspoken in his attacks on many organisations in this country that may use imported product as opposed to domestically grown product. Hopefully this answer will assure him that the issue about imports and exports in the citrus industry is becoming a two-way street and that our industry is doing well in overseas markets. I congratulate everyone involved in the industry and New South Wales Agriculture on the great work they have done in bringing about this success.

PECUNIARY INTERESTS DISCLOSURE

Mr STONER: My question is directed to the Premier. Given his statement yesterday that breaches of the pecuniary interest regulations are a matter between members and the Parliament, what action will the Premier take if any member of his Government is found to have breached the regulations?

Mr CARR: I stand by the answer I gave yesterday.

SHOOTING CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Mr HICKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the Government doing to facilitate responsible approaches to recreational shooting?

Mr WATKINS: In 1997 the Premier established an advisory committee to assist in a whole-of-government approach to the development of shooting clubs across New South Wales. That committee is made up of a cross-section of Ministers, departments and people who have an interest in shooting. In conjunction with the establishment of the advisory committee, the Carr Government allocated \$2 million to a Shooting Club Development Program to assist responsible shooters and their clubs to improve their facilities. The program is administered by the Department of Sport and Recreation. This financial year—1999-2000—is its second year of operation. Under the program, clubs are able to apply for financial support to construct new facilities and upgrade or enhance existing facilities. Those applications are assessed against a set of eligibility criteria and recommendations made to me by the advisory committee for approval.

Today I am pleased to announce the successful projects for 1999-2000. This year I have approved the allocation of \$515,546 for 15 projects across the State to fund a diverse range of projects. Many members will be aware of the Government's ongoing commitment to the Cessnock Regional Shooting Complex. That is why I am pleased to advise the House that the next instalment of funds—that is, \$400,000—is being made available as part of this year's program. This money, together with half a billion dollars allocated last year, demonstrates the Government's strong commitment towards providing top-class sporting facilities in the Hunter region. When completed, the Cessnock Regional Shooting Complex will become a major national- and international-standard facility. The other successful applicants have been granted funds ranging from a few hundred dollars to more than \$20,000. This money will go towards the development and improvement of shooting facilities right across the State.

I should like to inform the House of my recent visit to the Blacktown Shooting Club at Mount Druitt. I was invited by the club to open the New South Wales shooting championships. I was very pleased to accept the invitation and to travel to western Sydney. It was an extremely well-run and well-attended competition. I was pleasantly surprised to see a large number of women and younger people involved in the competition. I was pleased to attend on behalf of the New South Wales Parliament and to extend my best wishes to the shooters on that occasion. I was struck by the professional way in which the championships were held and the high level of safety that was in place. The shooters present at the championships were keen to ensure that their sport is seen as one that is acceptable. The investment in responsible shooting in Cessnock and the Hunter is especially important to that part of the State.

This Government's commitment to rural and regional New South Wales is clear when one considers that successful applicants for the Shooting Club Development Program came from as far afield as Byron Bay and Broken Hill. For example, the Upper Hunter Gun Club—which the Leader of the National Party presumably would be interested in—will receive \$9,000 for the installation of shooting traps. The Grafton Pistol Club has been allocated \$17,520 to provide electricity service to the club. This will be particularly important for the club's disabled shooters who require power to operate their targets and lighting. During my visit to western Sydney I was impressed to see one of the State's leading disabled shooters taking part in the championships. It is touch and go whether some of our disabled shooters will be selected for the Olympic team and the Paralympic team later this year. The achievements of our disabled shooters should be brought to the attention of the wider community.

The Orange Clay Target Club will be developing a new clay target facility with its \$15,000 grant. The Broken Hill Pistol Club will receive \$21,345 to erect new dividing walls at the shooting range and to cover the shooting bays. The Tamworth and Peel Valley Rifle Club will be constructing eight new undercover shooting benches and storage facilities with its \$4,140 grant. The Shooting Club Development Program, initiated by the Carr Government, is meeting a clear demand across the State for the many thousands of shooting club members who want the opportunity to pursue their sport in a safe, controlled environment. During the program's first two years 35 worthy projects have been supported. Importantly, 32 of those projects are in regional and rural New South Wales. I am reminded that the regional facilities grants that were announced earlier this year are valued at more than \$2 million.

Mr Scully: How much?

Mr WATKINS: They are worth more than \$2 million. There were 14 successful applications this year and of those 11 were from centres in regional and rural New South Wales. That demonstrates the commitment of this Government to meeting the sporting needs of people outside the metropolitan area of Sydney. There are 35 worthy projects under the Shooting Club Development Program, and 32 of those are in regional areas of our State.

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

Mr WATKINS: In conclusion, I thank all those who have been involved in the assessment of this year's grants. In particular, I thank representatives of the shooting fraternity throughout New South Wales, the Hon. J. S. Tingle and Michael Asher, President of the New South Wales Amateur Pistol Association, who are involved in a sport that is very attractive to many people. Men, women, young people and a range of disabled people across the State are involved in the sport of shooting. I am pleased to draw the attention of the House to the program.

STATE RAIL SIGNALLING SYSTEM

Mr O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given that State Rail's new Scada signalling system repeatedly fails—resulting in the loss of trains from the signallers' screens, points indicators giving wrong readings and situations in which train drivers are being forced to ignore signals—what reassurance can he give to commuters about a system that signallers have branded unsafe?

Mr SCULLY: The shadow Minister for Transport has not been listening to me and other Government members. If he had bothered to listen to responses given by members of the Government to the Oliver inquiry, which examined a number of matters, and to some issues that have arisen out of the Glenbrook inquiry, he would know that a number of steps have been taken to improve safety in this State's railways. One measure is signalling in dark zones. The Rail Access Corporation has committed \$8 million and, instead of trains not being visible on the signal boards because electronic equipment has not been laid down, the electronics have been laid out and collision avoidance systems have been laid out also.

In relation to some of the other issues, such as signals passed at danger points, I am pleased to inform the House that a number of initiatives have been put in place to ensure that the number of signals passed at danger points are reduced. A number of training issues have arisen out of the Glenbrook inquiry and recent incidents. I am pleased to say that CityRail and the State Rail Authority have reacted most positively to those issues. Safety is absolutely of paramount importance to this Government and to the State's railways. I can say that, at my request, State Rail chief executives and boards have set up a rail safety committee on each board and are treating safety issues very seriously. Of course, we all await the outcome of the first Glenbrook report.

Mr O'FARRELL: I direct a supplementary question to the Minister for Transport. In the light of his answer and the fact that the technology which has failed is the new technology to which he referred, when can commuters expect some relief from signal failures on the rail system?

Mr SCULLY: Perhaps I should get the Stasi out to see what sort of signal failures occurred when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was chief of staff to the Minister for Transport in 1995. For the honourable member to come into this House and project an image of perfection is a little bit pathetic. However, I can say that this Government treats safety as an issue of absolute importance. I have dealt with the question. The supplementary question adds nothing further.

STOCK AND STATION AGENTS

Mr MARTIN: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs. How is the Government helping stock and station agents across New South Wales?

Mr WOODS: The honourable member for Bathurst takes a great deal of interest in these matters, as do many Opposition members. As a matter of fact, the first time I met the honourable member for Lismore was in 1988 when he was a stock and station agent. Once again, it is the Labor Party that is acting in the interests of country communities. Stock and station agents approached the Government on the issue of cutting stamp duty on livestock insurance policies. Those policies greatly benefit stock and station agents by insuring against abattoirs that default on their debts. In February this year I announced that from 1 February to 31 January 2005, the Treasurer would cut the stamp duty rate from 11.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent. That will bring the stock and station agents into line with the rate of duty paid by farmers who insure against stock theft.

As a result of that concession, more than 120 stock and station agents in New South Wales are saving an average of \$371 a year. It is Country Labor that has delivered a saving of \$371 to stock and station agents right across this State. The value of livestock production in New South Wales in 1998-99 was \$3.2 billion. The industry employs approximately 80,000 people and another 60,000 people are employed in related industries. The industry approached the Government because of its confidence that this Government would take action in the interests of regional New South Wales. It is this Government that is getting the results in country New South Wales. Moreover, the people of regional New South Wales, particularly families and men on the land, know that very well. Members of the Opposition do not have to take my word for it. I received a letter dated 22 March from Andrew McClaren who is the secretary of the New South Wales Stock and Station Agents Co-Operative. The letter stated:

On behalf of the co-operative, I want to extend our sincere gratitude to you and your staff for the support given in regard to a proposal seeking to reclassify the rate of stamp duty on our trade debtor insurance policy.

Support for the Government's action does not end there. I received another letter dated 9 March from Chris McGrath and Partners who acted on behalf of the New South Wales Stock and Station Agents Co-Operative. That letter stated:

The stamp duty concession will not only benefit the agents who insure against buyer defaults on livestock payments but will also benefit those primary producer clients and will contribute to the stability of livestock markets as a whole. The agents sector appreciates your efforts and those of the Government in helping to address the serious problems in primary industry.

Those comments represent another big tick from country New South Wales for the State Government which stands in stark contrast to the way in which members of the National Party are regarded. They cannot stand up to their Liberal colleagues. They cannot represent New South Wales because they do not have the ability to do so. I must say that I feel a little sorry for the Leader of the National Party. Over the last couple of days he has been coping one hell of a serve. I almost feel that I want to defend him. I can understand his position, particularly when I recall the Opposition's absolute madness in the policies listed the other day by the Minister for Agriculture—for example, the idea of jacking up the east coast so that the rivers will run inland, and piping water from New Guinea.

Mr Debus: And the tunnel.

Mr WOODS: Those policies, including the tunnel policy, are formed from absolute madness. The Leader of the National Party has a problem. He has to act in a particular way because he is the leader of the bunyip aristocracy, with him as the chief bunyip. He has to act the goat while at the same time looking a little clever and educated, which he would not have much trouble in doing, and that makes him sort of schizophrenic.

Mr Stoner: Point of order: The Minister's reply is not relevant to the question he was asked.

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

Mr WOODS: I appreciate what the honourable member for Oxley said, but I want to explain to him that I am defending his leader who has a track of madness but has to look educated and clever at times. That is the National Party. In relation to other issues, this man—Mr 4 Per Cent—has taken the National Party from nowhere to almost the edge of obscurity. He is vying with some of the lesser-known upper House members for that lower percentage of vote. It has been recognised that the Labor Party is making advances for country New South Wales. The *Western Advocate* of 25 March states, "Winning the battle for the bush. Carr steals the march on his Federal counterparts." That is recognised for a very good reason—that is, policy that the National Party does not have and is unable to get. The State Coalition follows its Federal colleagues, led by Howard and Anderson. Mr John Anderson, the Deputy Prime Minister—probably the highest ranking National in the land—when speaking to the Sydney Institute said:

The plight of regional Australia is intimately bound up with the accelerating economic changes that we have witnessed over the last decade.

The Coalition would agree with that, and Mr Anderson is saying that most of the community agrees with him—I do.

Mr Debnam: Point of order: If the Minister has nothing to say I would like to ask a question of the Premier.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. I ask the Minister to conclude his answer.

Mr WOODS: I will conclude on an important and central policy matter for country New South Wales. The Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the National Party—

[*Interruption*]

Members of the Opposition are not interested in what the Deputy Prime Minister said. He said:

This rapid change has been the primary cause of the problems of regional New South Wales.

I agree with that, but he then said:

It will be also the primary source of solutions.

In other words, we will get more of the same in the future. The Federal Government does not believe that governments have a part to play. It is no wonder the National Party in this State is stuck in the mud and in its own mediocrity. It is eternally at its best. In fact, this is as good as it gets!

Questions without notice concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Retail Leases Amendment Legislation

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [3.24 p.m.]: I will be extremely brief because of the joint sitting at 3.30 p.m. I draw the attention of the House to the landmark legislation that was passed by this House in 1998 to reform the retail tenancy legislation. The core part of that legislation relied on the Federal Government passing a minor amendment to the Federal Trade Practices Act to enable us to draw down the unconscionable provisions of that Federal Act into New South Wales to allow retail tenants access to that remedy. Some 17 months have passed and the Federal Government has still failed to make the minor amendment, despite repeated assurances that it would. The matter is therefore urgent. We need to send a message to the Federal Parliament to do its job.

Teachers Dispute

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [3.25 p.m.]: The students of public schools in New South Wales have been disrupted for 309 days by the continual stress and pressure of the teachers' dispute which should never have happened. The dispute disrupts every single day, including today, the direct education of approximately 750,000 students in government schools and affects approximately 1.5 million parents who are absolutely sick to death of the lack of leadership by the so-called education Premier and his so-called education Cabinet. What has the Government done in 309 days of industrial disruption? It defies imagination how a government could be less competent in dealing with a matter of critical importance to education: the renegotiation of an award.

Mrs Skinner: Where is the Premier now?

Mr O'DOHERTY: The education Premier is not even here. This matter was an issue during the election campaign more than 12 months ago. The Government went to the election promising teachers that it would do nothing—and then it did nothing. I well remember sharing a platform with the Minister for Education and Training when the Coalition put forward its proposal for a real-terms pay increase for teachers, which they would have received forthwith upon the election of a Coalition government. At that time I challenged the Minister to match the offer of the Opposition. He said, "I would be lynched if I matched your offer." The Opposition thought that he meant he would be lynched by the teachers, but he meant he would be lynched by his own Cabinet colleagues because they had nothing to offer the teachers.

That is why the dispute has dragged on for 309 days. The Government's process to grapple with an issue that has been on the table since before that time is appalling. The teachers' award expired that long ago. One would have thought that a responsible and prudent government would have renegotiated the award before it expired. It is fair to say that the Government and the New South Wales Teachers Federation have been in discussion for the 18 months this matter has been on the table. For 18 months the Government has deliberately held out against reasonable negotiations with the teachers. The cost during that time has been to the morale and sense of worth of the teachers who do a dedicated job in our schools every single day. I know that is recognised by the honourable member for Bligh because we have discussed this matter.

I am reminded that just yesterday 20,000 school students from public schools in New South Wales were involved in an opening ceremony for the Pacific School Games. They had costumes and were involved in dances and routines that were worked on for months by their dedicated teachers and by community members. What thanks do teachers get for the extra work they put in every single day into the education of young people? What thanks do they get from the Minister for Education and Training, who does not bother to come to the Chamber to listen to this debate? What thanks do they get from the so-called education Premier, who again absents himself from the Chamber? Teachers get no thanks and the Government says it is not coming to the table to discuss these matters properly.

Peter Sams, the Deputy President of the Industrial Commission, said this week that his role in arbitration had been exhausted by a fundamental disagreement about the State budget, not by the intransigence of the federation. However, he did express some views about the federation. The House is keen to debate this matter and I have no doubt that the Leader of the House will agree to its urgency. Peter Sams not only reflected on matters to do with the federation, he also reflected on a fundamental disagreement about the State budget that only the Government can resolve. That is the sticking point. Yet what is the one and only tactic the Government uses to try to negotiate a settlement of this dispute? It goes back to the Industrial Relations Commission every single time. As the Coalition said during the election campaign, and has said in this place, the status of teachers cannot be negotiated in the Industrial Relations Commission. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 52

Ms Allan	Mrs Grusovin	Ms Nori
Mr Amery	Ms Harrison	Mr Orkopoulos
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Aquilina	Mr Hunter	Mr Price
Mr Ashton	Mr Iemma	Dr Refshauge
Mr Bartlett	Mr Knight	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Knowles	Mr Scully
Mr Black	Mrs Lo Po'	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Brown	Mr Lynch	Mr Stewart
Mr Campbell	Mr McBride	Mr Tripodi
Mr Carr	Mr Markham	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Mr Martin	Mr Whelan
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Woods
Mr Debus	Ms Megarrity	Mr Yeadon
Mr Face	Mr Mills	
Mr Gaudry	Mr Moss	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Nagle	Mr Anderson
Mr Greene	Mr Newell	Mr Thompson

Noes, 36

Mr Armstrong	Mr Kerr	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Barr	Mr Maguire	Mr Souris
Mr Brogden	Mr McGrane	Mr Stoner
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Merton	Mr Tink
Mr Collins	Ms Moore	Mr Torbay
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Doherty	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr George	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Webb
Mr Glachan	Mr D. L. Page	Mr Windsor
Mr Hartcher	Mr Piccoli	
Mr Hazzard	Mr Richardson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Rozzoli	Mr Fraser
Mr Humpherson	Ms Seaton	Mr R. H. L. Smith
Dr Kernohan	Mrs Skinner	

Pair

Miss Burton

Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.**SENATE VACANCY****Joint Sitting**

At 3.35 p.m. the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting to choose a senator in the place of David Gordon Cadell Brownhill, resigned.

At 3.45 p.m. the House reassembled.

Mr SPEAKER: I report that at a joint sitting this day Sandy Macdonald was chosen as senator in the place of David Gordon Cadell Brownhill, resigned.

RETAIL LEASES AMENDMENT LEGISLATION**Urgent Motion**

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [3.48 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes with concern the failure of the Federal Government, despite repeated assurances, to make the straightforward and minor changes to the Trade Practices Act required to put the provisions of the New South Wales Retail Leases Amendment Act dealing with unconscionable conduct into effect.
- (2) expresses its alarm that this failure to act by the Federal Government could cost small businesses up to \$50,000 in unnecessary legal fees; and
- (3) urges the Federal Government to immediately end the uncertainty faced by small retailers by enacting the required legislation to fully put the New South Wales law into effect.

Last year I informed the House of the Howard Government's unacceptable delay in enacting the necessary non-controversial amendments to the Trade Practices Act that would allow the provisions of the New South Wales Retail Leases Amendment Act on unconscionable conduct to fully take effect. I am sad to report that nothing has changed. Last year I also informed the House of the success of this New South Wales landmark retail tenancy legislation. Honourable members will recall that these laws have ushered in a new era of dispute resolution between retail lessors and lessees. The principal objective of the laws is to move away from expensive litigation to mediation by drawing down elements of the Commonwealth Trade Practices Act into New South Wales law.

When I introduced the New South Wales retail leases legislation in 1998, I am pleased to say that it received bipartisan support. The former members for the electorates of Wagga Wagga, Baulkham Hills, Albury, Dubbo, Northern Tablelands and Gordon spoke in support of the legislation. Let me remind honourable members of the benefits that this legislation has brought to small businesses in New South Wales, benefits not yet available in other States. The Retail Leases Amendment Act provides the mechanisms for early and equitable resolution of disputes. The emphasis is on mediation without the need for extensive court action. However, if an unconscionable conduct claim is made by either a landlord or a retail tenant and it is not resolved through the alternative dispute resolution mechanisms established under the Act, the matter can be heard in the new Retail Tenancy Division of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal [ADT] that will be established by legislation.

This most significant feature of the new legislation will save businesses in New South Wales thousands of dollars in unnecessary legal costs. It will provide affordable access to justice, particularly for smaller businesses on matters of unconscionable conduct. Currently, the only remedy available to a lessor or lessee on issues relating to unconscionable conduct is expensive court action under Commonwealth law. Even this remedy is not available to all businesses. These changes to the legislation should mean that disputes that cannot be mediated can be heard in the new Retail Tenancy Division of the ADT. That, of course, will then save businesses a lot of unnecessary legal costs. However, there is one problem. The Commonwealth has not delivered on its side of the bargain. Repeated promises by the Commonwealth to enact the relevant draw-down provisions in the Federal Parliament have not been kept.

The New South Wales legislation was assented to on 14 December 1998, more than 18 months ago. In February 1999 the Commonwealth Minister for Financial Services and Regulation, the Hon. Joe Hockey, wrote to the Government and said that he intended to seek the agreement of his Federal colleagues to make the necessary amendments. Nothing happened. Last year I spoke to the Federal Minister for Workplace Relations and Small Business, Peter Reith, at the ministerial council meeting and explained the problem to him. Nothing happened. In October last year I informed the House that I would again urge Minister Hockey to expedite the passage of the necessary legislation.

On 26 November he wrote back and said that he would bring the need for the amendments to the attention of his ministerial colleagues and he would again seek approval for appropriate legislative amendments. Almost six months later still nothing has happened. Early this year I spoke to Minister Hockey about this issue. At Minister Hockey's suggestion, a staff member from my office followed this matter up by contacting his office about the delay and was told that the amendments would be introduced but that a date could not be given. This delay in introducing such a simple and straightforward amendment is inexplicable and, frankly, inexcusable.

The Federal shadow Minister for Small Business and Tourism, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon, also tried to hurry the Howard Government along. During debate on the Trade Practices Amendment Bill the shadow Minister moved an amendment to draw down the relevant powers. He did this because he, like me, is frustrated by the Commonwealth's delay. He knows that small businesses want this legislation. The legislation is important not only for New South Wales but for other jurisdictions, such as Queensland and Western Australia, which are

interested in following our path. Even when it was made this simple, the Commonwealth Government still did not take the initiative. The Coalition, led by Minister Hockey in this instance, voted down the Opposition amendment. It voted it down even though Minister Hockey repeatedly said that he would enact the amendment. It just does not make sense.

This lack of action by the Commonwealth is a major problem for small businesses as complex retail tenancy legal disputes can cost up to \$50,000 to resolve. It took 18 months of difficult negotiations between the Australian Retail Association and the New South Wales Property Council, two groups of stakeholders that were literally 10 miles apart, to get them to sign bipartisan legislation enacted in this House. Those two groups had to agree on every tick, comma and exclamation mark in that bill. Now the very basis of the resolution of the conflict between two stakeholders cannot be confirmed—not because the State Government or the State Parliament does not want to but because the Federal Parliament cannot be bothered. It would take only five minutes of the time of the Federal Parliament to overcome this problem, to pass the minor amendment and allow New South Wales to draw down the relevant provision of the Federal Trade Practices Act. That would enable us to give retail tenants, and indeed landlords, the option of invoking that section of the New South Wales legislation.

I understand that the Federal shadow Minister for Small Business and Tourism has drafted a private member's bill that would draw down the necessary powers to allow the New South Wales law to take full effect. There is no good reason why the Commonwealth should oppose this bill. After all, Minister Hockey claims to be in favour of it. He should be pleased that the Labor Party managed to do what the Commonwealth has been unable to do, in its own right, for 18 months. I understand also that the Federal Opposition will move the necessary amendments in the Senate if it is not successful in the lower House. We cannot make it any easier for Minister Hockey and the Federal Government. We must make a decision about whether he supports sensible reforms to help small business.

Based on his track record and the Federal Government's track record I will not hold my breath waiting for them to do the right thing. That is why I have sought advice on the possibility of proclaiming the State legislation, regardless of whether the Commonwealth acts. I make it clear to small business, to the retail industry and to property managers that the fault lies clearly with the Commonwealth. We as a Parliament and as a Government have done all we can. The Federal Labor Party is doing all it can. It is now up to the Federal Government. It must stop sitting on its hands. Instead of making life difficult for small business, the Commonwealth has an opportunity to do something positive by urgently amending the Trade Practices Act. It would be even better and a quicker result would probably be achieved if it supported the Federal Labor Opposition's legislation.

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [3.57 p.m.]: I acknowledge that the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism has raised this issue before in this House. Indeed, the legislation we are talking about clearly has been supported by all honourable members. Minister Hockey would be extremely pleased to learn that at least one Labor Minister in Australia is actually interested in doing something about these sorts of issues. This issue goes to the heart of Labor Party politics. In Canberra the Labor Party is being completely obstructionist in the Senate. The Labor Party has asked a Senate committee to look at a related bill—A New Tax System (Trade Practices Amendment) Bill. As a result of that sort of intervention in Canberra, which is obstructing the legislative program of the Commonwealth Government, every piece of legislation is being slowed down, specifically the piece of legislation that the Minister talked about earlier.

Minister Hockey would be extremely pleased to hear a Labor Minister saying, "Let's make a move in relation to this legislation." What is needed now is what was needed in 1998 when the Senate again started to obstruct the GST legislation, and the Premier demonstrated some leadership. The Premier put himself in front of the Beazley camp in Canberra and said, "If we need the Senate to consider the Government's legislative program, we will put some pressure on our Canberra colleagues." That is what he did. He threatened on radio to send his new Special Minister of State, the Hon. John Della Bosca, to Canberra to sort out the Senate and unblock the legislative logjam in Canberra. In this case that is again what is needed.

The Labor Party in Canberra is doing whatever it can to slow down the legislative program and to frustrate the business of the Commonwealth Parliament and the Commonwealth Government. Unfortunately, this legislation is caught in the middle of those delaying tactics in Canberra. As I have said, Minister Hockey would be extremely pleased if members of the Labor Party in Sydney got on the telephone or went to Canberra and spoke to their colleagues. I know Kim Beazley is struggling with his job as Leader of the Opposition at the moment, but members of the Labor Party should say to him, "It is in the interests of small business in Australia

for this legislation to get through. It is in the interests of everybody in Australia that the Senate stop frustrating the Federal Government's programs on a range of issues and specifically look at the related bill—A New Tax System (Trade Practices Amendment) Bill."

That is the bill with which the Labor Party has been playing politics. The Minister would be well served if, between the time Parliament adjourns in the next 24 hours and the delivery of the budget on 23 May, she spent some time twisting the arms of her Federal colleagues in Canberra to do the right thing by small business in Australia, especially New South Wales, and the Australian community and unblock the logjam in Canberra. This is a great opportunity for the Minister to strut the national stage and play a leadership role. Kim Beazley is clearly looking for assistance in Canberra at the moment.

Ms Nori: You might like to strut!

Mr DEBNAM: Only members of the Labor Party strut. It was intriguing to see the Minister for Fair Trading attempt to strut the promenade here this afternoon. He got himself into trouble the first time he moved away from the script. The Minister sits next to the Minister for Fair Trading on the front bench and she would do very well to assist him to move away from his scripted speeches and try to talk to the issues, and perhaps understand the issues, instead of just reading scripts that he gets either from the Premier's Department or from his own department. The Premier enjoys strutting the stage in this Chamber. The Minister for Small Business could move to Canberra and strut the national stage by twisting the arms of her Federal colleagues on this issue, unblocking the logjam in the Senate and getting the legislative program in Canberra moving. Small business in New South Wales desperately needs the Minister to show that leadership.

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [4.01 p.m.]: It is obvious the Opposition has no policy on this issue. The honourable member for Vacluse, who led for the Opposition on this issue, used only about four of his allotted 10 minutes. That is how much the Opposition cares about small business. We have heard today that it has been 18 months since the Retail Leases Amendment Act was assented to. That should have been plenty of time for the Federal Government to make what is a straightforward and minor amendment to the Trade Practices Act. However, as we have heard from the Minister for Small Business, and not for the first time in this place, the Federal Government has failed to do anything about this matter. It is not good enough for the Federal Government merely to talk about helping small business; it must act. Most people believe that the Federal Government is only interested in big business. This was the perfect opportunity for the Howard Government to become involved in helping small business instead of placing further obstacles in its way.

Unfortunately, it appears that the Federal Government is preoccupied with its nightmare goods and services tax [GST]. The GST compliance nightmare confronting the small business community is just another example of the lack of consideration the Federal Government has for small business. Using the small business sector as a tax collector is bad enough, but to offer a compliance compensation package that is excessively inadequate illustrates the lack of understanding the Federal Government has of small business. The Commonwealth Government announced in its tax reform package that it would provide a \$500 million fund to address the problems of small and medium-size businesses in meeting the start-up requirements for compliance with the GST. This so-called compensation package is for start-up requirements of complying with the GST only.

Mr Rozzoli: Point of order: The honourable member for Lake Macquarie criticised the honourable member for Vacluse for not using his full time, but he is not speaking to the motion at all. Although the honourable member for Vacluse made passing reference to other legislation in Parliament, he did not attempt to deal with it in detail. I suggest the honourable member for Lake Macquarie is dealing with subject matter totally outside the leave of the motion and I ask you to draw him back to the subject matter of the motion.

Mr HUNTER: To the point of order: What I am saying is clearly relevant. The second part of the motion refers to the failure of the Federal Government to act on small businesses costs, and, of course, with a GST there will be major costs to small business. However, I will move on and talk directly about the motion.

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

Mr HUNTER: Small business is the engine room of the New South Wales economy; it creates about 50 per cent of all new jobs. The Carr Government not only recognises that small business is the engine room of the economy; it acts to create conditions to ensure that small businesses can grow and create jobs. I remind Parliament that it was the Carr Government in its previous term that established the small business committee. I

was a member of that committee and we considered this issue. At a meeting in February 1998 we decided to advertise and to undertake a major inquiry into retail tenancies. We worked very well with the former Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business, the current Minister. The Carr Labor Government created the position of Minister for Small Business. I am proud to be secretary of the backbench government committee on small business and to work closely with the Minister. She has known for many years that this problem existed. During the previous term of the Government, when the Minister was the Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business, she introduced the legislation which was passed 18 months ago. The Federal Government has been dragging its heels.

The legislation was supported almost across the board; it even received the support of the retail leasing industry. Why does the Federal Government show such contempt for small business? I urge the Federal Government to do the right thing. I urge those sitting opposite to lobby their Liberal and National Party colleagues in Canberra to make the straightforward and minor amendment to the Trade Practices Act which will create certainty for all small business people. Small business people in my electorate of Lake Macquarie would certainly be pleased if this State Government initiative was supported by the Federal Government. Again I urge the Federal Government to act on this issue and to help small business people in New South Wales.

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [4.06 p.m.]: Few people in this Chamber would disagree with the spirit and intent of the retail leases legislation. For many years retail leases have been somewhat complex and perplexing for both the current and previous governments. People often have their life savings on the line in retail premises, whether those premises are a single shop or a shopping centre of five shops or more. There is a question of balance. The legislation tried to get the balance right between the rights of landlords and the rights of tenants. There are fundamental problems with matters such as options, and it is necessary to be fair to all parties concerned. If I remember rightly, the retail leases legislation was first introduced by the Fahey Government in 1994. Since then the present Minister has introduced amendments to the legislation and basically the Opposition has agreed with those amendments.

The motion before the House today is a little surprising as far as we are concerned. Although we acknowledge that there is a problem and it has to be overcome, we believe, with the greatest respect to the Minister—and this enthusiastic and conscientious Minister has done a good job; she is trying hard—that it goes beyond asking this Parliament to do something. The lead has to come from the top. The Premier is accustomed to dealing with matters as diverse as architecture and schooling. He should focus attention on this aspect of small business. We support the notion that small business needs the protection of legislation, but the Premier recently joked that after the last election he sent an architect, the Hon. J. J. Della Bosca, to Canberra to convince the Senate to pass the package.

It is not the present Federal Government that is to blame, it is this Government's Federal masters in the ALP who are playing party politics by using simple political tricks and devices to frustrate legislation which, at the end of the day, would have benefited many small business people and shopkeepers in New South Wales. The amendments must be passed. The Government should not be sending that message to us; it should be co-operating with the Federal Government. The Premier and the Minister for Small Business should go to Canberra and tell the Federal Government to do something to help the battlers in New South Wales whom it is supposed to help, rather than simply talk about the matter and frustrate the intentions and efforts of an excellent Federal Government. The present Federal Government has done more for business than any other Federal Government in recent years.

Against all odds, the Federal Government shows tenacity. When the system gets bogged down by Labor's delay-and-frustrate tactics—they are deliberate obstruction tactics—the Federal Government can do little. The Minister's message is right, but her leader should go to Canberra and tell Kim Beazley, "Mate, it's about time you thought of the fair dinkum Australian battlers you purport to represent. Get out of the party politics game. Stop the delay-and-obstruct tactics and get the legislation through. Co-operate with the great Federal Government led by John Howard, which has helped the people of Australia."

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [4.11 p.m.]: There were shades of the Minister in that performance from the honourable member for Baulkham Hills. I can remember the dynamic way he made speeches when he was a Government Minister. He had the same problem today as he had when he was a Minister: There was nothing in his speech, although his excellent performance was entertaining. For any business, large or small, entering into a retail tenancy agreement is a major commitment. Disputes about leases can have a debilitating financial effect on both sides, not to mention the emotional anguish of the prospect of a legal battle. The tragedy is that many disputes could so easily have been avoided if the rights and obligations embodied in a lease were fully understood and there was a commitment on both sides to mediation, not litigation. Mediation focuses on equitable solutions that both parties can accept.

The Carr Government's Retail Tenancy Unit is all about helping landlords and tenants to resolve disputes so they can get back to what they do best: running successful businesses and creating new jobs. In the real world solving business disputes before they escalate into fully fledged legal combat can literally save a small enterprise thousands of dollars. Over the past couple of years the Retail Tenancy Unit has received high praise from the small business community for its work in resolving disputes. A fax to the Minister for Small Business from a small business operator encapsulates all that the Government is trying to achieve and reflects extremely well on the performance of the Retail Tenancy Unit. The fax stated:

Dear Minister,

I wanted to thank you regarding the services your Retail Tenancy Unit is providing to small business. The one telephone conversation I had with the Unit has saved my business tens of thousands of dollars in rent and, more importantly, the courteous, knowledgeable advice and guidance that was provided has been exceptional in solving what could have been an ugly situation.

That reinforces my view that the Carr Government has been able to strike the right balance with the retail tenancy amendment legislation and its underlying philosophy of mediation, not litigation. While the new legislative amendments cannot guarantee that everyone is a winner, the Act provides the mechanisms for early and equitable resolution of disputes. In 1999 the Retail Tenancy Unit mediated 112 separate cases. In an extremely pleasing result, 105 of those cases—that is, a remarkable 93 per cent—resulted in the disputants reaching an agreement for settlement of the dispute.

The unit also answered 2,793 inquiries and conducted 619 informal mediations. The Retail Tenancy Unit is obviously a major success story, and the Carr Government's amendment to the Act can only enhance that achievement. I am sure all honourable members are aware that the Retail Leases Amendment Act creates the conditions for all involved in retail leasing to operate with confidence and certainty. The Federal Government has taken too long to respond to the needs of small business. The straightforward and minor changes to the Trade Practices Act—required at the Commonwealth level to put the New South Wales unconscionable conduct provisions into effect—must be made. I call on the Federal Government to do the right thing and no longer to put off these minor changes. I call on it to match its small business rhetoric with a bit of reality for once.

Mr Debnam: Time!

Mr McBRIDE: My speaking time has not expired.

Mr Debnam: We have had enough.

Mr McBRIDE: Members opposite can walk out; that shows their concern for small business. That is typical of them! The shadow Minister does not know anything about small business. To members opposite, small business is large business; that is their only interest. I spoke in the debate on the Retail Leases Amendment Bill. There was universal agreement for that bill, because Opposition members who have small business experience totally agreed with the Government's amendments.

Mr Debnam: Point of order: Obviously the honourable member for The Entrance has finished his prepared speech so now he is ad-libbing. However, his ad-libbing has nothing to do with the subject matter of the motion.

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

Mr McBRIDE: This motion relates to all small businesses in this State. The honourable member for Vacluse has no small business experience, although other members opposite, including the honourable member for Baulkham Hills, have such experience. The honourable member for Vacluse can laugh, because he knows that I am right. I have small business experience. Although he has no small business experience, he makes comments about me. When the retail leases legislation was introduced all members opposite with small business experience spoke in support of the proposed amendments. The Government recognises the importance of that legislation to small business in New South Wales. Members opposite are a disgrace because they do not represent their constituencies. That is why they will stay on the Opposition benches forever.

[Debate interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Order of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders****Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone private members' statements to permit:

- (1) the reply by the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism to the motion for urgent consideration,
- (2) the third reading of the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill; and
- (3) messages from the Legislative Council to be reported.

RETAIL LEASES AMENDMENT LEGISLATION**Urgent Motion**

[Debate resumed.]

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [4.16 p.m.], in reply: I shall respond briefly to the contributions of members opposite. The shadow Minister for Small Business concentrated his speech on attacking the Federal Labor Opposition, asserting that it was delaying the passage of the relevant legislation that I sought to have carried to enable the New South Wales legislation to take effect. I remind the shadow Minister that the Federal legislation to which he referred is A New Tax System (Trade Practices Amendment) Bill. Joel Fitzgibbon moved amendments to that bill in the House of Representatives, but the Coalition Government voted down his sensible amendments to the small business reforms. I point out to the shadow Minister that the two issues are not linked in a legislative sense. They do not have to be linked. There is absolutely nothing to stop the Federal Government, in the House of Representatives or in the Senate, from moving a small amendment, confined to the facts and the issue I have raised in the House today, to assist small business retailers in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria.

All the States are following the Government's landmark legislation; they all realise the wisdom of the New South Wales way of doing things in terms of retail tenancy reform. The whole of Australia is waiting for these amendments. Why must the whole of Australia wait for something that could be done in the Federal Parliament in 90 seconds? No doubt the Federal Labor Opposition in the House of Representatives and in the Senate would support the amendment. I call on Joe Hockey to do all he can to convince his colleagues to move this minor amendment in the Federal Parliament. The honourable member for Baulkham Hills, whom I thank for his compliments, said that the lead must come from the top.

I remind honourable members of what the Government has done to try to get the Federal Government to move this minor amendment. I have written to the Federal Government, I have spoken to Federal members, and I have raised the matter in this House. I do not know what one must do to get the Federal Government to make the amendment. I have raised this matter today because I hope that this essentially bipartisan debate will cajole, urge and embarrass the Federal Government into taking action. I simply want the amendment to be made. I simply want the Federal Minister for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, Mr Reith, to show the same level of leadership as I have shown on this issue and give retail tenants and, indeed, the landlords of New South Wales the legislation they want.

Motion agreed to.**COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION AND PRINCIPLES
OF MULTICULTURALISM BILL****Bill read a third time.****EVIDENCE (AUDIO AND AUDIO VISUAL LINKS) AMENDMENT BILL****Bill received and read a first time.****COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS (SUPERANNUATION) AMENDMENT
(1999 SUPERANNUATION AGREEMENT) BILL****Bill received and read a first time.**

Pursuant to resolution private members' statements taken forthwith.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RICHMOND-BLACKTOWN RAILWAY BRANCH LINE

Mr ROZZOLI (Hawkesbury) [4.22 p.m.]: I should like to place on record the concerns of commuters who travel on the Richmond-Blacktown railway branch line about the level of service—or, should I say, lack of service—that is currently delivered on that branch line. In recent years the former Government electrified the branch line. This Government has done work on the line to improve the level of service with regard to train running times. I am the first to concede that because branch lines are offshoots of a main line, when there are problems in the main line system, the branch lines are adversely affected. However, the problems that are occurring on the Richmond branch line relate not to problems on the main line but to lack of proper organisation on the branch line to enable commuters who are affected by changes in timetabling and running schedules to cope with those changes.

One of the most frequent complaints of commuters on the branch line is that they are never advised what is happening. They are never given any indication why the train they have sought to catch has been terminated or what arrangements are being put in place to assist commuters to get home. But for the proliferation these days of mobile phones, which enable commuters by pooling their knowledge to get some idea of what is happening, commuters would be far worse off. The problems that are generated by commuters being stranded on railway stations on the Richmond branch line are further compounded by the fact that many stations on that line are now unmanned. Indeed, many of the services are terminated at Mulgrave railway station. In the evening the station is unlit and unmanned and is decidedly dangerous for the security of young, aged and female passengers who are left on the station without warning and without the opportunity to make alternative arrangements to continue their journey by some other means of transport.

I am told by commuters that although buses are sometimes organised, there is no information about this and often the buses that arrive, because they are servicing peak hour trains, do not arrive in sufficient quantities to transport the number of passengers who are left stranded. This is disruptive not only to commuters. Many of the commuters who use the branch line live outside the towns immediately adjacent to the railway line. In fact, virtually only Riverstone, Windsor and Richmond have major centres of population close to the stations. Even those stations act as terminals for many people who live far beyond those towns. It is therefore the practice of other members of commuters' families to travel to the railway stations to pick them up and take them home. It is a very common practice. I did it for my children when they were travelling to the city.

It is frustrating and annoying when one arrives at the station to find that the service has been cancelled. It is even more annoying when one asks railway station staff what has happened and they do not know. When they are asked what alternative arrangements have been made for the people to continue their journey from wherever they may have been stranded, they do not know. Understandably, those waiting to pick up commuters get a little terse. I am told that they are often met with considerable rudeness on the part of the staff. I do not blame the railway staff necessarily. I think they find it equally frustrating because the rail service does nothing to keep them informed about what is happening. Obviously, if a station is unmanned, it is absolutely impossible for any information to flow.

Many of the problems experienced on the Richmond branch line relate to poor organisation and lack of customer service. Addressing those problems does not necessarily involve the expenditure of great sums of money. However, complaints to the Minister simply fall on deaf ears. All the representations I have made on behalf of commuters have been met with very trivial answers. It is a disgrace that this Government treats rail commuters with such cavalier disdain.

CABRAMATTA POLICING

Ms MEAGHER (Cabramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.27 p.m.]: I raise the issue of policing in my electorate of Cabramatta. The highly visible street trade of heroin in my electorate engenders fear and anger in local residents, shopkeepers and visitors to Cabramatta. The abuse and distribution of heroin is a highly complex and disturbing problem for which there is no quick fix or guaranteed solution. Indeed, until an answer—a permanent answer—is found for addiction, effective policing will remain an important factor in minimising the impact of the use and distribution of heroin and related drug crime in any local community. Cabramatta is a community that is highly dependent on a vigorous and dedicated police service and government

support at all levels to tackle this very serious problem head on. That is why the State Government has deployed significant extra resources and officers to the Cabramatta patrol, namely Operations Puccini and Portville.

In recent times I have been able to welcome the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Commissioner of Police and the Minister for Police to the local patrol. However, the widely reported disharmony within the local area command is of great concern and frustration to my local community. The community has the right to expect that its police are concentrating on the enormous task before them. For that reason I welcome the announcement by the Police Service that the recruitment process of a new patrol commander will be completed by 8 May. I welcome the prompt action by the Police Service and take this opportunity to assure my local community that the Government and the Police Service are determined to ensure the highest quality police service in our local area.

I take this opportunity also to ask my constituency to work closely with the new patrol commander and the Cabramatta police. I regard the installation of a new commander as a new broom for the local patrol and an opportunity to renew the vigorous efforts of the hard-working men and women of the Cabramatta patrol. I take this opportunity to reassure my constituents, despite some of the public and detractory statements that have been made in recent times about policing efforts in Cabramatta, that there has been a great deal of success with Operations Puccini and Portville. On 2 April, Operation Puccini was refocused. Since that time, 75 charges relating to drug crimes have been made. Overall, Operation Puccini has resulted in more than 7,000 arrests and 11,000 charges.

In addition to focussing on drug offences, Puccini officers have executed more than 2000 first instance warrants and have generated nearly 4,000 intelligence reports. That is a great example of proactive and professional policing, and reflects great credit on the hard work of the police in the local area. It is only possible because of the resources that the Government has deployed on the ground in the Cabramatta area. I mention in particular the 25 additional police officers who form the special strike force, Portville. I point out that police are not working in isolation on the very complex issue of drugs and drug-related crime in Cabramatta. The Carr Government has committed itself to a whole-of-government approach to reviving Cabramatta's local neighbourhood.

In particular, I refer to police involvement in the Cabramatta Place Management Project. Police officers have worked very closely with the Department of Health and various other Government departments as well as the local business community. I mention Business Watch, which was established recently as part of Operation Puccini to generate local knowledge and local input so that policing truly reflects the concerns of the local community. The police have worked with the place manager on issues involving the drug action team. They have also worked with the Western Sydney Chamber of Commerce to facilitate more effective policing of business premises. I have met the regional commander, Chris Evans, and I have been assured that targeting serious crime will remain the top priority for the local police force.

I take this opportunity to address some of the concerns raised by a local councillor who said that the drug problem in Cabramatta was attributable to the police. I find those comments totally irresponsible and reject them out of hand. In making such an allegation, the councillor has gone a long way towards undermining the very commendable efforts of a lot of hardworking police officers and the commitment of this Government to addressing serious crime in Cabramatta and returning the streets of Cabramatta to honest and hardworking people.

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [4.32 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Cabramatta for her courtesy in advising me that she intended to make some remarks about policing in Cabramatta. She indicated that Cabramatta is included in the local area command changes that are being made. I advise the House that that process is expected to be finalised next week. I am sure that the honourable member is pleased with such prompt action, which will provide an opportunity to the local community to firmly support local police officers under the leadership of a new commander. I commend the honourable member for Cabramatta for her very strong representation on behalf of her constituents in relation to the difficulties of policing in Cabramatta. She is right to refer to the irresponsibility of people who have been making statements, for purely political motives, that are both injurious to the morale of the Police Service as well as to the officers who are working in very difficult circumstances in that area.

Most honourable members in this Chamber and most people in New South Wales would have heard of Operation Puccini, which is in its thirteenth phase. Since 2 April, 75 charges have been laid. Puccini has resulted in more than 7,000 arrests and a total of 11,000 charges. Puccini officers have executed 2,157 first instance

warrants and have generated 3,875 intelligence reports. An additional 25 police officers have been sent to the Cabramatta area. Everyone should recognise that police have been participating in the Cabramatta Place Management Project with the local council, the New South Wales Department of Health, the Premier's Department and representatives of the local residential and business community. The point I make is that police are not working in isolation. A whole-of-government approach has been taken to revival of the shopping centre and neighbourhood of Cabramatta. My only advice to critics of action being taken in the Cabramatta electorate is that they should support the men and women of the Police Service, as the honourable member for Cabramatta has been doing publicly, and support Commissioner Ryan and his team in their endeavours to clean up Cabramatta. The Government has made many commitments, including financial commitments, and they will all be delivered.

TIMBERTOWN

Mr STONER (Oxley) [4.34 p.m.]: I rise this evening to inform the House about Timbertown, a tourist attraction in my home town of Wauchope. Any honourable member who has been there would confirm that Timbertown is a working village typifying life in the 1800s. Honourable members who visit Timbertown will experience the sights, sounds and smells of history as they walk through Timbertown. The setting is enhanced by costumes and buildings and by an overall atmosphere that portrays life in a wonderful bygone era in country New South Wales. Timbertown represents many small towns in country New South Wales that were built upon logging and timber production, and has been a major tourist attraction for Wauchope and the surrounding district. The fact that Timbertown is open to the public currently is testimony to community support and the determination of people who live in the Wauchope and Hastings district. The local group known as the Friends of Timbertown have contributed an enormous amount of effort to ensure its success.

Timbertown was originally operated by the Hastings Council but, owing to financial problems, Timbertown closed in the early 1990s. A community enterprise was formed in the mid-1990s to reopen Timbertown but again it encountered financial difficulties and closed. Later, in 1998, the Hastings Council reopened Timbertown under a different commercial structure whereby private enterprise tenants occupy the various buildings. That action was led by the economic development officer of Hastings Council, Trevor Sargent, who has worked tirelessly for the success of Timbertown. Among the enterprises trading out of Timbertown is Vickers Fudge. When I made my inaugural speech in this Parliament, I brought with me some Vickers Fudge. A number of honourable members sampled it and found to be very nice. Another enterprise is Timbertown Pies, and I assure honourable members that not a better pie can be found anywhere. Among other enterprises are the Maul and Wedge Restaurant and Ellenborough River Olives.

Timbertown currently offers free admission and families are welcome to visit and experience its many attractions, including a steam train, a timber mill, a bullock team and—my friend—Billy Bush-Dog, which performs a bushranging act and keeps the bullock team under control. Timbertown patronage has been very good since it reopened. The attraction has been a boon to the local economy. There are many other tourism venues located nearby, including Cassegrains Winery, Bago Winery, Billabong Wildlife Park and the many excellent bed and breakfast establishments in the Hastings area. Because Timbertown needs some assistance, yesterday I met the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism to discuss highway signs. Unfortunately, when Timbertown closed in the mid-1990s, lettering was removed from the brown tourist highway signs.

As people drive along the Pacific Highway, the faded colour can be seen where the lettering used to be, which suggests to tourists and potential visitors that the attraction is still closed. Many of the tenants have approached me and have sought the restoration of Timbertown lettering on signs along the Pacific Highway. I am pleased to say that I received a very good response from the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism, who said she will talk to her colleague, the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads. I hope that after 1½ years, action will be taken to have the name Timbertown restored on tourist road signs. That would assist Timbertown to capture more passing trade, which forms a large part of those who visit Timbertown. I thank the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism for her help in this matter, and I hope that the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads can assist.

BOURKE SPORTING CLUB

Mr BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.39 p.m.]: My contribution this afternoon relates to the great community of Bourke, an historic centre for the river trade of New South Wales, on the Darling River in the north of western New South Wales. The Bourke community is undergoing traumatic social, economic and other

change. Part of that change has been brought about by the collapse of the traditional pastoral industry. Bourke lost the riverboat trade a long time ago. In more recent years the rail line between Bourke and Nyngan was closed and, as a consequence, the abattoir at Bourke also closed. In contrast, there have been significant developments, one being the irrigation industry, which currently employs 670 equivalent full-time staff within the Bourke community. All who have contributed to the development of irrigation at Bourke need to be congratulated. However, very difficult issues of social adjustment and unemployment, particularly within the Bourke Aboriginal community, still remain.

I am pleased to report that one of the 14 approvals for sporting complex developments mentioned today by the Minister for Sport and Recreation is for a \$104,400 grant for the Bourke Sporting Club. The Bourke Sporting Club is the inspiration of a number of members of the community, led by Dr Ross Lamplugh. The concept is that facilities be developed in Bourke immediately adjacent to the existing nine-hole golf course to enable kids to come off the streets of Bourke and be entertained in a positive environment. Having come from Broken Hill I know how important such facilities are. The police citizens youth club there has just short of 1,000 members and provides a great service to the City of Broken Hill. The proposed Bourke centre will be very similar to the facilities at Broken Hill. Bourke will gain a centre at which young citizens can amuse themselves with boxing, netball or any other sport the children of the west enjoy.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation has made the grant available through the State Government's Regional Sports Facility program. The funds provided will be used to build the facility for local sporting groups and schools, and for those young citizens of Bourke to whom I have already referred. The centre has been described as a multipurpose sporting complex adjoining the Bourke Golf Club. Several months ago I was shown the high-quality submission proposed for the complex. I commend the new Mayor, Councillor Wayne O'Mally, for the assiduous way in which Bourke Shire Council supported the proposal. I cannot overemphasise how important this proposal is to the Bourke community. I hope that similar proposals can be put in place in other regional towns, especially river towns experiencing social dislocation through unemployment. I conclude by noting that this is but one of 14 projects approved by the Minister for Sport and Recreation across the State, the total value of which is \$2.2 million. This is a great win for a community that is struggling socially.

CASTLE HILL ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY TOILET FACILITIES

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [4.45 p.m.]: A number constituents have raised with me their concerns about the lack of toilet facilities for public use at the office of the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA], Castle Hill. On 21 January this year I wrote to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads on behalf of Mr B. Tumeth of 62 Ula Crescent, Baulkham Hills. Mr Tumeth has advised me that he is on medication which necessitates the frequent use of toilet facilities. He stated that he was required to wait for some time for service at the RTA Castle Hill office and was forced to approach counter staff to ascertain the whereabouts of the toilet facilities. However, he was informed that there were no such facilities for public use, and he was required to walk a fair distance to a garage to use its facilities. Mr Tumeth rightly stated that the RTA, being a government instrumentality, should have toilet facilities for public use. On 11 April I received a response from the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads which stated:

As you would appreciate, as is the case in the majority of individual commercial premises of this type, motor registries generally do not provide public toilets and are not obliged by law to do so.

However, I am advised that on request, customers can be sent to the adjoining Castle Hill business office where access to toilets can be provided.

Another customer, Mr Ken Tucker, informed me that on two visits to that establishment he was required to wait about 35 minutes on each occasion. He stated that he witnessed five clients being directed to the service station, a considerable distance up Anella Avenue. He said that the comment that "motor registries do not generally provide these facilities" is an irrelevant truism and the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads has replied that they are "not obliged by law to do so" is shameful. Motorists in this State are forced to pay large taxes. Surely it is not too much to ask that public toilets be provided at motor registries? Many clients of these establishments are forced to wait lengthy periods of time to undergo driving tests, and the lack of toilet facilities can be an added stress. Pregnant women, children accompanying their parents and, indeed, the general public should be able to avail themselves of such facilities.

The staff of the RTA at Castle Hill do an excellent job and certainly their task is not made easier by toilets not being available for members of the public who from time to time would require them. I call upon the Minister to review this difficulty. No doubt this issue applies to other RTA offices throughout the State. Many

people attend RTA offices for driving tests, licence applications and motor vehicle registration, and that often takes time. No-one denies that RTA offices are busy establishments, but consideration should be given to providing toilet facilities. This afternoon I have given details from my electorate alone. I imagine that many other honourable members would have received similar complaints from members of the public. I ask the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads to review the lack of toilet facilities at the RTA establishment in Castle Hill and to review availability at other RTA establishments throughout New South Wales.

NAMOI GROUNDWATER TASK FORCE

Mr WINDSOR (Tamworth) [4.49 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the recent establishment of the Namoi Groundwater Task Force. The allocation and overallocation of water licences is a very important, probably the most important, issue that this Parliament will deal with this year. Therefore it is pertinent to raise the matter, for it concerns a very important part of the State: the Namoi Valley. The issue relates to resources allocated by governments over many years, and in particular the overallocation of licences over those years. The task force was established by the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation, the Hon. Richard Amery; the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson; and the Federal Minister For Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Warren Truss.

The task force will investigate the Namoi groundwater recharge and what adjustment processes can be put in place to come to grips with this important issue. I raise this matter in the House not only to highlight the impact that this matter has on the Tamworth electorate but to draw parallels between that issue, which was raised in the white paper that is currently before the people of New South Wales, and the process that Minister Amery is going through to try to come to grips with a very difficult problem, including over-allocation of water licences over many years by many governments.

On 23 February the Deputy Prime Minister and the New South Wales Minister for Land and Water Conservation agreed to establish the Namoi Groundwater Task Force to examine options for an adjustment package to support a move to sustainable groundwater allocations in the Namoi Valley. The valley is the most over-allocated of any of the valleys within the State. That makes the issue very important from a number of perspectives. If the task force brings together Federal and State people in a spirit of co-operation—which it has done to date—and can solve that particular dilemma, I do not think it will have much problem dealing with the other issues throughout the State raised in the white paper and to be addressed in the water reform legislation that will come forward later in the year.

The options that the Namoi Groundwater Task Force is considering include investigation of the alternative for water to be obtained and provided as substitution for reduced groundwater availability. That option is very important. I know that many people across this State are examining ways and means of gaining efficiencies in their water use and considering structural measures that could be implemented in a sense to create more water, such as by better water transmission, or engineering works that could reduce the level of water evaporation. The investigation is to include a review of the Murray Darling Basin cap levels, which do not adequately include groundwater in their calculations.

Another option is a structural adjustment fund, with Federal and State government and industry contributions to assist individuals and businesses that will be directly and adversely affected as a result of government policy. A further option is financial assistance to conduct an independent review of the Namoi catchment to better quantify the sustainable groundwater yield, as a starting point for the adjustment process. Yet another option is financial assistance to conduct an independent review of the Namoi Valley to quantify the social and economic impacts of the individual water entitlement holders and the flow-on effects to the local community, also a very important point. Perhaps the last option is to investigate alternative management processes that will alleviate social and economic impacts.

Quite obviously, the issues raised in consideration of those options will be, I hope, taken into account by the New South Wales Government in relation to the white paper and when putting together the water reforms that it will soon present to this Parliament. I inform the House that I am a member of the task force. I should also like to take this opportunity to say to constituents, some of whom are in the electorate of Tamworth, that there is a lot of work going on. The department has been doing quite a lot of work. I am confident that the meetings that will take place over the next few weeks will lead to a successful outcome regarding the issues that the task force must come to grips with. I commend the Minister, the Hon. Richard Amery, for the role that he has played in the establishment of this task force. I commend also the Federal Minister, the Hon. Warren Truss.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE TOURISM

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [4.54 p.m.]: I speak on a matter of great importance to the electorate of Maitland: tourism and the diverse nature of tourism opportunities in that portion of the Lower Hunter. In the first instance I will refer particularly to the shire of Dungog and its important natural and man-made tourism resources. I mention the Barrington Ranges, the Barrington Tops and the Barrington Tops guesthouse, the walking trails, four-wheel drive trails, pony trails, the natural beauty of the area and the visitors it attracts from other parts of New South Wales, but particularly from the metropolitan area of Sydney. Those facilities make one realise how valuable a beautiful natural rainforest can be when it is properly managed, properly promoted and, in a tourist sense, well catered for.

The management of the Barrington Tops guesthouse does an excellent job of introducing people to a variety of accommodation, from motels right through to single-room services. The guesthouse provides horseriding and nature walks, and presents many other recreational opportunities for visiting tourists, particularly overseas tourists. Unfortunately, the quality of some Dungog shire roads is not so good, but that does not seem to deter visitors. Not far away is the Chichester dam, which is under the control of the Hunter Water Corporation. That dam has tremendous tourist facilities. It is a place to which many people, from the local area and from Newcastle and points interstate, like to go for picnics.

Another attraction is the Lostock dam and the associated caravan park in the shire. That is an extremely popular place for tourists, particularly caravan tourists. As honourable members would know, the Lostock dam is an irrigation dam of considerable dimension. It is tucked away in a magnificent part of the Hunter Valley. It is becoming increasingly popular for both day trips and long stays. Further south in the electorate is Tocal, with the Tocal Agricultural College and Tocal House. That facility is currently owned by the State and is operated by the Department of Agriculture. Again, the heritage value of Tocal House, surrounding properties and the restored barracks, including the tourist information centre that has been converted from one of the old buildings, make these icons of heritage well sought after by tourists. They are heavily promoted by the Dungog Shire Tourist Committee.

The local history museums in Paterson and Dungog are also eagerly sought out by tourists who visit those areas. That is not to mention some of the oldest of the wooden bridges built by the Department of Public Works. One only needs to look at the Morpeth bridge, in the district of Maitland, the Hinton bridge, in the shire of Port Stephens, the Woodville bridge, in Port Stephens, and the Clarence Town and Vacy bridges, both of which are within the Dungog shire, to get some idea of the quality of engineering of more than a hundred years ago. Those bridges are being maintained and brought up to speed. They are still in service and doing an incredible job to maintain the transport lifelines for those country areas.

I know I have already touched on heritage, but I would like to return briefly to the Morpeth area, a heritage icon of the Maitland district. I note that a major tourist event is about to occur there in the form of the Morpeth Jazz Festival. That festival is a wonderful opportunity for jazz fans to congregate, and to listen to some of the best bands in the country. The festival runs literally from Friday night through to Sunday night. People travel to that centre from all over Australia. They book permanently, and re-book. I was talking with one of the boarding house and bed and breakfast operators, who tells me that her establishment is booked out two years in advance for that event. In conclusion, tourism in the Maitland electorate is a major event. It is an activity that I heavily promote. I would hope that all honourable members will have the opportunity to come visit and enjoy.

DEATH OF SIR WILLIAM KEYS

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [4.59 p.m.]: Tonight I am somewhat saddened. I express sympathy to the Keys family on the death yesterday of Sir William Keys. Sir William's life might have been different if he had been able to follow his chosen career. However, in 1940, as a young Australian, he found himself in the Citizen Military Forces. He served in the 2nd-3rd Battalion of the Australian Imperial Force and went on to serve in New Guinea. Later he was involved in the battle of Tarakan in Borneo and he was critically injured in that battle. After World War II he joined the Korean conflict with the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. Unfortunately, he was again wounded. He was subsequently awarded the Military Cross.

After the Korean War he served as President of the national RSL in Australia for 10 years until 1986. Before that he served from 1961 as national Secretary of the RSL for a period of 17 years. Sir William was elected to the RSL New South Wales Council in 1947 before the Korean conflict. Sir William then took on a further battle, a personal battle with cancer. As on previous occasions he was again victorious after turning to

traditional Chinese medicines. At that time he served as the international President of the Federation of Korean War Veterans Associations and performed other duties, including being instrumental in the founding of the Korea and South-East Asia Forces Association.

Sir William was a farmer at heart. On his own admission he was a farmer by trade. While raising his three young daughters he ran the family farm at Bombala. His early training for his chosen career certainly stood him in good stead for the rest of his life. Sir William and Lady Keys enjoyed living on their block off the Captains Flat Road out of Queanbeyan, from where they followed the progress of their children. Their daughter Amanda is still fighting for peace in Burma today. Sir William was a kind and gentle man. He fought his latest battle and hung on until after the dedication, just before last Easter, of the national Korean war memorial in Canberra on Anzac Parade, which he attended in a wheelchair. Unfortunately, he was not well enough to attend any of the Anzac Day services which were held a few days later.

Sir William is survived by his charming wife, Dulcie, and their three children, Elizabeth, Amanda and Tammy. He fought for peace in wartime and he continued to fight during times of peace. He faithfully represented his service colleagues and worked tirelessly for the recognition of world peace, particularly through the construction of the Korean war memorial. He also fought a personal battle against lung cancer, which was believed to have originated from the asbestos lining in the tanks in which he served during the war. Regrettably, yesterday he lost that battle and he now rests in peace. Thank you, Sir William. It was a real pleasure and an honour to know you. I express sincere condolences to Sir William's family. He was 77 years old, having lived from 1923 to 2000. He made a great commitment to Australia and was a great Australian. May he rest in peace.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY HAWKESBURY STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Mr ANDERSON (Londonderry) [5.04 p.m.]: I did not have an opportunity to speak in the debate on the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Bill. However, I would now like to make some comments about it. Last Monday night I had the distinct pleasure of attending the student scholarship awards at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury campus. Guests were welcomed that night by the Chancellor, Sir Ian Turbott, who reiterated the comments of the President, Professor Bernard Carey, who talked about the institution, its history over many years and the outcomes that had been achieved. He said:

From that institution's earliest days as Hawkesbury Agricultural College, the calibre of its students was widely recognised.

In 1891, the Hon. Sydney Smith MP, then Minister for Mines and Agriculture, stated that the aim of the College was to ensure each of its students became "an authority upon all matters appertaining to the highest branches of his profession." It was those very students who were to become instrumental in building the wealth of the Colony and later, of the State of New South Wales.

Today, UWS Hawkesbury still ensures its students are authorities in their chosen professions.

It was evident during the presentation of the awards just how that university welcomes and encourages overseas students to participate in Australian education. Awards were presented to many but I was particularly pleased when the first award was presented. A few years ago I was friendly with the Movia family in Rooty Hill. The first recipient of an award that night was Shelley-Anne Movia. She received the scholarship award from Hawkesbury City Council. I was pleased that I had known that young lady from her earliest days.

As the night wore on we were treated to the presentation of scholarships for international students. The list of students who received awards included: Rosemeena Aziz, Navdeep Dahiya, James Josiah, Ernest Kolly, Honest Madziva and Thi Kim Anh Phan. That list reflects just how the University of Western Sydney is providing young people around the world with an opportunity to obtain quality education. Yesterday the Premier, in his speech in this Chamber, said that Australia was a multicultural society. Australia was built on the back of immigrants. We are continuing that great work by providing educational opportunities to people from all parts of the world.

Professor Mavis Bickerton then presented development and student exchange scholarships to many young people from around the world. The list of students who received awards included: Diana Armijo, Lauren Beattie, Shunling Cai, Elizabeth Holman, David Knight, Chun Li, Michelle Lopez, Michael Patoka, Roslyn Rodriguez, Sonia Thomas and Gavin Willis. Many people from many different cultures and nationalities are coming to Australia for their education. The Chancellor, Sir Ian Turbott, was absolutely beaming when a young lady responded on behalf of all students. Thi Kim Anh Phan responded by saying that the greatest opportunity anyone could ever present to her community was the opportunity of an education. She reserved the honour of receiving her scholarship and promised that she would not only work well in receiving her scholarship but also come back as a donator of scholarships in the future to give other young people in her nation the opportunities she was receiving through the good graces of Australia.

Private members' statements noted.

SENATE VACANCY**Joint Sitting**

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): I table the minutes of proceedings of the joint sitting to choose a senator in the place of Senator David Gordon Cadell Brownhill, resigned.

Ordered to be printed.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Lynch) left the chair at 5.10 p.m.]

Friday 5 May 2000

[Continuation of Thursday's sitting.]

[The House resumed at 10.05 a.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notice of Motion**

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is an error in today's printed program. The notice of motion in the name of the honourable member for Davidson for the Mona Vale Road Bushland Corridor Preservation Bill has been incorrectly listed and will not be called on today.

CROSS-BORDER COMMISSION BILL**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 13 April.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [10.07 a.m.]: I mentioned on 13 April when I commenced my second reading speech on this bill that members of the Opposition received a mountain of positive comments, letters and media coverage when we announced our intention to introduce legislation to create the Cross-Border Commission. Let me begin with the Premier of New South Wales. When the Opposition floated this idea the Premier's spokesman told the *Daily News* in the Tweed in December:

It doesn't matter if the proposal is put forward by Labor, Liberals, Nationals or Independents, if it's a good idea, it's a good idea.

I welcome the Premier's positive comments. I trust he will ensure that his Government supports this legislation. Unfortunately, some Labor members in border seats initially misunderstood our intention to create a cross-border commission. They labelled it a commission of inquiry, a creature of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. I am not talking about a commission of inquiry at all; I am talking about a statutory, stand-alone cross-border commission. It is difficult to imagine that Labor members could be so confused. A cross-border commission will not report on specific planning issues. It will be a stand-alone authority reporting directly to the Parliament of New South Wales, and not to the Premier or to bureaucrats.

In the newspaper article to which I referred earlier Mr Carr's spokesman also said that the Premier welcomed "any constructive effort" to solve cross-border problems, which clearly is what my proposal is. Opposition members sincerely look forward to bipartisan support from their parliamentary Labor Party colleagues, in particular, the honourable member for Tweed, Mr Newell, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, Mr Black, and the honourable member for Clarence and Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Harry Woods. The Labor Premier of Queensland then weighed into the issue, wholeheartedly supporting the proposal. Mr Beattie told the *Daily News* on 15 December that it did not matter which party came up with ideas to improve the quality of life and assist businesses in the Tweed and on the Gold Coast. Mr Beattie said:

I am very receptive to a suggestion like this. If we can do anything to work together to find a solution, we should try.

I welcome the Queensland Premier's positive comments. On 16 December last year, the Labor member for Tweed, Neville Newell, told ABC radio that he had given in-principle support to the National Party proposal for a cross-border commission. He said that the idea had merit. Tweed Mayor Lynne Beck said in the same newspaper that the Cross-Border Commission is "a great idea". Tweed Heads Bowls Club manager, Geoff Provest, told the *Daily News* that he welcomed "a serious attempt via a bipartisan approach to solve the cross-border anomalies". That is exactly what members of the National and Liberal parties want to achieve. Mr Provest said that, on many issues affecting the club industry he was frustrated at having to constantly "lobby this side, then the other side" of politics over the years. Mr Provest said:

... setting up an independent commission is tremendous.

Tweed Economic Development Corporation Chairman, Tom Senti, said it was a tremendous initiative because cross-border anomalies were a significant hurdle in attracting investment growth. I have since met with Mr Senti and he has written to me. His letter really illustrated the issues confronting this particular cross-border community. He wrote:

For all intents and purposes physically there is no border, but economically, philosophically and politically the differences and ramifications are quite profound.

In relation to the differences between New South Wales and Queensland he wrote:

While there are those who say the economic differences are not that great, when weighed up in terms of cost, the different philosophy, policies and attitude creates a difference in economic climate that is dramatic.

Mr Senti expresses concern that the New South Wales Government's white water paper will have a detrimental impact on the Tweed. He stated that the Tweed is well placed with water resources and infrastructure, but the New South Wales legislation will effectively cap the much-needed growth in the Tweed to 2 per cent per annum and lead potential investors to look across the border towards Queensland. This is certainly an issue that could be investigated by the commission. In the *Border Mail* of 15 December the honourable member for Murray-Darling was quoted as saying:

All country MPs would support efforts to resolve difficulties border communities face.

The newspaper reported Mr Black applauding the sentiment of the Coalition proposal, although he baulked at "the need for another commission of inquiry and another team of bureaucrats telling country people what they already know". For the benefit of the honourable member for Murray-Darling I repeat: We are not talking about a commission of inquiry under the planning Act; it will be a stand-alone statutory authority responsible only to the Parliament of this State. The fact is that governments come and go and they vary in political complexion from State to State. The benefit of a commission is that it is above party politics and able to address the issues irrespective of who is in power in the particular State.

Moreover, the commission will be a relatively small but nevertheless representative body of the community. I believe this is a critical element of the commission to help make it successful. These community representatives will have a strong interest in finding solutions. So, they will be focused and keen to tackle the issues. In its editorial of 15 December the *Queanbeyan Age* stated that "businesses, along with individuals, are being disadvantaged by cross-border anomalies with the Australian Capital Territory". The newspaper claimed that "because Queanbeyan is adjacent to Canberra, when new laws are implemented in the national capital, the fallout in Queanbeyan can be significant".

Another cross-border issue that has come to my attention since I delivered the first part of this speech on 13 April is aquaculture on the New South Wales-Victorian border. One issue relevant to the development of the inland aquaculture industry relates to the different permits required for projects on each side of the Murray River. I am informed that there is some evidence that the Victorian side is more attractive because it is further ahead in streamlining paperwork and there is more confidence in the system of water allocation in that State. In summary, I ask the Government to support the National and Liberal parties in this sincere attempt to fix obvious cross-border problems. A crying need exists for solutions to many problems in border communities. I believe the cross-border commission as outlined in the proposed legislation will provide a positive and proactive means of achieving outcomes for border residents and businesses. I urge all honourable members of this House to support the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stewart.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT (OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove—Leader of the Opposition) [10.14 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The aim of the Coalition's Freedom of Information Amendment (Open and Accountable Government) Bill is to restore the public's right to information by peeling back Labor's culture of secrecy. Our bill is based on the Jeffersonian principle that an informed citizenry is the cornerstone of democracy. As the father of the United States of America Freedom of Information Act 1966, US representative John Moss, said:

The real security of a nation is the intelligence and understanding of its people. Every effort [should] be made by government ... to assure that maximum information be available to the people who are the ultimate power under the constitution. No agency, no department, no individual has demonstrated a need so great as to avoid accountability for ... decisions made.

The New South Wales Coalition shares this view. As honourable members would be aware, in 1989 the Greiner Coalition Government introduced the New South Wales Freedom of Information Act believing that public access to information was a fundamental tenet of a Liberal democratic society. Unfortunately for the people of New South Wales, successive Labor governments have never shared this belief. The Wran and Unsworth governments continually blocked attempts to introduce freedom of legislation throughout their 13 years in office. In an unauthorised biography of Neville Wran in 1986, Milton Cockburn and Mike Steketee stated that under the Wran Government there was no "enthusiasm for greater scrutiny of government decision making".

Similarly, Professor Peter Wilenski, the original proponent of freedom of information legislation in New South Wales, described the then Labor Government as a bastion of secrecy. The Carr Government, of course, has continued the Labor tradition of secrecy. The Government has systematically abused the exemption provisions in the Freedom of Information Act by denying public access to information that it deems could damage the Government politically. By doing this, the Carr Government has turned the Freedom of Information Act into the freedom from information Act. The Deputy Ombudsman, Chris Wheeler, noted in 1999:

Where the information requested is in anyway contentious, it appears that agencies will go to considerable lengths to prevent disclosure of information.

The Premier's own department was found to be the worst offender by refusing, in full, 55 per cent of all freedom of information applications. Departments and agencies routinely abused the exemption provisions of the Freedom of Information Act by spuriously declaring requested information to be subject to Cabinet privilege, legal privilege, or being commercial in confidence. One department even tried to suppress a 1996 report by claiming there were problems with its research methodology. However, this rationalisation was later shown to be a lie by the report's researchers and forced the department to begrudgingly release it in 1998. Other techniques used by agencies are to impose exorbitant request fees or to black out large sections of documents rendering them practically useless.

Mrs Skinner: Absolutely true.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The honourable member for North Shore and shadow Minister for Health has had recent and ongoing experience of this particular practice. Disinterested observers might ask: How does this secrecy really affect my life? An answer can be found in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* "Secret State" articles in February and March 1999. One article, entitled "30 things they won't tell us", listed some of the information the Government has blocked access to, including funding allocations and expenditures for area health services; comparisons of individual school results for the Higher School Certificate, School Certificate, and basic skills tests; a Department of Community Services report into allegations of assault and rape at the Royal Place group homes for the disabled; an education department report detailing an increase in drug use by TAFE students; a transport department report into expanding the Pension Excursion Ticket scheme to private buses; Olympic Co-ordination Authority contracts for the construction of Olympic facilities; and Department of Community Services data on the number of notifications it receives annually from people concerned about child safety.

This is not dry, esoteric information. This information goes to the heart of government. It is information that would allow public scrutiny of the Carr Government's performance, and as such it is information the Carr Government is keen to keep out of the public arena. In addition to shielding incompetent decision-making from the glare of public scrutiny, secrecy also has the potential to be a breeding ground for corruption. Tony Harris, the former Auditor-General, after being refused access to Cabinet documents, said:

The absence of entitled access to these documents allows accountability to be evaded ... it was this lack of accountability that enabled WA Inc to emerge.

It is these twin concerns that have prompted the New South Wales Coalition's proposed amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. The main features of our bill include, first, the appointment of the Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman as the Freedom of Information Commissioner, with strengthened powers to access information and deal with reviews and appeals. The Freedom of Information Commissioner will have the power to enter agency premises and search for relevant documents. The second feature is a presumption in favour of access to information, with agencies having the burden of establishing that documents are exempt documents subject to "Cabinet privilege", "legal privilege" or "commercial in confidence." In other words, matters involving the personal affairs of individuals and issues of security would continue to be protected.

The third main feature is a requirement for agencies to number or otherwise identify their documents in such a way as to make it readily apparent if any document, or any part of a document, is unaccounted for in any response made by the agency to an application. The fourth provision is that agencies will not be permitted to impose excessive charges on individuals legitimately seeking information. The fifth feature is that the public will be able to attend the board meetings of statutory corporations, subject to a provision allowing them to go in camera to deal with appropriate staffing, financial or commercial details. The sixth provision is that the Freedom of Information Commissioner will have the power to name individual bureaucrats and agencies that obstruct access to information. The commissioner will also have the power to impose a maximum penalty of 20 penalty units on agencies and individuals who refuse or fail to comply with a direction.

These amendments give expression to the Coalition's belief that it is the people who own information; government is merely the custodian. This is something Labor governments have never understood. I accept that some people may believe that the Opposition is only interested in freedom of information amendments for its own political interest, to be used to try to expose government blunders. It is often said that oppositions lose their enthusiasm for freedom of information amendments once in government. However, I make this commitment: Our government will abide by both the letter and spirit of the Freedom of Information Act. In the emerging information age, voters are growing less tolerant of governments that keep secrets, and are demanding greater accountability and openness.

All established institutions in society—such as the judicial system, churches, the media and large corporations—are being exposed to far greater scrutiny. The Carr Labor Government's response to these developments has been to further restrict public access to information. Is it any wonder the public holds politicians in such low esteem—somewhere around the level of used car salesman—when they act in such contravention of the public interest. The task, as I see it, is to regain the public faith in its political institutions. In this sense, the Coalition's freedom of information amendments are also about institution building. These amendments are about rebuilding the public's faith in the Government. The amendments are about encouraging people to take a greater ownership in government. The amendments are about making government a more effective instrument for improving society. Before the Government rejects our bill—as I expect it to—I would ask it to ponder the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think themselves not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

With this bill the New South Wales Coalition is seeking to inform the people's discretion. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stewart.

**TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT
(CONSULTATION PROCEDURES) BILL**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 13 April.

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.24 a.m.]: The Carr Government opposes any legislative changes to the Technical and Further Education Commission Act regarding consultative

processes involving the proposed closure of TAFE establishments. It is the obligation and duty of this Government to ensure the distribution of resources is planned and administered in the most equitable and cost-effective way possible. The bill would impose additional costs on TAFE New South Wales at a time when, thanks to the Commonwealth Government, TAFE can least afford it. It would be detrimental to the provision of relevant vocational education and training [VET] in the rapidly changing VET environment because of the need for TAFE to retain uneconomic, underutilised sites during the period of consultation proposed in the bill. The provision of a quality public education system relies on the equitable distribution of resources. Facilities in areas with underutilised accommodation should be rationalised to free resources for both improving the quality of education and for the provision of courses in growth areas. Because Federal Government policy is reducing funding for education and training, TAFE New South Wales has no option but to look for achieving efficiencies in its business procedures. The Government will consider both the needs of the community and the need for efficient and effective service in education and the management of TAFE provision.

In 1996 the Commonwealth Government committed to an open training market, implementing competitive tendering, user choice and support for private training providers, resulting in the need for TAFE New South Wales to reduce costs in order to compete. As a consequence of the Federal Government's open market policies, TAFE New South Wales, which has 120 sites across New South Wales for the delivery of over 1,500 different courses, is now in competition with 1,200 private providers in the vocational education provision sector. At the same time that the TAFE sector is experiencing increased competition, successive Commonwealth budget cuts are imposing significant funding constraints on the vocational education and training sector, including TAFE New South Wales. As the New South Wales training sector becomes more competitive, TAFE New South Wales must reposition itself to ensure its standing as a pre-eminent training provider.

The current Australian National Training Authority [ANTA] Agreement 1998-2000 is based on the principle of "growth through efficiencies"—that is, requiring States to expend their public education provision of vocational education and training without providing any additional funds. The Federal Government, through ANTA, cut growth funding to States resulting in the loss of \$138 million over the past three years. On top of this, the Commonwealth has reduced capital funding to New South Wales by around \$19.5 million since coming to office in 1996. The detrimental effect of that on this State is to be condemned. This has placed pressure on the TAFE system in New South Wales, which is required to meet Commonwealth-imposed growth-through-efficiency targets. These targets require a range of strategies to be implemented to make TAFE New South Wales more efficient, including improving management systems, increasing average class sizes, reducing attrition rates, improving module completion rates and rationalising facilities.

This year, States and Territories are negotiating with the Commonwealth about future funding arrangements under a new ANTA agreement. At this stage it is not known what the future funding arrangements are likely to be. However, it is anticipated that there will be no increase in Commonwealth funding. That is very sad to report. The Federal Minister for Education, Dr Kemp, has written to the Minister for Education and Training demanding even greater growth through even greater efficiencies. Dr Kemp has threatened even further cuts to New South Wales should it not meet his demands. The funding available to TAFE reflects the need for efficiencies in a highly competitive training market while projecting a profile that is responsive to industry needs, provides more flexible delivery patterns and promotes new educational technologies. The State's 11 TAFE institutes determine their course offerings taking into account relevant student demand, local industry training needs and available resources.

Strategies have now been implemented through the 1999-2000 State budget process to make TAFE New South Wales more efficient. New South Wales is also continuing to implement strategies to improve management systems, increase average class sizes, reduce attrition rates, improve module completion rates and rationalise facilities. It would be inappropriate to recommend legislative changes to the TAFE Commission Act in this context. It is possible to implement changes through current departmental policy guidelines—significant change aimed at dealing with some of the concerns. These guidelines address the issue of consultation.

TAFE New South Wales must be able to operate on a level playing field. Any changes made to the TAFE Commission Act to introduce a long, structured process for closing down a TAFE site would mean that TAFE New South Wales would not be able to compete with other private providers in a fast-moving and deregulated education environment. This would weaken TAFE's position in the competitive training market, with dramatic implications for TAFE New South Wales both as a provider and as an employer. There are more than 2,200 State schools in New South Wales and under legislative requirements they have an expectation of enrolling well over 750, 000 students annually. The curriculum is set within boundaries. Schools have a more certain expectation about their enrolments than TAFE has.

Schools are funded in relation to their enrolments, which the Department of Education and Training constantly monitors. Demographic trends are used to make decisions about the rationalisation of school facilities. A small number of schools are closed each year because of falling enrolments. The needs of the community and the need for efficient and effective service in education are taken into account in the management of school provision. That is obviously the realistic approach. On the other hand, TAFE course profiles respond to changes in industry demand, which can be quite dramatic. It is essential that TAFE institutes have the flexibility to move resources between sites, and to do it in a flexible and fast way. Funding is allocated by institutes to meet priority needs in areas of industry demand.

The consultation process detailed in the Education Act of 1990 for the closure of schools is totally inappropriate for TAFE institutes. It would restrict the operations of TAFE institutes in meeting the changing industry and community demands for vocational education and training. Some sites are specialised in the courses delivered because of the need to be proactive in meeting the needs of industry and flexible in the mode of delivery. It is the obligation and duty of the Government to provide a statewide allocation of resources for the delivery of all educational programs across New South Wales. TAFE institutes must be in a position to be flexible and respond quickly to changing demands and the broader policy environment in which they operate. This flexibility is essential in order to ensure their longer term financial viability and competitiveness. The proposed legislation would greatly hinder the ability of TAFE New South Wales to compete with private providers in the delivery of vocational education and training.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [10.33 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the bill. Unlike the Government, the Opposition strongly supports the bill. Among the reasons for its support of the bill is that it came out of a process that was begun by the New South Wales Opposition. Honourable members would be aware that in another place the Hon. Patricia Forsythe, the shadow Minister for Education and Training, successfully moved a motion which sent to one of the general purpose standing committees the whole question of the closure of Seaforth TAFE. That committee did very good work. I note that the honourable member for Manly, who introduced this bill, is agreeing. The committee made the recommendation which has been picked up in this bill. The Opposition places firmly on the record that the central idea of the bill came from the general purpose standing committee and discussions with the Hon. Patricia Forsythe and other members of the committee.

The honourable member for Manly is smiling but it is very much the Coalition's policy that the bill be enacted. It came from work that was initiated by us. It is therefore clearly and strongly supported by us. We will support the bill in the lower House and in the upper House. At least one other bill seeks to do exactly the same thing as this bill, and it originated in another place. The Opposition supports that bill as well. This represents good policy, and it is good policy that came from the New South Wales Coalition as a result of initiatives that we took because we support the people of the northern beaches in their right to have a fully integrated education system. Unlike the Government, we believe that the people of the northern beaches need to have every opportunity for all forms of education and training delivered in an integrated setting close to home.

I do not know whether the Parliamentary Secretary fully appreciates the geography of the northern beaches, but the northern beaches may be considered as a geographic entity, and a social geographic entity, in its own right. More so than any other region of Sydney I can think of, perhaps with the exception of the Sutherland shire, it regards itself as almost a closed community. It is very proud of that. The phrase "insular on the peninsula" is often thrown around, but it reflects simple geographical imperatives, apart from anything else, that during the years have led to the area being a fairly isolated environment. For example, there is a distinct lack of public transport on the northern beaches. The road system is appalling: it is not possible to get in and out of the northern beaches quickly. There are not the same public and private transport options as there are in other areas of Sydney. Students represent the whole gamut of society, but I suppose more than other sections of the community they rely on public transport and access to services close to home.

It is ludicrous, and it reflects an appalling misunderstanding of the northern beaches, for the Government to suggest that upon the closure of Seaforth TAFE students would be easily able to go to Meadowbank. Meadowbank may be on a train line but how does one reach a train from the northern beaches? The honourable member for Georges River will speak next. He may be able to explain how the Government he supports believes that students from Seaforth TAFE will get to Meadowbank by train. How will they get to Hornsby, which is also on a train line? As the member for Hornsby I know that there is a very fine TAFE facility in Hornsby. It also has suffered from the rationalisation of courses under the Carr Labor Government. Hornsby TAFE is receiving significant capital works funding. This point is very pertinent to what the Government is doing.

During the last election campaign the State Government claimed credit for significant capital work being done at Hornsby TAFE. But the money is coming from the Commonwealth, from the Australian National Training Authority [ANTA]. In no sense can the State Government claim that it is providing the capital works funding to upgrade Hornsby TAFE. Yet when the Minister for Education and Training came to Hornsby during the election campaign with the Labor candidate he deliberately lied by claiming that it was the Carr Government that was building the new facilities at Hornsby TAFE. We can thank the Federal Government for it. I mention that because most of the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary was taken up with the notion that if Seaforth TAFE closes it will be the fault of the Federal Government. So the hypocrisy is revealed: the State Government is claiming credit for all the capital works being done at Hornsby and other TAFEs throughout New South Wales funded by ANTA, and on the other hand is blaming the ANTA process and the Federal Government for the fact that Seaforth TAFE has to close.

There is another example of hypocrisy. Who is one of the main signatories to the ANTA agreement? The Parliamentary Secretary should know the answer to that question. One signatory to the ANTA agreement is the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training. Any agreement that has been made for reform through efficiency in ANTA since 1995 has been signed off by the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training. ANTA is doing what it is doing now because the New South Wales Minister for Education and Training is a signatory and has agreed to the process. It is no use the Parliamentary Secretary whingeing if he does not like the process. He sits at the ANTA table so he should take the matter up with ANTA.

The Minister should work with the other State education Ministers to change this national policy—a policy that has been employed under Federal and State Labor and Coalition administrations for a long time. The national policy is not new. Indeed, I recall that it began during the term of the previous Federal Labor Government. It had the agreement of both sides of politics in both Federal and State jurisdictions. ANTA has implemented a co-operative and important process of providing an ongoing, singularly focused training policy to provide for the needs of a modern Australia for a considerable period. It has been a co-operative process.

Every time the New South Wales Labor Government does something bad it is happy to blame ANTA, to which it and Federal Labor Governments have been signatories during the years. Every time something good happens the New South Wales Labor Government wants to claim credit for it. That is the hypocrisy of New South Wales Labor. The Government told the people of New South Wales, particularly those on the peninsula, a direct lie. In the *Manly Daily* of 18 November 1998 the deputy director of the Northern Sydney Institute was quoted as saying:

There is no proposal for the closure of Seaforth. He said, "If the Government was planning to sell off Seaforth that would have to be three to five years in the planning so that we could make alternative plans to accommodate students".

I can only assume that the deputy director of the Northern Sydney Institute was stating honestly what he had been told by the Government—the same Government that clearly promised the people of the peninsula during the 1999 election campaign that Seaforth TAFE would not close. Why would Government members want to be so dishonest to the people at Seaforth? The reason is clear: they were in election campaign mode. The Government told the department to make a similar promise to the people at Manly High School. Do honourable members remember that promise? The honourable member for Manly would remember it well.

Manly High School attracted a significant amount of attention. I visited Manly High School with the honourable member for Wakehurst, who is a former student of the school and holds it very close to his heart. We visited the school to discuss with the parents and citizens, and the relevant school representatives, the appalling state of capital works at that school. Ongoing maintenance funding—periodic maintenance funding—for the school was cancelled by the incoming Labor Government in 1995. From memory, the school would have received close to \$1 million of periodic maintenance funding in about 1996.

Mr Stewart: The Government replaced periodic maintenance with a program of maintenance when it is necessary, not when a school must wait for it.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The Parliamentary Secretary says that the Government replaced the periodic maintenance program with a program that provides for maintenance when it is needed. That is the nub of the argument. Can the Parliamentary Secretary tell me that it was not necessary, at Manly High School, to fix the hole in the floor in the woodwork room, into which I personally stuck my arm up to the shoulder and still did not touch the bottom of it? Was it necessary to fix the hole in the floor behind the sink where students wash their hands and clean up after their work? I have inspected the hole on a number of occasions, and honourable members know that it featured prominently on my web page during the election campaign. Fixing that hole at

Manly High School was necessary. The Parliamentary Secretary said that the Government replaced the periodic maintenance program, which was to provide about \$1 million to Manly High School in 1995-96 to fix the hole in the floor, the cracks in the buttressing—

[Interruption]

If the Parliamentary Secretary wants to learn something he should be quiet. Periodic maintenance funding would have been used to fix the cracks in the buttressing on the outside of the building and the trim along the edge of the linoleum in many of the classrooms. I observed that it was literally hanging free for a distance of two metres, and students and staff could easily trip over it. When we walked down the corridor we saw that the linoleum had lifted. Much of it has not been replaced, and the bits that have been replaced—under this program of maintenance when it is needed, which is a joke—are a different colour.

I went into a classroom where the carpet was frayed, pretty much as the carpet in front of me where I am standing now is frayed. I draw the attention of the Speaker to the state of the carpet in this building. Here is an example of what was happening at Manly High School. This carpet will be lifting shortly, and it will be an occupational health and safety hazard. I know that the Speaker will attend to repair of the carpet now that I have drawn it to his attention. However, the carpet at Manly High School was lifting, and I demonstrated that a student could easily trip over the carpet and be seriously injured.

Mr Stewart: I will get you a job at the Labor Council as a building inspector.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The Parliamentary Secretary said that he will get me a job with the Labor Council as a building inspector. I would rather be in the New South Wales Parliament arguing for the genuine needs of students on the northern beaches and across New South Wales to have well-maintained buildings and a TAFE college from a government that provides for them properly. To finalise my account of what happened at Manly High School I should add that, as with Seaforth TAFE, the Government directly perpetrated a lie on the people of the northern beaches. I do not use that word often, but I feel very strongly about this matter.

When we raised the plight of the students at Manly High School and the appalling lack of capital works that had taken place during what was then four years of Labor government, the deputy director of education rang the school principal and the president of the parents and citizens association and told them, "We will provide the funding to fix all the problems you have outlined. Don't worry about it. Your needs will be met." There was a clear implication that the school's part of the bargain was to stop raising these matters in the context of an election campaign. It was a clear threat. That breaches a number of conventions about democracy in New South Wales, and certainly in Australia.

After the election the principal and the president of the Manly High School parents and citizens association, having abided by their part of the agreement by not raising in the most vocal manner the plight of Manly High School and the Government's failure to provide funding during the previous four years, asked the department where the money was that the Government had promised. What did the Government say? It said that the school could have the money but it would have to sell part of the school's assets to provide for it. What a deception! What arrogant, arrant deception on the part of the Labor Party! It is the same arrogant and arrant deception that brings us to this Chamber today with the bill introduced by the honourable member for Manly to try to stop the Government from closing Seaforth TAFE. We are doing that because during the election campaign the Government promised that it would not close Seaforth TAFE and then immediately after the election it decided that it had to close Seaforth TAFE after all.

The Government's assurances, via the deputy director of the Northern Sydney Institute, that the closure of Seaforth TAFE would be a three to five year process, have gone out the window. The Government simply wants to close Seaforth TAFE as quickly as possible and get out of there; it wants to take the money and run. The Government then had the hide to blame the Federal Government and ANTA, to which the New South Wales Government is a signatory. It is arrant nonsense. The Government has also completely ignored the Northern Beaches Secondary Education Review Committee and its ongoing work in looking at alternative modes of delivering education on the northern beaches. One alternative the committee is looking at is middle schooling—something about which I am a strong and passionate advocate, as honourable members well know.

It is part of an integrated education system to be able to provide senior students with a much more flexible system of receiving senior education, in which TAFE must play a fully integrated role. Similar things are happening in the south of Sydney, and the honourable member for Georges River might wish to refer to that.

I shall not canvas in detail what happened at Oatley, but, there was extensive debate and the Government finally decided to stop the sale of the university's campus to a body that had every right to believe the Government when it said it would allow the sale to go ahead. The Government has now legislated to stop the sale and is suggesting there will be a fully integrated K-2 training education environment with TAFE as a partner on the Oatley campus, with university courses being delivered. That is a good model that has been supported by the Coalition and was employed in Sydney's west at the University of Western Sydney joint site by the Catholic education sector, the Department of School Education, as it then was, and TAFE.

This ought to be happening in the northern beaches area. In the western and southern suburbs the Government has moved to provide TAFE facilities in a flexible way for senior secondary students and community members to receive a mixture of Higher School Certificate [HSC] and post Higher School Certificate training modes. Even though the northern beaches are crying out for the same flexible delivery, and even though the whole structure of education is under review, the Government has already prejudged the matter by deciding to sell off Seaforth TAFE.

When the review recommends that TAFE options in the northern beaches region be expanded to provide greater opportunities for Higher School Certificate students to attend a local TAFE college to undertake senior Higher School Certificate courses under the joint secondary schools-TAFE plan, the Government will not know what to do because it will have already sold Seaforth TAFE. It will blame the Federal Government and suggest that it will have to provide \$10 million to build a new facility.

This smacks of the same style of short-sighted crisis management and decision making, ignoring the needs of the community, that has characterised education under the Carr Labor Government. The Government has said that it will relocate students to Brookvale TAFE and other places. Seaforth TAFE has 1,800 students, and although many courses will be relocated to Brookvale TAFE, at least 500 students are studying courses that will not be relocated. The Government has said that those students will have to go to North Sydney, Hornsby or Meadowbank TAFEs. I have dealt earlier with the significant public transport problems that will cause students.

Higher School Certificate students will be particularly disadvantaged by this action. They will not be able to access courses at Brookvale TAFE, and under the current proposal HSC courses will not be available in the northern beaches area in a TAFE setting. That is important now, in 2001 when new HSC students are sitting for their examinations, and is important for the future of education. The Government has made no provision for the future flexible delivery of senior high school education in joint settings with TAFE.

This affects people who are seeking second-chance education through TAFE. These are people who left school before completing their School Certificate or Higher School Certificate and who find TAFE to be a very convenient and appropriate place for them to receive their qualifications. That includes students who are unable to study in normal senior high school settings who are 16 and 17 years of age. It also includes mature age students, who left school some years ago and are returning because they know that to survive in Australia and for Australia to grow and prosper all people need to be involved in ongoing and lifelong education.

Seaforth TAFE has been an invaluable base for second-chance education in the northern beaches area. Its closure will mean the loss of another option for those who look to the Government for equitable ways to further improve their lives. The Government has argued that enrolments at Seaforth TAFE have been dropping. That is not the case. In accounting and commerce in 1998, 510 students were enrolled but this year there are 550. Enrolments in fine arts have increased from 239 to 304. Enrolments in marketing, advertising, public relations and real estate courses have risen from 586 to 630. This is not a TAFE college that is in decline but one that is growing, and one that is important to people on the northern beaches. And why should TAFE colleges not grow? TAFE is a great place to do that form of training, yet this option will be limited severely if the Government embarks on its course of action.

Objections have been raised on behalf of TAFE teachers and students about the Government's plans to move to other settings. A key question is whether Brookvale TAFE will be provided with the capital works necessary for it to be able to expand in the way it will have to expand if Seaforth TAFE is closed. The answer clearly seems to be no. There is nothing from the Parliamentary Secretary, representing the Minister—and where is the Minister?—or the Government on ways in which it will enhance other facilities serving the northern beaches.

This bill, if passed, will enable the community to have a say about the closure of not just Seaforth but any TAFE college in the future, in the same way in which the community has a say and the Government is

accountable when it proposes to close a school. That important legislation was accepted by the Greiner Government, has an interesting history, and has been accepted by both sides. The passing of the legislation will mean that whenever the Government wants to close a school, it must give notice and provide a consultation process for the community under which the Government is held accountable for providing for the needs of that community in the future. If the community can mount a strong enough argument, any school under threat of closure will not be closed.

The Government has found a loophole. I alert the honourable member for Manly to the fact that the Government may try to use the same loophole in relation to Seaforth TAFE. We should be cognisant of that possibility. The Government did not give notice that it wanted to close Peter Board High School on Epping Road, North Ryde. Instead, because the Act provides that the 18-month period can be short-circuited if the community demonstrates that it accepts the decision, the Government sought to undermine the viability of Peter Board High School by refusing to provide the appropriate curriculum choices and to promote and enhance course options in the way that it had done at other high schools.

The Government set up a deliberate process to try to run down the numbers at Peter Board High School. That placed the staff in an extremely invidious position. Over the years I have had discussions with the staff at that high school, including some senior staff. They were upset—and I do not blame them—at the way in which for a period of time that high school became the focus of community action and political debate. I say to the staff and the community that the actions of the Government were as hurtful and damaging to the staff and to the interests of comprehensive, coeducational secondary education as anything that one could possibly imagine.

It was not the history of secondary education that was the subject of debate over the closure of Peter Board High School but the action of the Government in deliberately trying to bypass the provisions of the Education Act that it must give notice and undertake a consultation process before closing a school. The honourable member for Manly would be interested to learn that the Government offered students incentive packages to leave Peter Board High School. The Government offered to provide students with money to buy new uniforms and actively encouraged them to make choices to go elsewhere. The Government sent letters home to parents saying, "We will not be able to provide a full curriculum for your students beyond a certain date. We strongly recommend that you make a decision to send your children to another school." From memory, the Government was referring to Malvena High School and other high schools in the area.

That is how the Government was trying to ensure that the numbers dwindled. In the end, about nine students were looking for senior school accommodation. Those nine students were extremely angry because they had gone through Peter Board High School and felt committed to it. All honourable members would understand that students become extremely attached to their schools. Indeed, it is a necessary part of the education process that students have a sense of belonging about their school and feel that they are an important part of the history of that school. I heard the Premier express similar sentiments on radio recently. The Government is deliberately seeking to destroy Peter Board High School, which is very sad.

The Education Act passed by the Greiner Government provides that a government must give 18 months notice of the closure of a school. It provides that the government will establish a committee comprising broad representation so that the community can be consulted about the process by which that school will be closed—and, indeed, whether it ought to be closed at all. The bill introduced by the honourable member for Manly picks up on the policy ideas of the New South Wales Coalition, developed by the Hon. Patricia Forsythe and others through the general purpose committee that inquired into this matter.

The bill simply replicates for TAFE colleges the current provisions of the Education Act in relation to schools. It is a simple bill, with a simple proposition. It says that the community needs to be consulted, that notice needs to be given of the closure of a TAFE college before it is closed, and that a TAFE closure review committee must be established. As I have alluded to, the Opposition strongly supports such a measure. I mentioned this privately to the honourable member for Manly the other day. It might be instructive to have a closer look at the make-up of the TAFE closure review committee. The bill provides that the committee is to comprise:

- (a) an independent person appointed by the TAFE Commission, and
- (b) the Managing Director or a nominee of the Managing Director—

that is, of TAFE—

- (c) a nominee of the Local Government Association of New South Wales,
- (d) a nominee of a relevant student representative body for the relevant TAFE establishment affected by the proposal,
- (e) a nominee of the New South Wales Teachers Federation, and
- (f) a nominee of the TAFE Commission.

I believe that the committee membership is probably top-heavy with people from TAFE. The honourable member for Manly may wish to reflect on that matter, and perhaps some of our colleagues in another place may have further discussion about it at a later time. I do not hold a hard and fast view on the matter. The honourable member for Manly may not be aware of this. The TAFE Commission has become toothless—I hesitate to use that word, but it is close to toothless. Under the actions of the current Government, the commission has become a far less important body than the Education Act originally provided. The Government has wound down the importance of the TAFE Commissioner. For a very long time, commissioners who needed to be reappointed by the Government were not reappointed.

Mr Barr: They should be appointed by the Parliament.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The honourable member for Manly says that they should be appointed by the Parliament. Perhaps that is a good idea worthy of consideration. The Government deliberately bypassed the TAFE Commission. Indeed, the Managing Director of TAFE was completely bypassed as well. Clearly, that matter needs legislative review. Some very interesting anomalies were created and still exist. The Government has now appointed the Director-General of Education the Managing Director of TAFE. The Act has not been changed. However, the Act, when it was originally passed by this Parliament, distinctly separated TAFE from school education. An important part of that was the ability of the Director-General of TAFE to report directly to the Minister for Education and Training and the TAFE Commission to provide, to both TAFE and the Minister, advice about TAFE policy.

All of those independent processes have now been collapsed into an administrative structure which has the Director-General of Education and Training as the only person who is able to report to the Minister for Education and Training about the interests of schools and TAFE colleges. Conflicts relating to the interests of TAFE and the interests of school education are easily resolved because only one person reports to the Minister. However, I ask the honourable member for Manly and other honourable members to consider who now speaks independently on behalf of TAFE. It is no longer the managing director.

This is not a criticism of the incumbent. It is a structural impediment to an independent voice, independent advice, going to the Government about the operation of TAFE and policy in the technical and further education area. It is a structural impediment that this Parliament needs to resolve. The Government ought to introduce a review of the Education Act and the TAFE Act to this Parliament to resolve that tension. As I mentioned earlier, alongside that lies the Government's complete winding back of its regard for the TAFE Commission and the importance of the commission. The bill provides that the TAFE closure review committee is to comprise the managing director, two people involved with the TAFE Commission, and so on. I simply wonder whether that will be effective under the current structures, because the Government still clearly has the numbers in all of those places in any event. The honourable member for Manly and other honourable members may wish to reflect upon that.

I reiterate: The New South Wales Liberal-National Coalition believes in the future of Seaforth TAFE. It believes in the future of technical and further education as part of a modern, integrated range of education options for people on the northern beaches. It believes in the right of the people on the northern beaches to have the same sorts of facilities as the Government is providing in other parts of Sydney, including southern Sydney and western Sydney, and Dubbo. The Government has found it opportune to start reviewing the structures of education in a number of areas. However, the Government needs to conduct such a review in my electorate of Hornsby and those parts of the northern suburbs that deserve the Government's attention. Perhaps I will discuss that matter on another occasion. The New South Wales Coalition was there at the genesis of the idea raised by the honourable member for Manly and, therefore, we strongly support it.

Mr Stewart: You said it was your idea; now you are saying it is his idea.

Mr O'DOHERTY: I said that we were there at the genesis of the idea. The honourable member for Bankstown, the Parliamentary Secretary who is in the Chamber, is simply delaying the House. I could speak to this matter for a very long time. However, if the honourable member promises to remain silent for another 30

seconds, I will not do so. I have respect for the honourable member for Bankstown. I think he is a good man, and I like him personally. But he is simply delaying the House. As I have said, the New South Wales Coalition was at the genesis of this idea. I pay tribute to the members of the other place, including the shadow Minister for Education and Training, who set up the process by which we are now able to bring this bill to the House. The Coalition strongly supports the bill.

[Debate interrupted.]

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER CARPET REPLACEMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I draw to the attention of the House a comment that the honourable member for Hornsby made about the carpet in the Chamber. We ordered new carpet to replace the section referred to by the honourable member. However, when it arrived we found that, like at Manly High School, it did not match the existing carpet. As a consequence, we have to replace the entire carpet in the Chamber, which will take place when the House is in recess.

TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT (CONSULTATION PROCEDURES) BILL

Second Reading

[Debate resumed.]

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [11.09 a.m.]: The notice of motion to amend the TAFE Commission Act 1990 was brought before the House by the honourable member for Manly during the Seaforth TAFE closure inquiry. Unlike the honourable member for Hornsby, I will confine my comments as much as is possible to the bill introduced by the honourable member for Manly rather than discussing every high school that I have ever visited. I certainly gained the impression that the honourable member for Hornsby has visited plenty of high schools. I am sure he has seen lots of fantastic things happening in those high schools. Given the opportunity, at some stage I am sure that he will talk about the positive things that are happening as well.

It is appropriate to use Seaforth as an example of why it is necessary for TAFE New South Wales to be flexible in meeting the constantly changing needs of industry and the community. This debate does not concern geography, as the honourable member for Hornsby would suggest. Rather, it is about resources and the need for resources to be used appropriately, not just in the northern beaches but statewide. Students throughout New South Wales travel to TAFEs, universities, schools and other educational facilities in city and country areas. When a decision is made to relocate courses, it is necessary to give extensive consideration to Commonwealth and statewide policy frameworks, the nature of industry demand, achieving flexibility and competitiveness in training delivery and meeting Australian National Training Authority [ANTA] growth through efficiencies targets.

The Commonwealth Government has ceased allocating growth funds for public provision, yet requires the States to provide more places. Through ANTA, the Commonwealth has directed that State governments must find efficiencies in their public vocational education and training systems to fund growth in enrolments. The Commonwealth has threatened further cuts to funding for TAFE New South Wales unless it meets ANTA efficiency targets. That is why the Minister for Education and Training had to sign off on those ANTA agreements. Earlier in the debate the Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member for Blacktown, said:

The Federal Government, through ANTA, cut growth funding to States resulting in the loss of \$138 million over the past three years. On top of this, the Commonwealth has reduced capital funding to New South Wales by around \$19.5 million since coming to office in 1996.

Obviously the New South Wales Government and the Department of Education and Training have been put in a very difficult position by the Commonwealth Government. The New South Wales Government is almost being blackmailed into providing courses without receiving adequate Commonwealth funding. That position requires New South Wales to look at the most efficient and effective way to deliver vocational education and training [VET] to the greatest number of students in order to secure the long-term future of TAFE New South Wales. Within TAFE New South Wales these efficiencies include the improvement of management systems, increases in average class sizes, reduction of attrition rates, improvement of module and course completion rates, and rationalisation of facilities.

It is clear from the documents tendered on behalf of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training that the recommendation to relocate courses from Seaforth to Brookvale and other sites was one of the strategies that the Director of the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE employed to achieve the target for delivery of student contact hours while finding efficiencies. The institute had already made significant progress in its efforts to wind down the Seaforth building and relocate programs to Brookvale and other sites by implementing a series of decisions from 1992 to the present. The consolidation of sites has been on the agenda for seven years with a progressive transfer of courses, services and personnel to Brookvale.

A number of site-specific factors—including declining enrolments, underutilisation of the Seaforth site and higher maintenance costs—contributed to the decision to bring forward the closing date of Seaforth as part of the institute's budget strategy for 1999-2000. Recent Commonwealth funding constraints to which I referred earlier and subsequent New South Wales Government budget adjustments resulted in the need for a flexible response to achieve growth through efficiency from the Northern Sydney Institute. That meant that the institute had to bring forward plans for consolidation to relocate this year rather than at some point in the next few years. The process by which the Department of Education and Training resolved to relocate courses from Seaforth to Brookvale reflects the length of time that was available for the institute's director to make the decision.

It is inappropriate to recommend a legislative response to concerns raised about consultation. TAFE institutes must have the flexibility to respond to the broader policy environment in which they operate. TAFE New South Wales operates in a different context from the one in which schools operate, and it services different needs. For example, TAFE's provision of courses is demand driven, industry responsive and competitive whereas schools must provide a certain curriculum. There is no compulsory requirement for post-school attendance. Adult learners can generally travel to study facilities. Adult learners have demanding needs that must be met flexibly. As such, the Government has a different set of responsibilities for TAFE. This flexibility is essential to ensure the longer term financial viability of TAFE institutes.

It should be noted that if the director had not made the decision to relocate courses it would have been necessary to achieve budget reductions by the utilisation of other strategies, and the most significant of these would have been the reduction of courses offered throughout the institute. Any recommendation not to proceed with the relocation would thus impact on the capacity of the Northern Sydney Institute to meet its obligations to other campuses and would increase course provision at Brookvale. Resources would need to be diverted from other campuses to sustain courses at Seaforth. The savings generated by the relocation of courses, coupled with more effective utilisation of the Brookvale site and the overall strategy for achieving an efficient and competitive Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE will guarantee the long-term public provision of VET on the northern beaches.

TAFE has spent more than \$13 million—for the benefit of the honourable member for Hornsby, I emphasise the amount: \$13 million—on improvements to Brookvale since 1990, which has made Brookvale a much better study environment. It is now clear that the site better meets the VET needs of the area. This demonstrates the Government's commitment to, and simultaneously the lack of knowledge on the part of the Opposition about, the Brookvale site. Perhaps that is why honourable members heard about Manly and Pittwater high schools. The North Sydney Institute's overall strategy to achieve efficiency and competitiveness would have been jeopardised by deferring the relocation of courses. The overriding government responsibility is to ensure quality as well as efficient and effective vocational education and training that serves the needs of students and industry.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [11.17 a.m.]: I strongly support this bill. What has happened at Seaforth is an absolute travesty that has affected the lives of many students in the northern beaches area. Indeed, this legislation is, regrettably, yet another indication of the lack of commitment of the Carr Government to the northern beaches. For 35 years Seaforth TAFE has been located slightly to the north of Spit Bridge and is very much part of the educational culture of the northern beaches. More and more over the last few years people have recognised the importance of vocational education and TAFE plays a significant part in the overall provision of courses. Between North Sydney and Palm Beach there is the northern Sydney campus and the Brookvale campus. Many years ago I taught at north Sydney and Seaforth TAFEs. I am very familiar with the TAFE facilities that are available at those campuses.

I was delighted when that TAFE opened some years ago as it was a wonderful new facility. The problem is that all TAFE facilities are needed, not just the North Sydney-Gore Hill and Brookvale campuses but the Seaforth campus as well. There has been a lot of huffing and puffing from the Government about justifications for the closure of Seaforth TAFE, but the simple message is about education. When the Premier

came to office he made big promises about being an education-committed Premier. He has positively not been an education Premier. In fact, he still seems to have a total incapacity to switch on to the needs of ordinary people. Education has been in a state of flux in my area since the Carr Government came to office.

No-one on the northern beaches believes that the Carr Government is committed to improving the education of children, young people and adults. When it was first mooted that Seaforth TAFE might close, the Government made an unequivocal promise that Seaforth TAFE would not be closed; that promise was made approximately 12 months before the closure took place. The Government is culpable because it has shown no commitment to education on the northern beaches. The Government has shown a lack of commitment to its own promises. In other words, the Government is prepared to lie to the northern beaches community and to simply walk away from the fundamental promise that it will retain the important facility of Seaforth TAFE.

As I said earlier, I taught at North Sydney and Seaforth TAFEs. I have friends who are students at Brookvale TAFE and who were students at Seaforth TAFE. I also have friends who are or were teachers at those TAFEs. I certainly have first-hand knowledge of the sorts of stresses that were induced in both the teaching staff and students at those TAFEs. The students at Brookvale TAFE did not know what was happening either. The Government's broken promise finally reached a cataclysmic level in about July-August last year when it became apparent that the promise that had been made nearly 12 months earlier was going to be broken with a massive level of arrogance. It was a case of, "Yes, we are going to do it. It is necessary. We have to cut costs."—the figure mentioned was part of a \$35 million review—"We are going to save money by closing Seaforth TAFE."

Seaforth TAFE is owned by the people of the northern beaches and the people of New South Wales. It was being used to its maximum capacity. When I walked around the facility with the Leader of the Opposition we were told by departmental officers that the roof was leaking and that money needed to be spent to repair it, but nothing else was raised that would cost the Government a remarkable amount of money. As Seaforth TAFE was not causing an enormous drain on the public purse, the only reason the Government would close it would be to rationalise the number of students attending TAFE campuses on the northern beaches. How was that achieved? It was achieved by obfuscation, lies and game playing. The Government turned students away from Seaforth TAFE in early 1999 by downgrading the level of courses available.

Young students who were trying to better themselves by doing various courses at Seaforth TAFE were told that their courses would not be available this year. They came to see me in my office. Even during the early stages it was apparent that the future of Seaforth TAFE was sad. The 17-year-old children who saw me had been directed to complete their course at Meadowbank TAFE—but they did not even have drivers licences. I made submissions to the Minister for Education and Training and received the standard reply that the courses are available at Meadowbank or Hornsby and the students should be able to get there. In effect, that has happened now to a much greater number of students as a result of the cataclysmic closure of Seaforth TAFE. Students have had to move out of the northern beaches area to undertake their education. Families are under huge stress because of the basic arrogant disregard for the northern beaches community by the Minister and the Premier.

The Premier is definitely not committed to education, except in areas where it is politically expedient. If he is going to win a vote or get some extra votes for his Labor members he will put money into the local school. After each budget has been handed down in recent years we have heard a succession of Labor members proudly say the Government has done wonderful things for their local education system. I do not have any problem with that: I am glad that money is going into education in New South Wales, as are all Coalition members. However, as a matter of fairness, that situation should apply to all children or adults who are trying to get an education to better themselves. The Premier should take a far more objective and rational view about the closure of Seaforth TAFE. In November-December last year I was invited onto the action committee. I attended meetings with the honourable member for Manly.

Mr Windsor: A good member.

Mr HAZZARD: I thank the honourable member for Tamworth for saying that I am a good member. I am happy to indicate that in this particular case I, as a good Liberal member for the northern beaches, have been happy to work with the honourable member for Manly because he and I have the same commitment to this issue. There are no political differences relating to this substantive issue. Honourable members know that the honourable member for Manly is really a Liberal in very good disguise! That community committee has been frustrated in its efforts. There has been a picket line outside Seaforth TAFE for months against this Labor Government. That is just another indication that this so-called Labor Government is far removed from what the people want in relation to education and from the needs of children and adults. It should be held totally accountable not just for the closure of Seaforth TAFE but for the many other damaging things it has done, and is doing, to many of our educational facilities.

Despite all the protests, concerns, public protestations, and the inquiry and recommendations of an upper House committee established by the Coalition—the terms of reference were drafted by the Hon. Patricia Forsythe—that made it clear that the Government's proposed closure of Seaforth TAFE was totally inappropriate, the Government arrogantly disregarded them. I suspect that some Government members would be embarrassed and genuinely concerned that young children and adults are not being given the opportunity to better themselves because Brookvale TAFE cannot cope with all the students. It is a furphy and a lie that Brookvale TAFE can cope with all the students from Seaforth.

This is a problem that TAFE has in catering for fine arts students. I know some on the Government benches will wave their hands contemptuously when there is talk about fine arts students, implying that such courses are irrelevant. If people wish to pursue their interest in fine arts, thereby furthering their education and enhancing their sense of self-esteem in the community, then they are doing something to make themselves better people. Government members should not be sending them off on a bus trip of up to two hours. One young lady attended a meeting that was organised by the honourable member for Manly and held at the Queenscliff Surf Club. I and numerous others also attended that meeting. This young disabled lady, who was in a wheelchair, was a lovely person. She spoke in tears about the fact that this Carr mob, this anti-education Government, effectively would terminate her chance at education. When the Government's action is transformed into that sort of hurt, that type of real and personal suffering, then it must be said that the Government has lost touch with the people—if it ever was in touch with the people.

This bill is similar to legislation introduced in the upper House by Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile. The Government has been effective in preventing that upper House legislation coming on for debate. However, the bill introduced by the honourable member for Manly is before this House, and the Coalition is extremely supportive of it. Whether this type of legislation is introduced in the upper House or the lower House, Coalition members want a far better TAFE education system. A committee of review must be established. There is such a committee dealing with schools, and there must be one for TAFE. The Government should not be allowed to be at the control stick of education, deciding what institutions will remain open and what institutions will be closed.

If legislation of the type before this House is already in place for our public schools, then this legislation should be in place for our TAFE institutions. If this House passes this bill, it will have done something very worthwhile. All the left-wing members of the Labor Party, at least those who do care about the community, and all those who do not listen to the bumph that comes from the mouths of Bob Carr and his right-wing colleagues, have the chance to join with the Coalition and do something for technical and further education in the State.

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for Liverpool is interjecting. It will be interesting to see whether he joins the Coalition in supporting this bill to promote public education, or whether the people of Liverpool also will see that the honourable member for Liverpool does not support public education. Every left-wing member of the Labor Party should vote with this side of the House on this bill, and leave the right wing of Labor supporting the Premier's destruction of public education. [*Time expired.*]

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

WATER REFORM

Debate resumed from 6 April.

Mr TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.30 a.m.]: The motion before the House raises a number of concerns of regional New South Wales. I have told the House previously that I am encouraged by the comments of the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation, the Hon. Richard Amery, who has to date responded very constructively to some of the concerns that have been raised. We must bear in mind that agriculture contributes \$10 billion to the State's economy and employs upwards of 100,000 people in regional New South Wales. We should not do lightly anything that would add to the uncertainty about supply of water. The peak industry bodies discussed these and other matters with the Country Independent Alliance on a recent tour. I congratulate the Independent member for Tamworth, Mr Tony Windsor, and the Independent member for Dubbo, Mr Tony McGrane, who joined me on that trip, on which we looked at a number of valleys around this State and heard the concerns and statements of a number of people on the issues raised in the white paper.

I am encouraged that this white paper gives the Government an opportunity to consider the issue of sustainability, an opportunity that perhaps has never been greater than it is today. The white paper raises a whole range of issues that the peak bodies are keen to sit down and discuss. I emphasise that they are keen to sit down and discuss the issues, because the motion before the House seeks that the white paper lay on the table for a period of 12 months. I did not find support from industry bodies, certainly not from the people who spoke to me, for this matter to be delayed for such a period. Certainly, contributions were made about property rights. I raised those matters in a private member's statement on 13 April in this House, and the Minister responded to some of those concerns. Concerns were also raised about some of the procedural issues involved in the proposed legislation. No-one wants a repeat of the process that was followed leading up to the implementation of the Native Vegetation and Conservation Act, and no-one would want a repeat of the frustration and disappointment that that Act brought to regions of this State.

There are a whole range of other issues. I do not like using the word "compensation", because everyone frowns at the mere mention of it. "Structural adjustment" seems to be the more politically correct term. However, genuine concerns are being expressed by water users, who are keen to take advantage of the opportunity that is presented by the white paper. They are keen for the Minister to take those matters on board. I know that the honourable member for Ballina has had discussions with a number of industry group representatives, who have also been speaking with me, the honourable member for Tamworth, the honourable member for Dubbo and others, but those representatives are not telling me that they want this white paper to lay on the table for another 12 months.

Industry groups are saying that they want their concerns about these issues addressed. I have raised a number of other matters in a letter to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. The industry representatives are keen to sit down and discuss those matters also. I am encouraged that the Minister has set up a body on which peak industry groups are represented. Those people have indicated to me that, to date, they believe the Minister has approached the issue in good faith. I say "to date" because I would like the Minister to take the opportunity that now presents itself. The Minister must take on board the concerns of this very substantial industry. He must take the opportunity to meet the objectives of regional water users of this State when considering these important reforms.

I will be voting not to further delay negotiations and discussions. I believe that that is what the industry is saying to us. If the Minister and the Government take this opportunity to protect the interests of country communities and water users, and also take this opportunity to address sustainability—and many of these issues were raised in the Salinity Summit, which I and other honourable members attended—they will produce something of historic significance. I want to make sure that, in moving this motion to delay things, the Opposition is not more interested in the problem than it is in the solution. If there is an opportunity for a solution, I urge the Minister to continue to act in good faith. He will certainly have the support of the communities of interests. They want a reasonable outcome on these matters.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [11.38 a.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members who have participated in this debate—the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation, the honourable member for Burrinjuck, the honourable member for Bathurst, the honourable member for Cessnock, the honourable member for Tamworth and the honourable member for Northern Tablelands. The intention of the motion is to ensure proper consultation. Though I have taken on board the assurances given by the Ministers—and I believe he gave those assurances in good faith—and whilst I have listened to the comments made by other honourable members, particularly the honourable member for Tamworth and the honourable member for Northern Tablelands, I emphasise that the Opposition is not seeking to delay the water reform process. The Coalition accepts the fact that water reform is necessary, but it also recognises that this is a significant legislative package that is under consideration.

The Minister would be aware that for the past 15 years governments and oppositions, at some stage or another in their manifestos, have tried to rationalise water legislation. We, as a Parliament, are taking on a fairly important project concerning the future of our regional areas. The intention of the Opposition in moving this motion was to try to provide some guarantee. A period of 12 months was chosen—perhaps it should have been less—because we have not yet seen the legislation. I make the important point that we have seen a white paper, which essentially is a conceptual document, but we have not seen the legislation that will flow from that. I am sure that any legislation introduced in June will be reasonably complex.

Industry groups are now telling the Minister that they do not want unnecessary delays. I suppose that they are telling me the same thing. When that legislation is introduced I am sure the Minister will find that they

will make sure they have a good look at it. As the Olympic Games are to be held in the interim, the Government might feel duty-bound to introduce legislation in the spring session. However, it may be prudent for the Government to allow this matter to be debated in the autumn session next year. The intention of this motion is to provide a proper mechanism for public consultation. I said earlier that I will take on board what the Minister said. In his contribution to the debate on this motion, he said:

I can inform the House today that as of Monday next week my staff will be sitting down with some of those peak interest groups and going through the issues they raised in their recent submissions to the white paper, including those of the Opposition.

He went on to assure me that he would keep the Opposition informed. The Minister made that contribution on 7 April, a month ago, but I have not yet heard anything from his office. It may have been an oversight. I have been a member of government and I know what Ministers say and what bureaucrats say to Ministers. They say there will be a full consultation process, they will advise everybody and they will keep the Opposition informed. In reality it is different: they do not. Through this motion the Opposition is trying to secure some guarantees as to the openness of the public consultation process. We certainly are not trying to delay sensible water reform. I do not want to do that, and I believe nobody else does. I make brief mention of the fact that many people in the community are confused about what is happening in the debate on water reform, notwithstanding the fact that the period allowed for submissions on the white paper has closed. As recently as 4 April the honourable member for Lismore received a letter from the Casino Rural Lands Protection Board which stated:

At a recent meeting of the Board the above document—

which is the white paper—

was discussed. The Directors expressed some concern that the broader local farming community may not be aware of the paper and some of the possible ramifications of the items therein.

The letter went on to ask the honourable member for Lismore to do something to try to heighten the awareness of the local community of the existence of the white paper. The Minister should not rely on the fact that he has received 600 submissions as being an indication that everyone in the community knows—

[Interruption]

Are they individual written submissions, or are some of them the usual submissions put out by the green movement? I gather that quite a few are from the Government. Obviously the Opposition will support this motion and we will divide the House on it. We want a full and open consultation process. We are not attempting to unnecessarily delay water reform.

[Debate interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Division: Suspension of Standing Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone putting the question "That the motion be agreed to" on General Business (Order of the Day) No 1, relating to the white paper on water reform, until the conclusion of debate on the General Business (Order of the Day) No 2 relating to New South Wales health funding.

HEALTH SERVICES FUNDING

Debate resumed from 13 April.

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.45 a.m.]: Recently the President of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Medical Association [AMA] held a press conference. She had been touring hospitals, allegedly talking to clinicians, and she came up with a list of vague complaints, wish lists and misinformation. She obviously did not talk to people like Professor John Dwyer at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Dr Graeme Stewart or Dr Ric Kefford from Westmead Hospital, Professor Malcolm Fisher from the emergency department of the Royal North Shore Hospital or Dr Lou McGuigan, Chair of St George Medical Staff Council. They are all at odds with what she said.

As the Minister said recently, the report was full of political sloganeering, distortions, misinformation, and plain falsehoods. Dr Phelps' political aspirations are well known. Perhaps she is using—or, rather, abusing—her current office to launch her political career as Leader of the State Opposition. God knows that members of the Opposition need one! That is why Opposition members have embraced her report. We all know that the current Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition spokesperson on health do not have any idea, let alone a policy, between them. The Premier said recently that the Leader of the National Party, when engaging in his cyber chat, promised \$45 million for rural health. The Government is providing an injection of more than \$317 million in annual recurrent funding to rural New South Wales over the next three years, an increase of \$163 million.

The President of the AMA also accused the Government of double counting. When the Minister announced the \$2 billion cash injection in March, it included \$45 million for emergency departments and intensive care units. Dr Phelps is accusing the Minister and the Government of being untruthful. The Minister was truthful. The Minister, when he made his announcement in March, stated explicitly that the \$45 million package had been announced last December. If anyone needs convincing of this fact I refer them to the Minister's media release dated 8 March, of which I have a copy. My colleague has already conducted an economics class for members opposite. He explained to them how to read budget statements, he told them about the real cash injection that this Government will be making to health services, and he explained the true debt situation in rural health services.

Dr Phelps claimed that the Government is delivering only \$60 million in increased funding. In three years time the recurrent cash increase will be \$1.2 billion. I ask Dr Phelps: What happened to the other \$1.1 billion? Perhaps she thinks it has gone to join the \$250 million that the Commonwealth owes the State Government under the Australian Health Care Agreement. The Government is delivering real increases in every area of health care. It is genuine about bringing equity into the health care system. This Government does not show political favour. I invite honourable members to look at the Northern Sydney Area Health Service—the health service that covers the areas in which most Opposition members live. In three years time that service will have received a real increase of almost \$33 million in funding. On the other side of Sydney, the Western Sydney Area Health Service received almost \$30 million and South Western Sydney Area Health Service received \$42 million.

The Opposition bleats that rural area health services are being neglected. Let us see whether that claim stands up. The Northern Rivers Area Health Service will receive an increase in funding of \$29 million. What about the big winner, the Mid North Coast Area Health Service? It will receive almost \$36 million. I know that Opposition members are bored with the mighty achievements of the Government. The Government has achieved what the Opposition could never hope to achieve: that is, equity in the health system. It is not true that all the extra funding for rural health services will be used for wages and to counter inflation. Every rural and regional health service will have a real increase in funding.

Dr Phelps claimed that the Hunter Area Health Service was closed down for more than 51 weeks last year and that the South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service was closed down for 49 weeks. Is she really claiming that the Hunter Area Health Service operated for only one week last year and that the South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service operated for only two weeks? How ridiculous can she get! This is not just about money, it is about bricks and mortar, and the Government is providing employment and equity to rural areas. Between 1988 and 1995 the former Coalition Government closed or wound down 30 hospitals. Since coming to office in 1995 the Government has completed 155 new and redeveloped facilities, such as hospitals, community health centres, aged-care facilities, multipurpose services, and Aboriginal health and mental services. What a contrast! Another 87 capital works programs are under way, as well as the 34 hospitals the Minister recently announced that the Government would build or redevelop in smaller rural towns. How ridiculous of Dr Phelps to suggest otherwise of this Government.

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [11.50 a.m.]: Obviously the Parliamentary Secretary has just spoken to notes provided by either the Treasury or the Department of Health. I suggest they are probably from Treasury, because the advisers in the office of the Minister for Health probably would not attempt to put together that sort of package. The motion is about the Government's financial credibility—and what a great day to discuss it! The number 13 is unlucky for the Government. To see the credibility of the Carr Government on health one has only to read page 13 of today's *Australian Financial Review*, which literally pulls the Government apart limb from limb on its numbers. The article demonstrates that the Government is not credible. When the Minister for Health announced \$2 billion in so-called new cash for health, he was totally unbelievable. Never has \$2 billion been worth so little. How much is it worth? It took a few weeks but the Australian Medical Association [AMA] and Access Economics put together the figures, which demonstrated that the \$2 billion was worth a little over \$100 million.

In my view the \$2 billion is worth even less than that. That is the point the Opposition made to the press gallery on the day the Minister announced the figure of \$2 billion. When the Government announced the \$2 billion it used a dishonest graph. I suggest the graph probably came from Treasury, and it was very effective. It shows that in four years funding will increase by \$2 billion. What a load of rubbish; what dishonesty! When this piece of paper was floated around the press gallery, members of the media could not make anything of it. It does not matter what end of the graph one starts with, so let us start with the \$412 million for the first year. What extra cash did the Government put into the health system two years ago under Minister Refshauge? Honourable members do not know. The Government put in \$484 million extra. The graph shows that next year the Government will put in \$412 million. Fantastic! In the following years it will put in \$279 million and \$294 million.

Honourable members have been sold a dummy by Treasury, which has simply quarantined the forward estimates. It has moved them around a little, given them to the Government and said, "Here is \$2 billion extra cash." That is not \$2 billion in extra cash—that is rubbish! That is why honourable members will see on page 13 of today's *Australian Financial Review* a fair dinkum assessment of the Carr Government's financial performance. It has been done by none other than Standard and Poor's Ratings Agency, which said New South Wales budgeting has a perennial problem in forecasting. It went on to say that the big issue facing the New South Wales people this month is how plausible the numbers will be when the Government delivers the budget on 23 May. That comment is from the rating agency that determines whether the Government is going forwards or backwards. The same rating agency said the Government was also under pressure about the high level of business taxes in the State; they are higher than everywhere else. That is not new; we all know that. In the same report this morning Access Economics says:

Relative to other states and territories the NSW Budget will be in a worse shape basically because the Government has been spending up big in recent years.

The Government has not been spending big in health. The share of the budget allocated to health and education has decreased over the past few years. Today caucus sits there fat, dumb and happy, not realising what the Government and Cabinet have been doing to it. That is why the community understands the Government has no financial credibility. The Government is interested only in high taxes and high waste; it is certainly not interested in record spending on health. One only has to look at the basic figures. Members on the Government side should take that graph, look at their past budgets, and look at the report by the Australian Medical Association [AMA] and Access Economics. They will realise that although the Government and caucus have been ripped off, they have not been ripped off over the past five years as much as the people of New South Wales. Huge taxes are simply going into waste.

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [11.55 a.m.]: I support the motion because I am sure members on both sides of House will agree that health is a most important issue. I get no pleasure from debating every week the funding, the dollars and cents, that should be put into health care. A few weeks ago I asked a question of the Minister. I was disappointed by his reaction. On 5 April I asked the Minister about debt. I asked the question:

In light of the Premier's statement this morning that all country area health services debts would be wiped off, will the Minister tell the House when he will write off the debt of the Greater Murray Area Health Service, which totals more than \$32.4 million and means that local small businesses and suppliers are not being paid?

The Minister's answer was not appropriate. He said I had asked a stupid question and that I should read his press release. I did, and I have it here. I will read it to honourable members in a moment. Before I do so I want to read to the House how this great new budget of \$2 billion was reported by the media, which has been hoodwinked by creative accounting. The *Wagga Daily Advertiser* of 9 March reported:

Minister for Health Craig Knowles said yesterday all debt that has been accumulated in the Greater Murray area before the end of this financial year will be eliminated.

In the same newspaper, Karyn McPeake, the Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Murray Area Health Service, was reported as saying:

It means that the debt from GMAHS will be written off.

The report went on to say:

Ms McPeake said GMAHS was yet to receive information of the exact details of the funding increases ...

When I asked the Minister a supplementary question about exactly how much historic debt was paid off, he said basically, "Go and read the press report, you silly man." I have the press release here and nowhere does it refer to the historic debt that has been wiped from the Greater Murray Area Health Service.

Mr Hickey: You have the wrong press release.

Mr MAGUIRE: No, there it is. Perhaps the Minister should have read his own press release. Honourable members may come to my room and look at it any time. Nowhere does it say how much debt is being wiped off. This press release is a furphy, along with the \$2 billion of so-called new money. The Minister said in his answer that I shuffled into his room and asked for new money to be spent in Wagga Wagga for radiotherapy services. That is not the case. The Department of Health will confirm that the radiotherapy project in Wagga Wagga is cost neutral to the Government. That is the reason the Government agreed to it, because it was to be cost neutral. In debate in this House today honourable members have spoken about small businesses in regional and rural New South Wales. Representatives of small businesses who want to be paid have rung my office. They have been owed money by the Greater Murray Area Health Service for 120 days. The amounts are not small; at times they have been as much as \$20,000.

If there is so much money awash in the health system, why have these accounts not been paid? People in small business must pay interest on overdrafts. Members opposite who have been in business, as I have, understand that the interest and costs imposed on business are horrendous. The inability of the Greater Murray Area Health Service to pay its accounts is costing dollars and cents to businesses in my electorate and, indeed, throughout New South Wales. Businesses do not want to cut off credit because they rely on it to enable them to continue in business and keep jobs. Why is the Government not paying the bills on time? The answer is that the money is not there—and the money is not there because the new funding announced by the Minister is a furphy; it is simply smoke and mirrors. Coalition members are aware of that, and the media has woken up to the fact that this has all been just a great game to the Minister.

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [12.00 p.m.]: I oppose the motion moved by the honourable member for North Shore.

Mr Debnam: Apologise!

Mr LYNCH: The honourable member for Vacluse says that I should apologise. I have not done anything to apologise for. Say that to me when I have finished speaking. The extraordinary exercise of members opposite is to say that they know that everyone else has got it wrong. They know that absolutely nobody else in the world has any idea about this matter; the media have been hoodwinked and caucus has been conned. No-one, apart from Opposition members, knows anything, we are told.

The Opposition has relied on Kerryn Phelps and, allegedly, Access Economics. It is a classic case of voodoo economics. The stuff that Kerryn Phelps came out with reminds me of the aphorism that the only reason people study economics is to ensure that they do not get misled by economists. That is precisely the approach adopted by Kerryn Phelps in this case. The material produced by Kerryn Phelps is interesting. The economic analysis is not in a document by Access Economics; the alleged economic analysis is, in fact, on the letterhead of the [AMA]. It is not an Access Economics document at all. The only time Access Economics gets involved is when the words "Access Economics" appear under the name of Roger Kilham at the bottom of the document on the AMA letterhead.

It is fascinating because on the day the document was released Access Economics was contacted and asked what it knew about the document issued by Roger Kilham that allegedly came from Access Economics. Access Economics said that it did not know anything about the document. That means that this economic analysis is not an economic analysis; it is a political manifesto produced by a person parading as an economist, a person who has absolutely no credibility in terms of his economic analysis. The substance of the alleged economic analysis confirms my assessment because the learned analyst has managed to confuse guaranteed budgets with forward estimates.

Mrs Skinner: This motion isn't about the Access Economics report. It has nothing to do with that. There is no reference to it.

Mr LYNCH: The honourable member for North Shore is now saying that this motion does not relate to the Access Economics report. Her comment does not surprise me. What she called the Access Economics report was the basis of her attack and the formulation of this motion. Now she is running away from it, because it has been revealed for the furphy it is.

Mrs Skinner: Point of order: The motion does not refer to any reports; it refers to the Government's loss of credibility on a range of issues relating to the health budget announcements. The honourable member for Liverpool should come back to the subject matter of the motion.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr LYNCH: During my speech there has been a constant stream of interjections from members opposite, including the honourable member for North Shore, in defence of the Access Economics report. If the point of order raised by the honourable member had had any substance she would not have been interjecting to defend that report. As I said, the author of the alleged analysis has made a fundamental mistake in that he has confused forward estimates with guaranteed budgeting amounts. One significant issue in the Minister's announcement was the fact that for the first time three-year guaranteed amounts would be provided. It is unfortunate that a person who works for Access Economics has made that fundamental mistake. It vitiates entirely not only his credibility and that of Kerry Phelps but also the Opposition's credibility on this matter.

The weaknesses in the economic analysis go on. He makes an analysis of cost increases in the future and says that the Minister's allowances for labour and employee costs in the future are merely estimates. That ignores the fundamental fact that there is an agreement on salaries and wages for four years. That means that the amounts talked about are not estimates in any shape or form; they are precise amounts set out in agreements.

One would have thought that that sort of pre-basic economic analysis would not escape a person who was making an economic analysis. The fact is that the person did not make an economic analysis; he made a political statement and manifesto. The bottom line is that the Government is delivering increases and equitable funding in a way that the Coalition could never have attempted and will never attempt.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [12.05 p.m.], in reply: Government members have not said anything persuasive in relation to the Government's claims about a substantial increase in funding, as announced by the Minister for Health earlier this year. The table that says it all is the one the Minister provided to the press gallery, and to which my colleagues have referred. I have a copy of the Minister's press release, which shows triple counting of \$412 million and double counting of \$279 million, and concludes that there will be \$2 billion in the health budget. It is a deceitful sham. It led the people of New South Wales to expect that all the problems in the health system will be solved. However, that is not the case. Interestingly, the Minister for Health, in his contribution to this debate, said:

The Government has funded on the basis of real growth. Wages have been locked in. Hospital cost indexation increases have been funded.

The truth of the matter is that \$412 million is the amount the Minister said would be allocated to health in the forthcoming budget. However, the Auditor-General's report for last year shows that employee-related costs, maintenance depreciation amortisation, grants and subsidies, finance costs and other expenses were \$484.7 million. So last year the cost of salaries, goods and services was greater than the increase in the health budget this year. That means that services will still have to be cut. One tragic story in the newspapers this week was that of a young woman suffering from anorexia who had been in Westmead Hospital. According to the doctors, this young woman was two kilograms away from death. One horrendous aspect of service cuts is the threat to cut such services as the anorexia unit at Westmead Hospital. That unit is the only unit in New South Wales that provides treatment for teenagers. It is appalling that Government members have accepted without question the nonsensical budget presented by the Minister, because their electorates will be affected.

The Parliamentary Secretary referred to the Northern Sydney Area Health Service as an example. I am sure he knows that Northern Sydney Area Health Service will receive an extra \$21.3 million next year, and that he agrees with it. I can show him a copy of the Minister's press release which outlines that. The press release is headed "Major boost for Northern Sydney Area Health Service", and states that its funding will increase from \$455.8 million this year to \$477.1 million next year—an increase of \$21.3 million.

The Auditor-General's report with regard to the Northern Sydney Area Health Service reveals that employee-related costs went up by \$18.01 million and goods and services costs went up by \$36 million. That health service is going out backwards. There is no way that the Northern Sydney Area Health Service, or indeed any other health service, will be able to keep up.

I thank my colleagues the honourable member for Wagga Wagga and the honourable member for Vacluse for their erudite contributions to this debate. The honourable member for Wagga Wagga referred to

that part of the motion relating to the retirement of rural debt. The Minister came out with a series of press releases that were shamefully dishonest. Those press releases were picked up by the local newspapers. There was a particularly large spread about them in the Wagga Wagga newspapers. They thought, "Hallelujah, all our debts are to be forgiven." Not true. The Minister said, "We are going to give you \$40 million, and that will retire rural debt." The Auditor-General's report showed that \$141 million was outstanding in debts from last year. That included current borrowings, non-current borrowings and accounts payable. If the Minister is trying to pretend to us that those debts have been paid, he is totally dishonest. As the shadow Treasurer said, Standard and Poor's got it right: this Government has a perennial problem in correctly forecasting health expenditure.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 29

Mr Armstrong	Mr Humpherson	Mr Richardson
Mr Brogden	Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Collins	Mr Maguire	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Debnam	Mr Merton	Mr Souris
Mr George	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Stoner
Mr Glachan	Mr O'Doherty	Mr Webb
Mr Hartcher	Mr O'Farrell	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hazzard	Mr D. L. Page	Mr Fraser
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Piccoli	Mr R. H. L. Smith

Noes, 45

Ms Allan	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Mr Amery	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Ms Andrews	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Mr Ashton	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Barr	Mr Martin	Mr W. D. Smith
Ms Beamer	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Mr Brown	Mr McGrane	Mr Torbay
Mr Campbell	Mr McManus	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Ms Meagher	Mr Whelan
Mr Crittenden	Ms Megarrity	Mr Windsor
Mr Gaudry	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Greene	Mr Moss	
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Nagle	
Ms Harrison	Mr Newell	Tellers
Mr Hickey	Ms Nori	Mr Anderson
Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page	Mr Thompson

Pair

Mr J. H. Turner

Miss Burton

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

WATER REFORM

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 29

Mr Armstrong	Mr Humpherson	Mr Richardson
Mr Brogden	Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton
Mrs Chikarovski	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Collins	Mr Maguire	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Debnam	Mr Merton	Mr Souris
Mr George	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Stoner
Mr Glachan	Mr O'Doherty	Mr Webb
Mr Hartcher	Mr O'Farrell	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hazzard	Mr D. L. Page	Mr Fraser
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Piccoli	Mr R. H. L. Smith

Noes, 45

Ms Allan	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Mr Amery	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Ms Andrews	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Mr Ashton	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Barr	Mr Martin	Mr W. D. Smith
Ms Beamer	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Mr Brown	Mr McGrane	Mr Torbay
Mr Campbell	Mr McManus	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Ms Meagher	Mr Whelan
Mr Crittenden	Ms Megarrity	Mr Windsor
Mr Gaudry	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Greene	Mr Moss	
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Nagle	
Ms Harrison	Mr Newell	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hickey	Ms Nori	Mr Anderson
Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page	Mr Thompson

Pair

Mr J. H. Turner

Miss Burton

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Order of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders****Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for:

- (1) consideration of General Business Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) Nos 1 and 2 forthwith, and for the Speaker to then leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.;
- (2) no divisions or quorums to be called prior to 2.15 p.m.; and
- (3) at 2.15 p.m. the introduction and progress up to and including the Minister's second reading speech of the following bills:

Parking Space Levy Amendment Bill
 Transport Administration Amendment (Parramatta Rail Link) Bill

followed by the consideration of General Business Orders of the Day (General Orders).

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE UPON ROAD SAFETY**Report: Local Government and Road Safety—Speech of Grant McBride MP, STAYSAFE Chairman, in opening the 4th Local Government Road Safety Conference, Millennium Hotel, Kings Cross, 11-13 August 1999**

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [12.29 p.m.]: I speak in support of Staysafe Report 50, which is the committee's first report of the Fifty-Second Parliament. This report documents the remarks I made in the opening of the fourth local government road safety conference which was held in Sydney in mid-August 1999.

I gave particular prominence in my speech to the stalling of a reduction in road trauma that has, until recent years, been a feature of the operation of the New South Wales road transport system. The accuracy of my remarks was unhappily borne out when just under 508 people died on New South Wales roads in 1999. The indications are that there will not be any reduction in road deaths this year, and there may well be an increase in road deaths in the future.

Just four months into the new millennium the road toll is just over 5 per cent what it was this time last year. That message does not please the road safety bureaucracy. There is a marked sensitivity to the issue. When Staysafe asked questions about the plateauing of the road toll or the road safety effort being stalled it got pages of detailed statistical explanations, graphs and trend lines from the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] as to why that cannot possibly be so. Comparisons were made with the road toll in 1981, in the pre-random breath testing era, and with 1989, prior to the implementation of the Road Safety 2000 Strategy. But is it appropriate to make comparisons spanning one or two decades? Should we not be comparing this year's performance with last year's performance—that is, 578 deaths in 1999, compared with 556 deaths in 1998; and 576 deaths in 1997, compared with 581 deaths in 1996?

This debate is relevant and urgent. The message that our effort in road trauma reduction in New South Wales is probably stalled should be heard. That is why Staysafe took the unusual step of publishing my remarks as the first report of the new Staysafe committee of the fifty-second Parliament. The plateauing is not just a feature in New South Wales; it is occurring throughout Australia. In all Australian States except Queensland there has been a plateauing during the past five years. That is of major concern to road safety professionals in every State. It has also been recognised internationally. It raises a lot of questions, including: Is what we are doing at the moment as effective as it should be? Should there be a major review of the tactics being used to spread the road safety message to the community?

Staysafe also released the report because it wanted to pay tribute to the continuing work of road safety officers in local government. In my previous role as Parliamentary Secretary for Roads from 1995 to 1999 I was aware that the evolution of local government road safety officers was one of the most potent means to address the problem of road trauma in New South Wales. Road safety officers were introduced into local government councils with the introduction of the Local Government Road Safety program in 1992. The program was a major element of the Road Safety 2000 strategic framework. More than 50 road safety officers are now employed across New South Wales and that number is set to grow with the recent endorsement of the Local Government Road Safety Program by the Minister for Roads and the Government's commitment to fund the program until at least 2010. That has been a major initiative because this study has moved from a pilot stage to a program that is now fundamental to road safety in this State.

Today road safety officers are assisting in the development of a nexus between communities and their local councils, integrating traffic management, public health, policing and road safety activities in ways that solve local problems by local action. A major issue identified by Staysafe is the need for an effective road safety information system to support local council road safety officers, in particular, but also road safety workers and the general public throughout New South Wales. Facilitation of the interchange of ideas and experience among road safety officers and road safety workers in general is critical.

Road safety is a worldwide issue. There are common problems and challenges to deal effectively and efficiently with road trauma, whether the issues are being faced in Sydney, rural and regional centres of New South Wales, metropolitan London, or cities in the United States of America. While it is true that political and bureaucratic environments differ, and societies and cultures differ, road crashes and their causes share a common basis. If the challenges and problems are common, many potential solutions may well be similar too. However, despite everything, too many people are unaware about much of the excellent work that is being carried out in different parts of the world, from which we might benefit.

In this report Staysafe has identified opportunities for the development of a road safety information system based on current RTA initiatives and in accord with the recommendations made in previous Staysafe reports. I urge the Government to review Staysafe's comments and the findings and recommendations of previous reports that have commented on that issue. Other immediate issues need to be addressed in the local government road safety program. In particular, they include the high turnover rate of road safety officers and the need to create more training and professional development opportunities within road safety, which would also provide a career path for road safety officers. I look forward to reviewing developments concerning those issues in the future work of the Staysafe committee.

I thank my colleagues on the Staysafe committee for their contributions. Staysafe has been a strong and effective committee in the past, and in many ways that has been the cause of its bipartisan, consensual approach. I welcome the fact that that view remains a significant feature of the new committee. I thank my colleagues in this House and in the other place for their collaborative work. I would also like to note the contribution of my director, Ian Faulks, and congratulate him on his reappointment as director.

Significant changes have occurred in the constitution of the committee: seven of the nine members are non-metropolitan members. In the past the focus of the committee has been on metropolitan issues; now there will be a strong focus on non-metropolitan issues. Road safety is an important issue for communities outside of Sydney, in particular, in relation to the resources that are needed to make road safety effective in those communities. The RTA and the Government are responding to a number of those issues. Because of the bipartisan nature of the committee and the commitment of all honourable members to road safety in our community they believe strongly that it will make a difference to the community of New South Wales.

Mr STONER (Oxley) [12.37 p.m.]: I attended this important conference of road safety officers from various local governments throughout New South Wales on 11 August 1999. I had the opportunity to hear first-hand the presentation of the chairman of the Staysafe committee. It was an excellent conference that got together road safety officers so they could share ideas and discuss what does or does not work in their local communities. The conference facilitated networking between road safety officers, the RTA and other key road safety stakeholders. The Road Safety Officers Program has been particularly effective in reducing road deaths in New South Wales, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Statewide initiatives, sponsored by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] and the Motor Accidents Authority [MAA], have been effective in recent years. However, there has been a plateauing effect in road accident statistics. The road safety officers complement the RTA and MAA initiatives by developing local strategies for local conditions. As a result of that grassroots approach communities and local governments are involved and we are beginning to see the development of a whole range of effective initiatives to deal with road traffic accidents and trauma. This approach essentially is one of horses for courses or, should I say, bulls for courses. I refer to the matador rodeo bull so cleverly used in the Taree-Great Lakes area to promote road safety. In the area abutting my electorate of Oxley it has been very effective and an excellent example. I endorse the comments of the chairman.

I support also the committee's recommendation, made in this Staysafe 50 report, that the Roads and Traffic Authority continue to develop a capacity to disseminate road safety information; that is, that the authority have as an exclusive policy the dissemination of relevant—I stress relevant—road safety information. The report recommends also that the Roads and Traffic Authority assess the feasibility of developing a road safety information system similar to the European Community Road Accident System Homepage, and that the authority investigate the possibility of that system having a national focus, and that it not be based solely on New South Wales road safety data and knowledge.

The recommendations, if followed, would provide up-to-date information on the many road safety initiatives; encourage the adoption of best practice throughout New South Wales and Australia by road safety officers and other agencies in the road safety field; and facilitate networking of road safety officers and other key stakeholders. So I fully endorse and support these recommendations. I take the opportunity to congratulate the chairman and other members of the Staysafe committee, who, as the chairman mentioned, are very much committed to the objectives of the committee, and do so in a bipartisan and non-political way. I congratulate the director on his reappointment, and I commend the other staff supporting Staysafe. I congratulate them on the production of this Staysafe 50 report. I commend the report and its recommendations to the House.

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [12.42 p.m.]: Like the chair of the committee and the honourable member for Oxley, a member of the committee, I acknowledge that the committee works in a bipartisan way on this very

important issue of road safety. I have been a member of the committee for about 12 months, which has given me an opportunity to learn the workings of the committees of the Parliament. I very much appreciate that opportunity. I acknowledge the support and leadership of the chairman in that regard. I commend to the House the recommendations of this report. I do so particularly because the issue of road safety in urban areas, but also throughout the State, is one that requires work to be done in partnership—the partnership of State government and its agencies and local communities, particularly through local government.

It is appropriate that there be that sense of partnership because local government road safety workers are funded 50:50 by the Roads and Traffic Authority and the councils. As was said earlier in this debate, there is a commitment of that funding until 2010. That will enable local government authorities and councils throughout the State to put in place long-term strategies in the knowledge that they will have the support of a road safety officer to work those strategies through and oversee their implementation. I acknowledge the road safety officer at Wollongong City Council, Ms Prue Dunstan, a person extremely dedicated to road safety. I worked with Prue Dunstan in my previous role as Lord Mayor of Wollongong and more recently as the member for Keira. I have had the opportunity to work with Prue on a number of specific projects.

A project that I want to speak about briefly is called the Summer Bus. That project targets 17- to 25-year-olds. It is a drink-drive prevention project. It is about working not only with the council and the RTA but also the Illawarra Area Health Service, licensed premises in the central business district of Wollongong, and the private bus operators in the region. It is all about getting young people home safely after they have had a night out at nightclubs and licensed premises in Wollongong. It is about encouraging them to take public transport, rather than driving their cars whilst under the influence of alcohol. It is a program that works on harm minimisation theories, and is conducted in collaboration with a whole range of groups. I wish particularly to acknowledge the success of that initiative. It has operated over the past two summers and has had particular success over festive seasons and summer periods.

Another project that was run last year was a joint project of Wollongong City Council, Shellharbour City Council, an organisation known as the Illawarra Retirement Trust and the New South Wales Police Service. The project received funding from the Motor Accidents Authority and the Roads And Traffic Authority. The Illawarra Retirement Trust is an organisation that provides housing for retirees. The focus was on pedestrian safety. The project, entitled "Every Man and His Dog", was aimed particularly at the aged in our community, to encourage them to be very careful as they cross roads. It also identified and emphasised to drivers the importance of road safety for elderly pedestrians. The initiative emanated from research that indicated that a high proportion of fatalities and crashes involved aged pedestrians. Again, it was all about working in partnership, through local government road safety officers, to particularly focus on that problem.

Some other projects that have been in place include a campaign to encourage 17- to 25-year-olds, particularly motorcyclists, not to speed and for motorcyclists to wear helmets. There has been a particular focus on "Back to School". There are many issues of road safety that relate to schools and where parents park when they pick up their children. The sense of collaboration that I have been talking about has resulted in some of those programs coming to fruition. One thing that the chairman pointed out in his speech is that it is important to work together on this issue of road safety. I encourage the House and the Government to look very closely at the recommendations of Staysafe 50, and I look forward to seeing their implementation.

Report noted.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON VICTIMS COMPENSATION

Report: Ongoing Issues Concerning the NSW Victims Compensation Scheme

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.46 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I once again speak as chairman to a report of the Joint Select Committee on Victims Compensation. This report is titled "Ongoing Issues Concerning the New South Wales Victims Compensation Scheme". The previous such committee which I chaired was prolific in both its inquiries and reports which resulted in significant amendments to the victims compensation scheme at the end of 1998. Those amendments resulted in a scheme that worked much better, but still needed further enhancement.

As a result of its inquiries, the previous select committee on victims compensation produced six reports, two of which specifically focused on issues concerning the long-term financial viability of the 1996 victims compensation scheme, which was already showing evidence of rapid cost escalation. In its second

interim report, titled "The long-term financial viability of the Victims Compensation Fund", the previous committee made a total of 16 recommendations. At the time of tabling that report the fund was paying out approximately \$90 million per year, with future liabilities expected to reach \$128.7 million by 2000. In fact, at the commencement of this inquiry, the committee learned that the Victims Compensation Fund currently has outstanding liabilities of \$150 million.

Following the recommendations made by the previous committee, the Attorney General introduced into Parliament the Victims Compensation Amendment Bill 1998. That bill contained a number of amendments to the victims compensation scheme, including reducing the number of counselling hours, creation of the injury category for domestic violence and an increase in the powers of the tribunal to recover restitution. The significant amendments were the replacement of the injury category of shock with a new category called "psychological injury" and the introduction of a requirement that the applicant seeking compensation for shock must obtain an independent medical assessment by a doctor who has been designated by the Director of Victims Services.

The previous committee, in its report "Inquiry into psychological injury—shock", welcomed the new amendments to the scheme but believed that there was a need to monitor the operation of the new provision of psychological injury and the counselling scheme. The committee found that the evidence provided to it during its inquiry suggested that it would be difficult to provide an accurate definition that would restrict the ability of interested parties from tailoring their reports to meet the criteria.

The committee was also concerned that the director of the tribunal did not have sufficient regulatory control of the designated doctors, and if they do not perform satisfactorily that they could be removed from the list. This committee was established in November last year to inquire into and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Victims Compensation Scheme in providing assistance to genuine victims of crime, and as to the current state of the provision of counselling and associated support services for victims of crime. In previous reports the committee highlighted the conflict of interest that might arise when a practitioner is required, on the one hand, to prepare reports substantiating the claims of victims and, on the other hand, to seek approval on behalf of victims for further counselling sessions.

The former committee concluded that practitioners who write medico-legal reports for victims should not also provide counselling to those victims. I am pleased to say that the Attorney General accepted the recommendations of the former committee and amended the Victims Compensation Act to require applicants seeking compensation for psychological injury to obtain an independent medical examination from a medical practitioner approved by the director and termed "authorised report writers". A panel called the Professional Advisory Panel has been established to assist the director to determine the merits of each of the report writers before approval is given.

If it is considered that the reports prepared by an authorised report writer are not of a high quality, and are not objective evidence-based assessments, the report writer may be called before the Professional Advisory Panel and may be removed from the list of authorised report writers. Victims Services has thus far approved 190 practitioners as authorised report writers. The committee supports the tightening of the criteria of authorised report writers and the establishment of the Professional Advisory Panel. As Professor Waring, President of the New South Wales Psychologists Registration Board, explained to the committee:

... the authorised report writers are now more responsible to the tribunal rather than hired guns, as it were, for people who have virtually turned this into an industry.

As the tribunal is yet to determine any applications for chronic psychological injury the system created for monitoring the work of the approved report writers is yet to be fully tested. The committee believes that ongoing monitoring and reviewing are needed to ensure that the authorised report writers scheme works efficiently and effectively in practice. The counselling scheme established in 1996 represents a positive directional change towards the provision of rehabilitation services to victims of crime. Prior to the 1998 amendments all persons eligible to receive a victims compensation award had an initial entitlement to two hours of independent counselling with a following 20 sessions granted based on an approved psychological assessment.

The scheme was widened following the 1998 amendments. There is no longer a requirement that victims have to have suffered a compensable injury in order to claim counselling. The establishment of the Victims of Crime Bureau in 1996 is a positive step in the provision of counselling and other services to victims of crime, not only through the approved counselling scheme. The bureau also assists victims who may not be eligible for counselling under the Victims Compensation Scheme. The agency's objectives include the co-

ordinated delivery of victims support and counselling services by government and community agencies—in short, an important cog in a whole-of-government co-ordinated approach to the provision of services to victims of crime.

During this inquiry the committee heard evidence from various victims support groups. They have also begun to provide comprehensive victims assistance services, which includes information, referral and counselling. The committee also heard that there is a lack of counselling resources, particularly in regional areas, resulting in some victims having to travel large distances and incur long waiting times to see a counsellor. The committee considers that a greater effort should be made by the Victims of Crime Bureau to ensure a more comprehensive regional coverage of approved counsellors. One of the major issues which most concerned the committee during the course of its inquiry was the delay in processing and paying compensation claims. It is currently taking the tribunal an average of 18 months to determine applications for victims of crime.

As at June last year the tribunal had more than 16,000 claims pending, representing a potential liability of \$150 million. Such delays only increase the suffering of victims of violent crime. Obviously that problem must be corrected. The committee also heard evidence from various victims of crime support groups of their concerns in respect of the tribunal's internal policy change which restricts their involvement in the tribunal's operations. The support groups expressed the view that they could be more involved in a hands-on process in assisting victims with their claims. Currently, victims groups assist victims in the completion of applications for compensation and counselling, without the provision of any ready assistance. However, once the application has been lodged the tribunal will communicate only with the victim and not with the support group.

This lack of communication with the victims groups is contributing to the delays in processing victims applications for counselling and monetary assistance, and it is increasing the suffering of victims who have suffered more than enough. Evidence provided by the tribunal indicates that 45 per cent of all claims lodged since the 1998 amendments are seeking compensation for chronic psychological injury. This is only marginally lower than the figure of 55 per cent of claims lodged under the previous category of shock. While the tribunal is hopeful that more claims for psychological injury will be dismissed due the 1998 amendments to the Victims Compensation Act, it still appears to the committee that the number of claims under that category will not significantly reduce.

A recommendation of the committee is that test cases under the 1998 amendments be determined as soon as possible and communicated to the legal profession so that something can be done about it as quickly as possible. In summary, the committee has put forward recommendations to the Government which amount to increased counselling services in country and regional areas. We must look at the way in which the Victims of Crime Bureau is operating at the moment to make it more efficient in line with the needs of victims. More important, we must provide the families of victims of homicide with increased services, rehabilitation and counselling when and where they need it. We must increase to \$75,000 the amount of compensation available to them—an increase on the previous figure of \$50,000. I commend the report to the House. It is a great direction for victims of crime.

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [12.56 p.m.]: During the inquiry the committee heard evidence from Graeme and Delma Collins, whose 16-year-old daughter, Nichole, had been horrifically murdered in 1997. They spoke about the problems they faced in gaining access to an approved counsellor in their home town of Bega. Due to problems with the Victims Compensation Tribunal and the lack of suitable counsellors in or near Bega, the Collins did not receive suitable counselling for a significant amount of time. The Victims Compensation Scheme did not provide a suitable approved counsellor at Bega. Counselling was organised with the assistance of the Homicide Victims Support Group.

The only suitable counsellor was in Canberra, which is some three hours drive from Bega. In order to obtain counselling the Collins were forced, after work, to make a three-hour trip to Canberra. After a one-hour counselling session they would make another three-hour trip home. As Mr Collins said, this process was almost counterproductive to their mental health. By the time they got home they felt worse than when they had left. Members of the Homicide Victims Support Group said that early intervention counselling is far more beneficial to people who have lost loved ones to homicide than any lump sum compensation. Counselling must be readily available and it must be provided promptly.

The present system of approved counselling involves the Victims Services Bureau inviting counsellors to submit an application to become accredited as approved counsellors for the purposes of the Victims Compensation Act. Counsellors must submit their qualifications and experience and, if approved, be entered on

a register of counsellors who are allowed to undertake counselling work for the bureau. Victims Services have accredited 406 counsellors since the beginning of the counselling scheme in 1996. It is the committee's opinion that the current counselling scheme is operating well, but there is a definite need for improvement in the areas of regional coverage and monitoring of performance.

The committee also heard from the Homicide Victims Support Group of the difficulties confronted by aggrieved family members of homicide victims who live in regional New South Wales. The committee was informed of the case of one counsellor who worked only two days a week in a country centre who wanted parents of a deceased victim to make an appointment two weeks in advance. As members of the Homicide Victims Support Group stated, grieving family members do not know what they will be doing tomorrow or whether they can even get out of bed, let alone wait two weeks for their first appointment with a counsellor.

The committee considers that the Victims of Crime Bureau should make a greater effort to ensure that counsellors from regional areas are attracted to joining the accreditation scheme. The bureau should actively seek feedback about the performance of approved counsellors from victims groups and individual victims to ensure that the counselling scheme is meeting the needs of victims of crime. The Homicide Victims Support Group also raised the possibility of counsellors travelling to family members' homes to provide counselling in circumstances where members are incapable of travelling to the nearest approved counsellor for reasons of distance or because of terrible distress. Currently this service is offered in other jurisdictions, such as Western Australia.

The Victims Compensation Act 1996 significantly changed the way in which the relatives of homicide victims were dealt with under the victims compensation scheme. Previously, relatives of homicide victims had to show evidence of psychological injury as a result of the murder, evidence that was usually in the form of medical reports. Monetary amounts were then awarded on the basis of the degree of injury sustained by the relatives. This was a purely arbitrary manner of providing monetary assistance to grieving relatives of homicide victims. The 1996 legislation removed the need for the relatives of homicide victims to prove injury and placed such relatives in a protected category of victim. Family relatives of a homicide victim were automatically recognised and each applicant member now shares equally from an amount of \$50,000, with priority being given to dependent children of the deceased.

That initiative achieved a number of important changes for family members of homicide victims. First, it spared family members from the indignity of having to medically prove the impact that the murder of a close relative has had on their lives. Second, it aims to make their applications easier to prepare and to have their claims administratively expedited by the tribunal. Upon receipt of all applications by family members the tribunal could share the compensation award amongst the applicants. Initially the system operated very effectively. The committee heard evidence from members of the Homicide Victims Support Group that when the provisions of the 1996 Act commenced a system was introduced that enabled the speedy and efficient processing of applications for compensation by family members.

Ms Martha Jabour, the executive director of the group, stated that she could ring the registrar of the tribunal or he would ring her when the application form was received by the tribunal. Any difficulties with the case would be discussed and solutions agreed upon. Ms Jabour said that claims at that time were finalised promptly. Sometimes they were finalised within a month, with the average being two months. The committee was extremely concerned to learn that compensation payments for homicide victims were taking an average of six to nine months. The committee was also informed by the Homicide Victims Support Group that some of its members are waiting too long for payment of interim awards. Section 33 of the Victims Compensation Act provides for the making of interim payments in cases of severe financial hardship or for the payment of funeral expenses in cases of homicide. Ms Jabour informed the committee of one case in which the Homicide Victims Support Group was sending food hampers to the victims because they were under such financial hardship. *[Time expired.]*

Report noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Mills) left the chair at 1.01 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

PARKING SPACE LEVY AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [2.15 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Parking Space Levy Bill 1992 was introduced with general cross-party support. The purpose of the bill was to discourage car use in business districts by imposing a levy on off-street commercial and office parking spaces, including parking spaces in parking stations. The revenue collected from the levy was to be used to finance the development of infrastructure to encourage the use of public transport to and from those districts. In the second reading speech on the Parking Space Levy Bill in this House on 7 May 1992 the then Minister for Transport, Mr Bruce Baird, said:

Road users need to be made aware of the external costs which they impose and are now being asked to contribute to the cost of providing transport systems.

The Minister said further:

It balances, in an equitable way, the need to encourage the sensible use of motor vehicles with the need to build on other measures already taken by the Government to enhance Sydney's public transport system.

This legislation proposed by the Government supports those sentiments of the former Minister for Transport. Since the levy's introduction in 1992 it has been applied to the Sydney and North Sydney-Milsons Point business districts. The current levy is \$400 per single car space per annum, and this revenue is paid into the Public Transport Facilities Fund. Under the legislation the Public Transport Facilities Fund can only be utilised for the construction and maintenance of car and bicycle parking facilities and other infrastructure that facilitates access to public transport services to and from levy areas, and for the provision of public transport services.

By 30 June 2000 there will have been \$87 million of improvements to public transport as a result of this levy. They include commuter car parks such as those at Meadowbank, Minto, Padstow and Cabramatta; bicycle facilities; bus-rail interchanges, including those at Hurstville, Liverpool, Ashfield and Woy Woy; ferry wharves and light rail. When introducing the 1992 legislation the then Minister for Transport informed the Parliament that initially the levy would be directed to improving commuter car parking at major suburban railway stations and to building bike storage facilities at stations. That is what occurred, and the uses to which the levy is allocated have widened to other transport facilities that match the requirements specified in the legislation.

The importance of public transport improvement projects undertaken with the levy funds has increased markedly since 1992 as attention is focused on public transport as a key means to improving the environment and air quality in particular. The levy is considered a very small component of the cost of car parking in the areas it covers and makes an important contribution to minimising congestion on the roads. The funds raised through the levy make an important contribution to providing facilities for regular commuters and encourage the use of public transport. The original legislation provided for the levy to be extended to new areas by regulation. It was envisaged that if the approach in the Sydney and North Sydney business districts was successful the levy would be extended.

In February this year the New South Wales Public Transport Authority released a discussion paper that proposed extending the levy to Chatswood, St Leonards-Crows Nest, Parramatta and Bondi Junction. Refinements to the legislation were also proposed by the Public Transport Authority to allow differential levy rates in the new areas, as compared to Sydney and North Sydney. It was proposed that the levy rate be increased to \$800 per annum in the central business district [CBD] and North Sydney-Milsons Point area but be set at \$400 in the proposed new areas. It was also proposed by the Public Transport Authority that the legislation be amended to allow more timely collection of the levy where it is extended to new areas.

The increase in the levy in the Sydney and North Sydney business districts was proposed to assist in meeting the increased cost to the State Government of providing transport services and associated infrastructure for commuters coming into these areas each day. The levy was originally applied to the Sydney CBD and North Sydney-Milsons Point area, because they were identified as the major commercial and business centres in the urban area. However, Sydney has grown and changed significantly since 1992.

New commercial centres have emerged that are themselves facing similar issues of traffic congestion. The Public Transport Authority proposal indicated that the new areas of Parramatta, Bondi Junction, St Leonards and Chatswood also satisfy the criteria of high-density commercial activity, considerable traffic congestion and the availability of adequate public transport as an alternative to private vehicle use. There is also a recognition that the proposed new areas are benefiting, and are set to benefit, from major public transport improvements being undertaken by the Government, including the Parramatta Rail Link, the Liverpool-Parramatta transitway, Chatswood station upgrade, Bondi Junction bus-rail interchange and St Leonards station upgrade. It is appropriate that an incentive be established in these areas to encourage greater public transport use as they develop further as business districts.

Since the release of the discussion paper the Public Transport Authority received submissions from the public and interested groups and provided advice to the Government. The work by the Public Transport Authority, and specifically its chair, Ms Antionette le Marchant, has been useful in ensuring that all issues and concerns of parties affected are fully considered—in particular, the different characteristic of business centres other than the Sydney and North Sydney areas. Overall support for the proposal was received from key interest groups throughout the community including the Bus and Coach Association, Lane Cove Council, the Total Environment Centre and the Council of Social Service of New South Wales.

A key concern raised in response to the discussion paper was the application of the levy to retail car parking in each of the new areas. All the proposed new areas have major shopping centres that provide free shopper parking. A large proportion of the retail in these areas—unlike the Sydney CBD—is weekly trade in consumer products such as groceries. These products can be difficult to carry on public transport. In practice the shopping centres argued that they would retain free parking if the levy was applied but would pass on the cost to retailers. This meant that the impact of the levy would be on retail prices rather than directly on the car user. As a result, the aim of reducing car use would not be achieved but there would be an increase in consumer prices at a time when the Commonwealth Government is also introducing the goods and services tax.

The Public Transport Authority fully appreciated this concern and recommended to the Government that the levy in the new areas should not apply to retail car spaces in the proposed new areas. This advice has been accepted by the Government. Given that similar issues apply to other car spaces provided for customers, the Government has decided that exemptions should be provided in the new areas of Parramatta, Bondi Junction, St Leonards and Chatswood for car spaces for guests or customers of a hotel or motel, members or guests of a registered club—for example, RSL clubs—customers of restaurants, patients of medical centres, customers of car yards et cetera, and clients of funeral parlours.

The approach for the new areas of Parramatta, Chatswood, St Leonards and Bondi Junction will be to apply a levy of \$400 to parking stations and office parking spaces only. This relates to the majority of the car spaces in the new areas and it is the regular commuter market that needs to be encouraged more to use public transport. Apart from the proposed increase in the levy, it is not proposed that the categories of eligible parking spaces in the Sydney CBD and North Sydney-Milsons Point areas be amended. It is considered that there is little, if any, free customer parking provided in these areas. There also exists a different retail-business profile, greater traffic congestion and more developed public transport structure. The arrangements established in 1992 are settled and working well.

I turn to the specific provisions of the bill. The proposed amendments provide for two categories of area under the Act—category 1 and category 2 areas. The city of Sydney and North Sydney business districts, the areas currently subject to the Act, are defined by the Act and prescribed by the regulations as category 1 areas. The levy in relation to parking spaces on premises in category 1 areas is increased from \$400 to \$800 per space per year. Certain areas in Bondi Junction, Chatswood, Parramatta and St Leonards are prescribed by the regulations as category 2 areas and the levy amount for these areas is set at \$400 per annum. Provision is made for exemptions in the new category 2 areas. Existing exemptions and a provision to further exempt by regulation are not affected. Other amendments are of a savings, transitional or consequential nature. The provision made in new section 6A essentially mirrors transitional provisions included in the original Act. The overall effect of the section is to ensure that when new areas are prescribed the levy is payable in a timely period.

In introducing this legislation the Government is making an important step towards addressing the quality of Sydney's air and encouraging greater use of public transport. The funds raised by the extended levy will be used to progress key transport infrastructure projects that are already under way. They include the Engadine bus and rail interchange, the Rockdale bus and rail interchange and car park, the Mount Druitt bus and rail interchange, the Kogarah car park, the Holsworthy car park, the Lilyfield light rail extension, and the

Liverpool-Parramatta transitway bus stations and stops. Under the legislation the Government will continue to be required to use all funds raised by the levy to provide for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure that improves access to public transport. I would like to thank the New South Wales Public Transport Authority and its chair, Ms Antonette le Marchant, for their work on this project. I also thank all members of the community and interest groups who took part in the debate on this issue. I commend the bill to the House. I seek leave to table the maps of category 1 and category 2 areas referred to in my second reading speech.

Leave granted.

Documents tabled.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr O'Farrell.

TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (PARRAMATTA RAIL LINK) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr SCULLY (Smithfield-Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads) [2.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This proposed legislation is one more example of the Carr Government's commitment to developing the Parramatta rail link. In the last few months this project has made great progress. Its environmental impact statement [EIS] was placed on public exhibition and registrations of interest have been sought as the first step in the tendering process. Now I am introducing a bill that will make the project possible. The Parramatta rail link is the centrepiece of the Carr Government's integrated transport plan for Sydney Action for Transport 2010 and a key component of our post-Olympic jobs plan. It will be the most significant expansion ever undertaken of the Sydney rail network. The preferred project outlined in the EIS involves 27 kilometres of new track with a total of 12 stations directly included in the link.

Mr Brogden: Did you say that this is biggest rail project in 200 years?

Mr SCULLY: Yes.

Mr Brogden: What a worry!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Those members seated on the Opposition front bench will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate at the appropriate time.

Mr Brogden: Only if the Minister is here.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is delivering a second reading speech that will be read by others and may also be referred to in court proceedings. I suggest that he be permitted to continue without further interruption.

Mr SCULLY: This new line will link western Sydney with employment and education opportunities at Rydalmere, North Ryde and the lower North Shore. It will improve public transport access to Parramatta, reinforcing its position as Sydney's second central business district [CBD]. Being fully integrated into the CityRail network, the Parramatta rail link will ensure that CityRail can meet growing demand for rail services. The main western line is currently running at close to its capacity. Without this project it will reach saturation point in 2006. The extra capacity of the Parramatta rail link will provide the potential for an extra 13,000 seats from western Sydney to Sydney CBD in the morning peak. In its first year it is expected that 26 million passengers will use these new services.

The EIS acknowledges that the project will create localised environmental impacts during construction and operation. However, most of these will be temporary and a range of mitigation measures are proposed to limit impacts. Overall, it has been shown that the project has positive, long-term environmental benefits. Alternatives to the Parramatta rail link have been examined extensively throughout the process of project development. Prior to the EIS, 66 different route and mode alternatives were considered. The EIS itself further

considered alternatives, including those raised by the community through a public call for alternative transport proposals. The preferred project has come through this rigorous process as the best way of meeting our future public transport demands.

This legislation has two primary aims. The first is to give specific powers to enable the Parramatta rail link conforming scheme, as outlined in the registrations of interest document, to be developed. The second is to use this opportunity to improve statutory powers to protect the State's investment in its existing and future underground rail facilities. It needs to be emphasised that this legislation in no way pre-empts the planning approval to be sought from the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. This approval will still be required for the Parramatta rail link to proceed. Proposed section 123 confirms that applications for, and consideration and determination of, that planning approval will proceed as usual through the existing provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

Legislation is required to address land use and acquisition restrictions contained in the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to enable the preferred project described in the EIS to be developed. Land in Lane Cove National Park and Parramatta regional park is required for the project. The EIS identified a site within Parramatta regional park as necessary for construction of the tunnel and the tunnel portal. This required both temporary and permanent use of land for construction and operational purposes. In response to issues raised by the Parramatta Park Trust, Parramatta City Council, local members of Parliament and the community, I directed that a new construction plan be developed. The new plan, which was announced in March this year, reduces the environmental impact of the proposal and ensures that Parramatta park's heritage assets are preserved and protected. There is no permanent impact on the park and Parramatta golf course will be able to remain open for business during the construction period. The temporary land requirements, which have the support of the Parramatta Park Trust, are to use an existing gravel car park as a construction site and to relocate Park Parade to allow tunnel construction.

The preferred project in the EIS also involves a bridge crossing of the Lane Cove River. The bridge enables two additional stations, namely, Delhi Road and the University of Technology Sydney [UTS] Ku-ring-gai, to be included in the project. While it is recognised that the bridge option has localised environmental impacts, it provides greater public transport benefits for Sydney. This avoids having an unbroken eight kilometre stretch of tunnel from Macquarie Park to Chatswood. The bridge option also provides significant safety and operational advantages including greater flexibility in train operations. The bridge requires the acquisition of approximately 1.9 hectares of land in the Lane Cove River valley as a construction site. Of this land, about 0.8 of a hectare is national park and the remainder is a mix of public ownerships including Crown land, road and public open space.

Part of the route between the proposed Delhi Road station and the bridge also passes under national park land for approximately 600 metres. As a result, a stratum of subsurface land adjoining Delhi Road also needs to be acquired for the project. Restrictions in the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 prevent the use or acquisition of land within Lane Cove National Park and Parramatta regional park for the Parramatta rail link. Legislation is therefore required to progress the project. This legislation will allow specified land, including native title rights and interests, to be acquired for the project. Subject to receiving planning approval, a public purpose acquisition would then take place that would revoke the reservation of land as a national park or regional park and would proceed consistently with the Native Title Act 1993 and the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991. It needs to be emphasised that this proposed legislation will not revoke the existing dedication of this land.

The land is clearly defined and limited in the plan of project park land presented to the Speaker. Sheets 1 and 2 reflect the revised construction plan for Parramatta regional park. Lot 1 would be a temporary surface acquisition during construction and would also be a permanent subsurface acquisition for the tunnel. Lots 2 and 3 would both be temporary surface acquisitions for construction purposes. Sheets 3 and 4 relate to the tunnel section between the proposed Delhi Road station and the crematorium. Lots 1 to 6 on these sheets would be a permanent subsurface acquisition. Sheets 5 and 6 relate to the construction site for the Lane Cove River Bridge and tunnel portals.

As a result, lot 1 would be acquired as a mix of temporary and permanent surface and subsurface acquisitions in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The remaining lots shown on sheets 5 and 6 are residue lots resulting from the subdivision of land and will not be acquired. It needs to be emphasised that the acquisition of these lands is not being taken lightly. Substantial efforts have been made in the preparation of the EIS and in response to community comments to maximise the benefits of the project and reduce its impacts.

Legal advice provided to Rail Access Corporation has questioned the use of powers under sections 80 and 82 of the Public Works Act 1912 for the temporary occupation of land for construction purposes. These powers are used either for the occupation of land while compulsory acquisition mechanisms are being finalised, or in situations where the short-term nature of the works makes compulsory acquisition inappropriate. Amending the legislation to allow this is necessary in order to confirm the availability of these powers in order to demonstrate that the construction plan outlined in the EIS is achievable.

In light of these concerns, the bill makes it clear that sections 80 and 82 of the Public Works Act apply to the project before the land to be used for construction is acquired. For example, this will enable activities such as geotechnical assessment and surveys to be carried out for the project. Of course, these powers are subject to existing obligations of constructing authorities under the Public Works Act. The bill also confirms that these powers apply to the project park lands but in these cases are clearly subject to those sections of the National Parks and Wildlife Act that protect relics, Aboriginal places and fauna. The rail authorities will consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the exercise of these powers. An amendment to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 is proposed to ensure consortia members and their parent companies cannot avoid responsibility for defective building work. The major contract packages for this project are expected to involve consortia of numerous companies and parent company guarantees of consortia member obligations.

The obligations and liabilities of consortia members would ordinarily be assumed on a joint and several basis. However, section 109ZJ of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 limits the liability for defective building work in cases where more than one party is responsible. This provision was primarily introduced to ensure accredited certifiers carrying out local government building inspections could be insured. Despite any contractual intent, persons who are contractually jointly and severally liable for loss or damage, and those who contractually guarantee the liabilities or performance of another person, may attempt to use this provision to avoid their contractual liabilities.

As this new section of the Act has not been subject to judicial scrutiny, it is not clear whether the project contracts can be cast to overcome this issue. For certainty in the tendering process, section 126 is intended to ensure that this existing insurance regime does not limit or affect the liability of guarantors or the liability of others who may be jointly and severally liable under contract. The proposed section allows the parties to deal with the issue of liability for defective work by agreement. Similar legislation was amended by the Victorian Parliament for the Melbourne City Link project. This amendment is proposed for the purposes of the Parramatta rail link so the existing insurance scheme is not affected, pending consideration of a whole-of-government approach to this issue.

This legislation will also amend the sequence of approvals required for the Parramatta rail link. Section 127 allows the approval process under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to proceed prior to heritage approval. This section retains the approval role of the Heritage Council. The Heritage Council will continue to influence the overall planning approval through its advice to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning during the assessment of the EIS. In addition, it will give the Heritage Council a more practical role in project approval which reflects the reality of the development of major projects. Rather than basing approval on conceptual designs, the Heritage Council approval will be based on more detailed design plans. This role is similar to that of numerous other authorities such as the Environment Protection Authority, the Department of Land and Water Conservation and the Waterways Authority. For example, the Environment Protection Authority has an approval role for a project of this magnitude which arises after the ministerial approval.

The amendments I have outlined, which together form a new division 6 of part 9 of the Transport Administration Act, apply solely to the Parramatta rail link. The bill also inserts a new schedule into the Transport Administration Act which provides an appropriate level of protection to underground railway infrastructure generally. This protection applies to existing facilities as well as future works such as the Parramatta rail link. The definitions for this schedule reflect the intent to cover rail projects which the Government develops jointly with the private sector. They also extend to all underground rail facilities to cover structures such as tunnels, stations and access ways. Through this schedule, this legislation is also using the opportunity to clarify the power to operate trains in tunnels acquired under section 62 of the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991.

Legal advice obtained in the development of other transport projects has identified a potential discrepancy within section 62 of that Act, which outlines the circumstances where compensation is not payable for acquisition of land for a tunnel. This is because subsection (1) of clause 62 refers to construction and maintenance while subsection (2) refers only to construction. Clause 2 of the new schedule confirms beyond

doubt that these provisions are not limited merely to construction but apply to the purpose for which the acquisition was undertaken. There is currently no adequate statutory protection in the Transport Administration Act 1988 for underground railway facilities. Protection is limited to compensation from people who knowingly damage rail infrastructure. That is in contrast to the security provided under legislation to other underground public infrastructure such as road, water and sewerage tunnels.

For example, the Sydney Water Act 1994 creates a statutory covenant over land on which a "work of the Corporation" is installed to ensure the work is not destroyed, damaged or interfered with. Similarly, under the Roads Act 1993, public roads are subject to a right of support and tunnel protection was incorporated into the Sydney Harbour Tunnel (Private Joint Venture) Act 1987. This legislation will provide a level of protection consistent with the State's investment in this infrastructure. The measures proposed in this bill to protect these vital assets and maintain the ability to operate the rail network are as follows. Clause 3 makes a person who causes destruction, damage or interference to an underground rail facility liable to pay compensation to the rail authority that owns it.

Clause 4 creates a right of support for underground rail facilities so that a person has a duty of care in negligence not to do anything that removes the support provided to underground rail facilities by supporting land. Clause 5 provides that land above, under or adjacent to an underground rail facility is subject to a covenant for the protection of the facility, and clause 6 authorises a rail authority to require the removal of any structure or object placed in contact with or near an underground rail facility that interferes with the operation of the facility and to compensate the rail authority for subsequent loss or damage.

In conclusion, the Parramatta rail link will be the most substantial public transport project ever constructed in Sydney. It is vital to achieving the Government's environmental, urban planning and social equity priorities and is a key part of the Government's post-Olympic jobs strategy. The Government's commitment to this project has already been demonstrated through the exhibition of the EIS, the commencement of the tendering process and a commitment to funding under Action for Transport 2010. This legislation is critical for the project to proceed and to deliver its environmental, social and economic benefits. I commend this bill to the House. I seek the leave of the House to table sheets 1 to 6 referred to in the second reading speech.

Leave granted.

Documents tabled.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr. O'Farrell.

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council with amendments:

Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Littering) Bill

Consideration of amendments deferred.

MONA VALE ROAD BUSHLAND

Debate resumed from 13 April.

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [2.48 p.m.]: I strongly support the motion moved by my colleague the honourable member for Davidson, which in part asks this House to note with concern that the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council intends to sell the 36-hectare bushland link between Garigal National Park and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park without recognising the community support for its preservation and incorporation into national park. The electorate of the honourable member for Davidson adjoins the electorate of Pittwater, which extends to the Terrey Hills-Duffys Forest community. Indeed, the land referred to in the motion is a little to the west of the electorate of Pittwater and borders on the electorate of Davidson. It has been a matter of great concern to many residents of Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills that this land may be lost forever to some form of commercial and/or residential development.

The reason I join my colleague in supporting the motion is that this matter should be looked at in general terms as relating to part of the northern beaches of Sydney. I refer to the northern beaches because the Minister accused the honourable member for Davidson of being from the North Shore. He is not from the North

Shore; he is from the northern beaches. Parts of the North Shore have large bushland tracts, and parts of the Pittwater electorate have very large bushland tracts, as does the Davidson electorate and, to a lesser extent, the Wakehurst electorate. We should not be penalised because, over some time, our bushland has been preserved and because, due to lower levels of development, we are able to act in some respects as the lungs of Sydney.

There are great opportunities not only for the communities of the northern beaches but other communities of this city to share this land, as they regularly do. The land in contention today is on both sides of Mona Vale Road; in fact, it is the dividing line between Garigal National Park and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. To have in the middle of that corridor the potential for commercial development is very concerning for the local community and, I would expect, for the community at large. The Minister for the Environment, in responding to the honourable member for Davidson, made a significant point. I quote what the Minister said:

In any event, having investigated the details, the National Parks and Wildlife Service advised me that the land swap was not in fact a viable option.

The Minister was referring to a land swap with Cottage Point. The Opposition is not disputing that. If the Aboriginal land council did not wish to take up the offer of some blocks of land at Cottage Point, so be it. However, the Minister's response negates the possibility that the Government would consider a land swap regarding the subject piece of land. In one instance, the land offered was not suitable to the owners of the land in contention. That, of course, does not rule out further consideration and negotiation of a land swap. Indeed, there are many areas of Crown land in and around the communities of Pittwater, Davidson and Warringah that could quite easily be used in a land swap. I encourage the Government to reconsider its position.

The Government's approach to this was, to say the least, half-hearted. Instead of taking a long-term approach and committing itself to overwhelmingly supporting the majority of communities who believe that this piece of land should be saved from commercial development, the Government decided to make a poor attempt at getting some land for a land swap, and looked at Cottage Point. The land that was offered was not appropriate and in the Government's view, that was it, end of story. There was no consideration given to going any further, of looking for more land, or of committing to the principle that this land should not be developed.

We all know that urban bushland is increasingly disappearing with the encroachment of more and more residential and commercial development. Therefore, in response to this fact, and given the urban consolidation policies of the Government, we must look continuously for more opportunities to save urban bushland, and to save it for our community for ever. This is one opportunity. If the Government fails on this occasion, it will fail to provide a future for urban bushland, a future in which our communities will be able to enjoy themselves in the bushland.

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [2.53 p.m.]: I enter this debate as someone who supports conservation and the protection of our environment. I am therefore proud to be a member of a Government that has an outstanding record of adding lands of high conservation importance to the national parks system. The Carr Government has increased the State network of protected areas by 25 per cent, from 4 million hectares in 1995 to 5 million hectares now. Over one million hectares of new parks and reserves have been created, while nearly 900,000 hectares of wilderness have been declared.

In 1995 the Carr Government promised 24 new national parks. So far, it has created over 150 new parks and reserves throughout New South Wales. Many of those involved urban bushland, particularly in the additions to the regional park system. The Government's goal is to conserve the natural and cultural resources of New South Wales, while providing appropriate recreational opportunities for the community. The Government's acquisition program is responsibly and actively targeted at securing the highest priority conservation outcomes. Contrast that record of achievement with the position of the Leader of the Opposition on national parks. She wants to close them. She told the *Eden Magnet* on 10 September 1998 that the Coalition wanted to "undeclare" parks created by the Carr Government. At her first, very celebrated, press conference as Leader of the Opposition she said:

What's the point of having a park if nobody can get into it ... I, for the life of me, can't understand why you would lock people out of them.

The reason I mention that statement is that those remarks place in context the views of the Coalition on a lot of these issues. The National Parks Association had quite a bit to say about the views of the Leader of the Opposition. But what about the views of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party? I certainly am aware that in 1994 the Leader the National Party—then the National Party Minister for Conservation, an interesting contradiction in terms—went on record as saying that the "wilderness concept was 'philosophically repugnant'". I would like to say more about the credibility of the Opposition.

On 9 September last year the Minister made a ministerial statement on the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park draft plan of management. When the Minister was making that statement, all that the shadow Minister for the Environment, the honourable member for Southern Highlands, and the honourable member for Port Macquarie could do was ridicule the draft plan of management about suggestions to minimise the impact of horseriding. They were not supporting the plan of management, or saying how important this whole issue was. I think the only thing green about the Opposition benches is quite literally the Opposition benches.

The shadow Minister for the Environment on 27 March put out a press release on what she termed "Carr's Khaki Report Card", claiming that the Government was talking green but not acting green. We know the attitude of the Opposition on the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park draft plan of management and other notable events debated in this House during this session. I recall that on Thursday 13 April the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House and complained that the Premier should not be concerned about overpopulation and global warming, that he had "more important things to do". Of course, the next day the shadow Minister for the Environment told the House that the Government did not care about those things at all. I guess we will always have to wait and hear how the Opposition feels on any given day about the environment. Of course, a policy would be of great help, but we know we will not get that for some time to come.

One of the bottom lines in this debate—the honourable member's request for acquisition of this land—is that it must be understood that the funds available are not limitless. Priorities must be set, and they are being set giving priority to areas of the highest conservation value. In other words, we should be about securing lands that are the most ecologically important, not lands that are most politically satisfying to the honourable member for Davidson. Whilst that may seem a little harsh, I recall a media release issued by the honourable member for Davidson just after the State elections entitled "State Liberals: Challenge is to regain our 'base'". That press release stated:

Davidson MP Andrew Humpherson said today that the first political challenge for the Liberal Party was to regain the confidence of its 'base'...

"Many traditional Liberal voters were uncertain about what the State Liberal Party stood for. They were not persuaded during the campaign that we were a credible alternative Government."

I wonder what has changed in the past 12 months! The honourable member for Davidson went on to say in his press release:

As a consequence many were disenchanted and registered a protest vote ... Our major task over the next 12 months is to regain the confidence of our traditional supporters."

I gather that the acquisition of the piece of land the subject of this motion is important to the constituents of the honourable member for Davidson, but I urge him to recognise the conservation outcomes secured through the acquisition program of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and to drop his campaign to overturn established priorities.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [2.58 p.m.]: It certainly is an experience to listen to the honourable member for Menai. At least it was interesting when she delivered the prepared part of her speech. However, most of her remarks showed how little attention she pays to Coalition documents and press releases. Perhaps the honourable member for Menai should spend more time preserving bushland in the Menai area and talking to her Government about its preservation, because Menai residents too are concerned about issues to do with preservation of bushland. They are concerned about what the Carr Government is doing in the Menai area. In the northern beaches area the problems are exactly the same. The Carr Government, regrettably, has not adhered to the promises that it made to the people of New South Wales that it would preserve the last vestiges of urban bushland in Sydney. That is what the motion is all about. The land the subject of the motion fits fairly and squarely into the category of land that the Premier identified he would preserve. He made a faithful promise, a pact with the people of New South Wales that he would preserve urban bushland.

Regrettably, what we have in New South Wales at the moment is a Bob Ellis prepackaged, hermetically sealed Premier, devoid of truthfulness, sincerity, heart, depth and passion. Time after time we witness this sort of farcical breach of a pact that he has made with the people of New South Wales. He is simply allowing land with a high conservation value, such as this land off Mona Vale Road, to be sold off without making any concerted effort to preserve it. I recognise that the land, which is in freehold title, is owned by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. I am a little disappointed that there have not been more serious negotiations and discussions between the land council and the Government. There is fault on both sides.

I made an effort to contact the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and I asked the executive officer whether he would enter into serious discussions with the Government. Without detailing the response that I got, it was extremely negative. The land council must, therefore, bear some of the burden in the sell-off of this land. If the land council were desirous of selling this land to the Government, the Government would be in a position to proceed with the land swap that was promised by the Minister for the Environment. However, I suspect that the Minister for the Environment was not serious about the undertakings that he gave in correspondence to the honourable member for Davidson.

The honourable member for Davidson is simply trying to do what his local community wants. This one-kilometre-wide bushland area, which adjoins Garigal National Park, runs from Garigal National Park to Kuring-gai Chase National Park—an important green corridor of land with obvious ecological and environmental values. The Minister recognised that fact in his correspondence to the honourable member for Davidson. The Minister indicated that he was directing the National Parks and Wildlife Service to urgently recommence discussions with the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council. He led everybody to believe that there would be a solution to the problem. Once the Minister makes such a promise he needs to follow it through.

The problem with the Carr Government is that it gives people false hope. It tells them that it is going to do something, that it is going to preserve urban bushland but, when it gets down to tin tacks, it does not. That is what occurred in relation to the Ardel site at Allambie Heights. Numerous delegations went to see the Minister for Planning, Dr Refshauge, and the Minister for the Environment. Delegations sought some sort of agreement that that urban bushland be preserved. The answer from the Carr Government was, "We are developing national and other far-flung parks in the State." Sydney needs its urban bushland. The Government recognised that in its policy documents but it is doing nothing about it. It then starts telling people in the community, "There are areas of much higher conservation value. We will put our money into those areas." But those areas happen to be in some fraudulent little Labor electorate somewhere. The Government should wake up to the fact that it is responsible for everyone in New South Wales. It must deliver services for everyone.

[Interruption]

The Minister for Small Business says that people in the northern beaches area are privileged. People living in public housing in my electorate will be furious when they hear that statement. However, that is the attitude of the Minister and the Premier. It is about time that we were all given a fair go.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Nori.

PAYROLL TAX RATE

Debate resumed from 13 April.

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [3.05 p.m.]: This motion is all about the financial credibility and promises of the Carr Government. Let us go back to the only true words spoken by the Treasurer of New South Wales in the past five years. In April 1995, in his first week as Treasurer, he was overcome by his appointment to the office of Treasurer. He participated in an interview and let the public know what his strategy was for dealing with payroll tax. He said, "Payroll tax is a bad tax and we need to get it down as quickly as possible. We need to get it down to match Queensland's rate of 5 per cent". The Treasurer promised to reduce the payroll tax rate to 5 per cent by 1999, but he went further than that. He suggested that, in the following year—which should be this year, the year 2000—he would get it down to 4 per cent. I will quote from the Treasurer's interview in April 1995. He said:

We are going to hack into payroll tax as heavily as we can and as soon as we can.

He then went on to say:

We want to get down to the Queensland payroll tax level very soon. I would like to go further than that. Payroll tax is a bad tax.

Those words of wisdom were spoken by the Treasurer in his first week as Treasurer. What has happened since then?

Mr Orkopoulos: Do you support him?

Mr DEBNAM: The honourable member for Swansea asked whether I support the Treasurer. I support a Treasurer who is interested in getting tax rates down in New South Wales, which is the highest taxed State in Australia. Last year the honourable member and every other man, woman and child in New South Wales paid \$2,157 to the Carr Government Treasury. The New South Wales Treasury has never had so much money rolling in the door. Last year it received an absolute record amount. This year it will receive another record amount. The Treasurer has achieved a few records—and he is claiming more than he should—but one thing he has achieved is record taxation in this State.

He achieved another record today by having credible agencies comment on his financial credibility. They did not comment on payroll tax specifically but they certainly commented on tax rates in this State. They pointed out again that New South Wales is the highest taxed State in Australia. Access Economics and Standard and Poor's credit rating agency made a few comments about New South Wales. Basically, they suggested that we have a problem in New South Wales with the Treasury and the credibility of Treasury numbers. We have known since April 1995 that Treasury's projections have always been rubbery. It has not been able to put together budget projections.

But, for the first time, the credit rating agency and Access Economics are saying that there is a real problem in New South Wales. The advice that those two well-respected agencies gave to the people of New South Wales this morning on page 13 of the *Australian Financial Review* was that when the State budget, prepared by Treasury, is delivered on 23 May we will have to ask ourselves whether the numbers are plausible. Clearly, from the comments of Standard and Poor's and Access Economics, they are not plausible. That is not unexpected from a Treasurer who made an important promise in April 1995—a promise that was extremely important for small business—to reduce the payroll tax rate to 5 per cent to match the rate in Queensland. Queensland has powered ahead and is now looking at a payroll tax rate of 4.9 per cent from July this year, while the rate in New South Wales is still hanging at 6.4 per cent.

I say "hanging" because Treasurer Egan is hanging on jobs in New South Wales, especially in northern New South Wales where businesses and communities have to deal with this predatory tax rate from Queensland of 4.9 per cent. It is a major issue in that area, but it is also a major issue right across New South Wales because the payroll tax rate should have gone down to the 5 per cent that Treasurer Egan promised. The figure of 6.4 per cent is just not good enough, and his so-called l-a-w tax cuts for the next few years are simply pre-election promises from which we probably will not see much benefit. The House needs to send a message to the Treasurer of New South Wales that his performance has been appalling to date, especially in relation to payroll tax. We need to get those tax rates down as quickly as we can.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 30

Mr Armstrong
Mr Barr
Mr Brogden
Mr Collins
Mr Debnam
Mr George
Mr Glachan
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Ms Hodgkinson
Dr Kernohan

Mr Kerr
Mr Maguire
Mr McGrane
Ms Moore
Mr O'Doherty
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Oakeshott
Mr D. L. Page
Mr Piccoli
Mr Richardson
Ms Seaton

Mrs Skinner
Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Stoner
Mr Torbay
Mr Webb
Mr Windsor

Tellers,
Mr Fraser
Mr Humpherson

Noes, 43

Ms Allan	Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Amery	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Ms Andrews	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Mr Ashton	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Brown	Mr McBride	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Campbell	Mr McManus	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Mr Martin	Mr Tripodi
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Whelan
Mr Gaudry	Ms Megarrity	Mr Woods
Mr Gibson	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Greene	Mr Moss	
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Nagle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Harrison	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
Mr Hickey	Ms Nori	Mr Thompson

Pairs

Mrs Chikarovksi	Mr Aquilina
Mr R. H. L. Smith	Miss Burton
Mr Souris	Mr Carr
Mr J. H. Turner	Mr Knight
Mr R. W. Turner	Mr Markham

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Membership**

Motion, by leave, by Mr Whelan agreed to:

- (1) That Gerard Francis Martin be appointed to serve on the Regulation Review Committee in place of Cherie Ann Burton, resigned.
- (2) That a message be sent acquainting the Legislative Council of the resolution.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Debate resumed from 14 April.

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.20 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (3) and (4) with a view to inserting instead the following paragraph:

- (3) commends the Government for its continued support and funding for sexual assault services.

Since this Government came to office an extra \$500,000 in recurrent funding has been provided to assist in providing direct sexual assault services for victims. I am pleased to affirm that this Government established an annual \$500,000 Victims Support Fund using funds from the Confiscated Proceeds of Crime Account, so criminals pay for victims support services. From these funds the Advocates for Survivors of Child Abuse [ASCA] group has been successful in its request for \$50,000 to help victims of child sexual assault and physical violence to heal from the trauma of the assault in a nurturing and calming environment. Survivors will receive counselling during their stay at Muyumarri, the retreat run by ASCA, in the Hunter area.

Also, the Wayside Chapel and the Station have been awarded \$54,841 to employ a counsellor to work with homeless people who are dealing with sexual assault and child sexual assault. This service will provide professional crisis counselling, and a referral and support service to a group of victims who rarely present to

traditional services for help. Further one-off funding has been made available by the Government to progress a range of other important initiatives, including a multicultural access program at Wentworth Area Health Service. New South Wales Health has provided funding of \$82,000 to implement a statewide strategy for Cultures in the Workplace to be carried out at sexual assault services. Cultures in the Workplace aims to increase access to health services for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Funding was made available for resources dealing with the crime of sexual assault and ways to get help. Six community language publications have now been developed in partnership with those communities. In 1998 an extra \$100,000 was allocated for the training of mental health workers to improve responses to adult survivors of child sexual assault. The Government has initiated funding of a number of important preventative programs to complement the essential provision of services to adult survivors of child sexual assault. In order to prevent sexual assault and reduce ongoing effects, New South Wales Health has provided \$300,000 in recurrent funding for two adolescent sex offender programs, initiated joint investigative teams and collaborated with other Government departments to provide a more effective response to children disclosing sexual assault.

I turn now to the Jacaranda project, to which the honourable member for North Shore referred in her motion. It should be recognised that adult survivors present to a wide variety of services with complex needs relating to their history of abuse. The New South Wales Health Department's strategy has been to provide services for adult survivors throughout the broader health system, in recognition of the need to provide a number of therapeutic options from a range of trained health workers. New South Wales Health's 50 specialist sexual assault services are able to meet the demand for counselling for adults and children who have been sexually assaulted recently.

The honourable member for North Shore rightly pointed out that one in four girls and one in eight boys have experienced childhood sexual abuse by the age of 18 years. Any government would have difficulty providing specialist services to meet such numbers. As well as providing services for this client group through specialist sexual assault services, a responsible approach is to ensure that awareness and skills in dealing with sexual assault are embedded in the full range of services that mental health, drug and alcohol, sexual assault, women's health and child and family health services provide in this process. This has been the approach taken by New South Wales Health.

To ensure that this occurs, \$100,000 was allocated in 1998 for the training of mental health workers to improve responses to adult survivors of child sexual assault. In 1999 the department increased this amount and provided its statewide training unit, the Education Centre against Violence [ECAV], with funding of \$450,000 for the provision of a three-year training program for mental health workers. Over the past three years the Education Centre against Violence has trained more than 3,000 workers. This includes training on child sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, and, since 1998, child physical abuse and neglect. Over this period ECAV has offered 54 separate courses which focused exclusively or predominantly on working with adults who have experienced child sexual assault.

The Government has also funded the development of *Big Shame*, which is a video to assist Aboriginal communities to deal with child sexual assault and includes coverage of issues for adult survivors. The video includes a resource package that addresses survivor issues. I am pleased to advise the House that this video won the 1999 New York Film Festival silver medal in the non-broadcast media category. New South Wales Health provided \$20,000 to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to assist in the production of a video informing general practitioners about issues for patients who have experienced childhood sexual abuse. This year the video *The Hidden Factor* has been distributed to general practitioners and other health workers.

The honourable member for North Shore also referred to apparent delays in establishing sexual assault services in the Illawarra area on the South Coast. The New South Wales Health Department's sexual assault services were established at Wollongong and Nowra more than 15 years ago. Each year these services each see approximately 200 adults and children who are victims of sexual assault. The most recent annual report shows that in 1998-99 the Nowra service saw 232 victims and the Wollongong service saw 179 victims. The honourable member for Illawarra has secured additional funding for these services to enhance the responses they are able to provide. It is inaccurate and misleading to say that people on the South Coast "must wait until June for that service".

In addition to the services in Wollongong and Nowra, the South Coast also has New South Wales Health sexual assault services at Bega and Moruya. New South Wales Health values the role of the New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre [NSWRCC], and has worked closely with the organisation to support this important

work. In July 1999 New South Wales Health allocated an additional one-off amount to the Rape Crisis Centre to address its financial difficulties. Additional funds have also been allocated on an annual basis, commencing from July 1999.

Following extensive negotiations between the New South Wales Department of Health and the New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre, a review was undertaken by external consultants to examine an estimated budget deficit of \$119,713 at June 1999. Conditional on the operation of this strategy, additional one-off funds of \$119,713 were allocated to NSW RCC to address the deficit. The annual allocation from the national women's health program budget was increased by \$30,000 to \$130,000 per annum from July 1999. The NGO grant program component for 1999-2000, paid for by the New South Wales Government, is \$428,100.

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [3.29 p.m.]: I wish to support the honourable member for North Shore in this very important motion. In doing so, I pay tribute to the vision and work of one very courageous woman and the organisation she has created to assist adult survivors of child abuse—ASCA. I speak of Liz Mullinar, who should be well known to many members of this House. Liz Mullinar is an extremely special woman in our community. As an adult she experienced the trauma of recovered memory of abuse she suffered when she was a young child. I first met Liz Mullinar around 15 years ago when I was working in the film and television industry. Liz was one of the most respected people in the industry and ran Australia's foremost casting agency. Liz decided, having recovered this childhood memory, to turn her back on all of that and dedicate her life to helping others who had suffered similar abuse.

Liz was struck by the lack of services available to help people in her situation, the lack of recognition of the real causes of the trauma suffered by adult survivors and what was the most effective treatment. She is absolutely right. During my time as a member of Parliament, and particularly more recently in the Goulburn area, I have been approached by women who have either recovered memories or had never lost memories of childhood sexual assault, and who were looking for specialised services but simply were not finding them. Low priority is given to people who are adult survivors of child abuse. Many of them suffer a good deal of mental illness and related problems, which are extremely costly to address at that stage in their lives. People who suffered sexual assault recently, perhaps in the last day or the last week, receive priority over people who try to deal with recovered memories or experiences that they have been trying to come to terms with over a lifetime.

ASCA's future plans are to open branches throughout New South Wales. Many people will be aware that Liz Mullinar put a considerable proportion of her own resources into establishing a refuge for women near Cessnock where she hopes to establish a rural and regional network of peer support. We all know that medical treatment in relation to adult survivors is costly and that it does not work unless the causes of the trauma are addressed. That is where peer support plays a vital role. Liz says that the refuge is having a profound effect on people who seek help there. I acknowledge that the State Government has provided some financial support in the form of a counsellor for ASCA, but it is simply not enough. The honourable member for Heathcote, the Parliamentary Secretary who is in the Chamber, referred to funding in the amount of \$50,000 to help treat the needs of 3,000 survivors per year. That works out at \$13 per head for each of those survivors.

According to Liz Mullinar, peer support healing is working and the effects are obvious. It is an effective alternative to drugs, psychiatric hospitals and other related treatments. However, there is still no provision for counselling for children who suffer sexual abuse. The emphasis is still on prosecuting the perpetrator. Clearly, that must be done, but the Government is not concentrating on healing the victim. The effect is especially bad on children, because of the court focus in our system. Children cannot access counselling until after the court proceedings have concluded. Children who suffer such abuse must wait until the court process is over before receiving the counselling they need. Urgent treatment is needed for children who have suffered sexual abuse; they simply cannot wait weeks or months to be treated. Even then, counselling is often not available.

One of the things that is most important to ASCA is the funding of its 1300 telephone line. By ringing that number people are able to speak to support staff about their experiences in the hope that it will start them on the road to good health. ASCA has been forced to put a 10-minute time limit on those phone calls because it simply cannot afford to keep the system going. As honourable members can imagine, it would often take more than 10 minutes for a person to describe his or her first experience. As members of Parliament, we all know how long it takes to get to the nub of some of these matters. ASCA desperately needs that funding. When I last spoke to Liz Mullinar she was organising an auction at Fox Studios to raise money merely to keep the 1300 line going. Vital services that these peer support officers in our community are willing to provide on a voluntary basis are not being properly resourced and funded by the Government. ASCA should be congratulated on the volunteer work that it does and the effort it puts in to addressing these issues in our community. It is up to the Government to support those volunteers in the essential work they do, and that is not happening.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [3.34 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Southern Highlands for her contribution to this debate, and particularly for reminding me of the wonderful work that is being done by Liz Mullinar and ASCA. The fact that this high-profile woman, an international leader in her field, felt so deeply about this issue that she was prepared to devote her life to assisting adult survivors of sexual assault tells the story. There is widespread and genuine concern regarding the victims of sexual assault. There is also an acknowledged shortage of resources provided by the Government to help these people overcome their trauma. It saddens me that the Government's response is nothing more than rhetoric—and inaccurate rhetoric at that. To suggest that we should amend this motion to congratulate the Government on what it is doing is nothing short of an insult.

The amounts of money that the Parliamentary Secretary referred to are absolutely paltry when one considers the extent of this problem and the expense of treating people over a long period. I would be very interested to hear how much of the additional mental health funding the Minister announced recently will be provided for sexual assault services. It is well recognised that a very high proportion, as high as 80 per cent, of women with mental health problems had been victims of child sexual abuse. Will any of the funds allocated for drug and alcohol treatment programs be provided for this purpose? After all, 70 per cent of people with DNA problems were sexually abused as children.

When I spoke to this matter in Parliament two weeks ago I referred to the Jacaranda project at the Northern Sydney Area Health Service, which does a fantastic job in providing counselling for sexual assault victims. Sadly, over the time that has elapsed since I introduced this motion in this House in September last year, the Jacaranda project has only just avoided closure because the co-ordinator, Susan Kendall, through her wonderful powers of persuasion, convinced the local area to provide \$8,000 in funds at the last minute. However, the service has had to cut back on staff and the services it is able to provide, and therefore the people it is able to help. Susan Kendall advises that the Northern Sydney Area Health Service Sexual Assault Service has had to turn away hundreds of people who need help because there are insufficient resources to help them.

The response I received in the local media with regard to this very short motion really surprised me. I congratulate and thank them for taking an interest in this issue. Even groups such as Zonta—which I have never been associated with—have taken up the cause and are going to run with it. I believe that that demonstrates how much concern there is in the community about this problem. I call on the Minister to provide \$100,000 from the Centre for Mental Health budget for the Jacaranda project over the next two years. This would provide a part-time worker and funding for the important task of undertaking research, developing resource materials and publications, providing supervision, and running groups and training. The idea is that Jacaranda will help train other health workers to recognise and deal with issues of sexual abuse, even though its primary role might relate to drug and alcohol abuse, mental health or other problems. It should be regarded as a pilot program that has enormous potential in extending skills to many health workers across New South Wales. Sexual assault services right across New South Wales are drastically underfunded.

I have found it alarming that many of the people working in the Government's services are prepared to talk to me privately but they are fearful of speaking out because they are afraid that they will lose the little funding they already have. Reference has been made in this debate to examples of those resource shortages. I am sure all members of this House must be concerned about the shortage of resources for sexual assault services. The Jacaranda project is operating on the smell of an oily rag; it is now operating on a budget of \$8,000. I proudly inform the House of something I learned just today. The Jacaranda project is regarded so highly that officers involved with the project have been invited to go to East Timor to provide sexual assault counselling for women who have been victims of sexual assault in that country.

The services for sexual assault victims provided by this group are an export commodity in health. Despite this wonderful program being recognised internationally, this Government is so lousy that it will not provide funding that is needed to do the job properly. I have mentioned the work done by Jacaranda and the work done by Susan Kendall in northern Sydney. Their work is replicated by sexual assault services throughout New South Wales, particularly regional New South Wales. It is a disgrace that the Government does not provide sufficient financial resources to enable the program to provide the services that are needed. I commend the original motion to the House and urge honourable members not to vote for this shocking amendment.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 43

Ms Allan	Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Amery	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Ms Andrews	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Mr Ashton	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Brown	Mr McBride	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Campbell	Mr McManus	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Mr Martin	Mr Tripodi
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Whelan
Mr Gaudry	Ms Megarrity	Mr Woods
Mr Gibson	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Greene	Mr Moss	
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Nagle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Harrison	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
Mr Hickey	Ms Nori	Mr Thompson

Noes, 33

Mr Armstrong	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barr	Mr Maguire	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Brogden	Mr McGrane	Mr Stoner
Mr Collins	Mr Merton	Mr Tink
Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr Torbay
Mr George	Mr O'Doherty	Mr Webb
Mr Glachan	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Windsor
Mr Hartcher	Mr Oakeshott	
Mr Hazzard	Mr D. L. Page	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Piccoli	Mr Fraser
Mr Humpherson	Mr Richardson	Mr R. H. L. Smith
Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton	

Pairs

Mr Aquilina	Mrs Chikarovski
Miss Burton	Mr Rozzoli
Mr Carr	Mr Souris
Mr Knight	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Markham	Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 43

Ms Allan	Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Amery	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Ms Andrews	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Mr Ashton	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Brown	Mr McBride	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Campbell	Mr McManus	Mr Stewart
Mr Collier	Mr Martin	Mr Tripodi
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Whelan
Mr Gaudry	Ms Megarrity	Mr Woods
Mr Gibson	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Greene	Mr Moss	
Mrs Grusovin	Mr Nagle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Harrison	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
Mr Hickey	Ms Nori	Mr Thompson

Noes, 33

Mr Armstrong	Mr Kerr	Mrs Skinner
Mr Barr	Mr Maguire	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Brogden	Mr McGrane	Mr Stoner
Mr Collins	Mr Merton	Mr Tink
Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr Torbay
Mr George	Mr O'Doherty	Mr Webb
Mr Glachan	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Windsor
Mr Hartcher	Mr Oakeshott	
Mr Hazzard	Mr D. L. Page	
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Humpherson	Mr Richardson	Mr Fraser
Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton	Mr R. H. L. Smith

Pairs

Mr Aquilina	Mrs Chikarovski
Miss Burton	Mr Rozzoli
Mr Carr	Mr Souris
Mr Knight	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Markham	Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

OZONE DEPLETION

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Whelan.

SEAFORTH TAFE CLOSURE

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Hartcher.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE CAPITAL WORKS EXPENDITURE

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [3.53 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the Premier's response to my letter of 3 February concerning the lack of any significant capital works expenditure in Hornsby; and
- (2) calls on the Government to give Hornsby a fair go.

Hornsby is enjoying a great population growth, which brings with it a number of problems. The people of Hornsby earnestly request the Government to recognise their problems, which it has not done in the past five years. In the 1996 census—the latest figures available to us—the population of Hornsby shire was 136,746. The shire has the largest population of the 11 local government areas in northern Sydney—18.9 per cent of the population of the northern region. The population growth has been a strong and continuing feature between 1986 and 1996. During the past 10 years the population growth in the Hornsby shire has been an astonishing 15.6 per cent, compared with an overall population growth for the northern Sydney region of 4.4 per cent. Projections for the next 10 years—from 1996 to 2006—suggest that the population growth will continue at 7.2 per cent.

The age characteristics of Hornsby are interesting. Hornsby has an even spread of ages but it is worth noting that a higher proportion of children and young people live in areas from Asquith through to Berowra and a higher proportion of older people live in the Hornsby central business district—an area that is suddenly experiencing an absolute explosion in the growth of high-density housing as a result of the housing strategy adopted by Hornsby council at the request of the New South Wales Government. The diversity of Hornsby has increased. In 1996 people from a non-English speaking background comprised 17.1 per cent of the Hornsby

local government area, which is higher than the average for Sydney. Many of the new arrivals who settle in Hornsby do so as part of humanitarian immigration to New South Wales. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs recently funded the establishment of Migrant Network Services Northern Sydney Ltd because Hornsby represents the fastest-growing area for migrant settlement in the northern Sydney region and one of the fastest-growing in all of New South Wales.

The capital works services in Hornsby are decades behind—like other settled areas of New South Wales, Hornsby's schools, hospitals, sewerage services, road works and rail infrastructure were developed many years ago. Despite good growth in those areas during the years of the Greiner and Fahey governments—I will demonstrate that in a moment—it ended in 1995 with the election of the Carr Labor Government. Before the Premier came to Hornsby to talk about post-Olympic development in New South Wales, at the request of the Hornsby business community I wrote to him to remind him that not one of the Government's promised priorities after the Olympics related to either the electorate of Hornsby or to the Hornsby area in general. I urged the Premier to look at a number of specific projects—not a wish list, not pie-in-the-sky projects, but much-needed urban and infrastructure redevelopment in Hornsby. My constituents and I have continually raised these matters with the Government since 1995.

The Premier's response was to simply insult me at a Hornsby lunch—something for which he earned the rightful opprobrium of the Hornsby business community and the *Hornsby and Upper North Shore Advocate*, a paper which has demonstrated a neutral stance over the years. It was scathing in its criticism of the Premier and his small-minded petty politics on that day. The people of Hornsby wanted to hear him say that he understood the problems and was prepared to look at them—he was not. Three months after I wrote my initial letter I got a disappointing response. In some cases the letter acknowledges the need for the projects that I raised, but it commits no funding whatsoever to the electorate of Hornsby—not one red cent!

The letter even makes the bold assertion that there has been no reduction in capital works in the Hornsby electorate. However, it does not provide any comparison. It proudly asserts that this year the Government will spend \$22 million in capital works in Hornsby. The record for the last year of the Fahey Liberal Government shows that it committed \$38.7 million to capital works in my former electorate of Ku-ring-gai, which shared three of the four boundaries of my current electorate of Hornsby. If inflation is added the current Government is spending less than half what the Fahey Liberal Government spent in 1994-95, and was being spent before it took office in 1995, on much-needed capital works in my electorate. How can the Government assert that there has been no cut? There has indeed been a cut.

This is a debate in which I have limited time, so I will race through a few of the issues that arose in the Premier's reply to me. In relation to Hornsby hospital, I am pleased by the Premier's statement that the Government has no plans to close Hornsby hospital, but that cannot be considered an unequivocal commitment to the hospital's future, which is what we need from the Government. This Government tried to close the hospital down in 1996. Only community resentment and a very large demonstration prevented that closure. We need an unequivocal commitment: not that the Government has no plans to close the hospital down but that it will not close the hospital down—more than that, that it will redevelop the hospital.

The Premier referred to a recent statement about extra funding for the health budget. As Access Economics and the Australian Medical Association say, there is double and triple counting involved. Those figures are rubbery. But, leaving that argument aside for the moment, the recent statement by the Minister for Health committed not one cent to Hornsby hospital. The Coalition has plans to redevelop the hospital, and it wants the Labor Government to match those plans. The Hornsby community has spoken very clearly on that matter.

In relation to the Landcom sites, the Premier said that the matter is under consideration. That is not encouraging. It is nearly 12 months since the completion of the study into the ecologically sustainable development issues surrounding these Landcom sites. The Government should have made an announcement 12 months ago. The fact that it has not indicates to me that it is not necessarily intending to protect some or all of those sites. That is contrary to the environmental and social interests of my electorate. I call on the Government to give that commitment in this debate.

In relation to sewerage in Cowan, the Premier's response did not address the issue that I raised, which is the need to place Cowan on the same priority list as the Brooklyn and Mount Ku-ring-gai industrial area. Nor does it give any timing for the programs or any commitment to funding for any of the work. Countless millions of dollars are coming out of Sydney Water each year in dividends to the New South Wales Government, but the

Labor Government will not commit one cent of that to the Hornsby electorate for spending in suburbs that are part of the Sydney metropolitan area yet still have no basic sewerage services. The environmental impact alone should justify money being allocated immediately. Cowan should be placed on the priority list as a matter of urgency.

In relation to schools the Premier's letter mentioned school funding of \$156 million that he says is being spent this year on schools. The Premier claimed that that was an increase on last year's funding. The Premier did not mention, though, that that amount is a decrease of \$43 million compared with the amount spent by the previous Liberal Government in its last term. That is the extent of the cut in capital works funding across the State: the Carr Government is spending today \$43 million less than the Coalition Government spent five years ago—and, again, that does not take into account inflation. None of that allocation for school funding is being spent in my electorate apart from a couple of very small projects that are being funded by land sales.

I am pleased that the Minister who prepared the response for the Premier at least has agreed that Mount Colah and Berowra public schools have a need for halls. That is the first step. But I say to the Government, the Premier and the Minister that the next step is to agree to planning taking place and then to allocate funds for halls for those schools. I am pleased to report that the Minister for Education and Training, in a conversation with me in a corridor of this place recently, said he will receive a delegation of parents of the Mount Colah Public School. I look forward to getting from the Minister a commitment to progress that much-needed project. The letter makes no apology for the fact that the Government has cut support teacher learning difficulties from Hornsby schools. He does not even apologise for that.

In relation to roads the Government gives no commitment for the funding of works in Duffy Avenue and the bridge across the railway line and joining Pennant Hills Road. This is a critical project. It is critical to the whole of the infrastructure of roads that go right through Westleigh, Thornleigh, Normanhurst and the other affected suburbs. The former member for Northcott, who is now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, will speak about that matter later in this debate. I urge the Government to get serious about funding this project. Many of us attended a public meeting, held during the election campaign, at which the Labor candidate for Hornsby said, "I have spoken to Carl Scully, and he tells me that \$600,000 is ready to go." Where that money has gone I do not know, but it does not feature in any of the Government's publications. It does not feature in the Government's forward planning. It does not even rank on the list of promises that the Government agrees it made. Nonetheless, it was a promise clearly made in public.

In relation to commuter issues the Government said it was supposed to finish safety upgrades for car parks and railway stations by July this year. It is clear that not one of the Hornsby electorate railway stations has had all of the work done. In fact, only one station has had some of the work done. Therefore it is clear that Hornsby is at the very bottom of the Government's priorities in respect of maintaining and upgrading the safety of rail commuters. There is not time for me to go through the list of other projects. Suffice it to say that Hornsby is an electorate that is being deliberately neglected by the Carr Labor Government. Even the Government's own figures betray the fact that the Carr Government is spending half today what was being spent before it took office in 1995. The Government cannot properly claim to be at all interested in Hornsby. All of Labor's assurances made during the election campaign and promises that a Labor government would not take the electorate for granted were simply lies.

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [4.03 p.m.]: The honourable member for the marginal seat of Hornsby, of course, is trying to lift his game and his profile. It should be noted that the Government allowed this motion to be brought forward from No. 127 on the business paper to No. 1 today. We are not exactly ignoring the Hornsby electorate or the temporary member for Hornsby at all. The voters put him on notice last year: he got a walloping 11 per cent swing against him. So he has to work a little harder this time round. It has taken him more than a year since the election to get started. In his desperation to imitate a hard-working local member, the honourable member for Hornsby is ready to be a bit loose with the truth. I am happy to detail some of the truth for him. I move:

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

"this House:

- (1) notes the Government's commitment to capital works spending as a means of improving government services, creating jobs and strengthening the State's economy.
- (2) commends the Government for ensuring a fair share for all of New South Wales".

The speech delivered by the honourable member for Hornsby was particularly selfish. Unlike some Australian Parliaments, such as those in Perth and Adelaide, that have little desks that members sit at, and that might even have a tag noting the seat that the member represents, in this Chamber we all sit on the same green leather benches and we are elected to represent all in New South Wales. I do not recall, while I have been a member of this Parliament, any member moving a motion that specifically whinged about his own electorate. That must say something to other honourable members of this Chamber. It must say that the honourable member is running scared because he knows that in the Liberal Party branches in Hornsby, in what was once the heartland of the Liberals, the thinking is that Stephen O'Doherty will not be the candidate next time.

Mr McManus: He's on the nose.

Mr ASHTON: He is on the nose. He has gone to the phone to ring a few of his colleagues to come down here and throw a few interjections my way.

Mr McManus: I wouldn't give him the pleasure.

Mr ASHTON: I don't know: Wait till you hear the rest of it! Why not wait until the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, addresses this House on 23 May? There may be a couple of pleasant surprises for the honourable member for Hornsby. After all, if he is concerned that the seat is close to being lost by him, it would completely surprise me that there would not be some funding that would go the way of that electorate, because it would deserve to be better represented. This Government is looking after every electorate in this State. I listened to quite a bit of what the honourable member for Hornsby had to say. I did not listen to every word, because I was penning what I would say. But I heard the honourable member give credit to the Minister for Education and Training, and he gave credit to the Minister for Health and other Ministers. So the whole point of his speech was lost on me.

Over the past five years the Carr Government has worked hard to secure the lowest unemployment rate in the nation and to create more than 200,000 jobs. It has helped to boost the State's economy by increasing spending on vital capital works, and it will continue this work by increasing spending on capital works by \$2 billion over the next four years. The Carr Government will spend \$20 billion over the next four years, up from \$18 billion over the last four years; \$500 million a year more on capital works, and no more Olympic spending. We have paid for the Olympics upfront—no legacy of debt from this for future generations. When the last race has been run and the last athlete is on the plane flying home, there will be no debt left from the Olympics, and we will still have those tremendous venues.

I will be there tonight at the McKell dinner to hear the speech by our leader, the Premier, Mr Bob Carr, and the speech by Mr Kim Beazley. Those facilities are there, and they will remain there. Even if the Coalition were re-elected, it would not be able to take them away from the people of New South Wales. That is a major achievement, a world-class achievement. The Carr Government has consistently increased money spent on capital works since coming to office. Since 1996-97 funding for asset acquisition has increased by some 36 per cent. In 1996-97 spending on asset acquisition was \$4,079 million.

Mr O'Doherty: Point of order: Is the honourable member addressing the motion, or does he not have anything at all to say about Hornsby?

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Beamer): Order! At this stage the member for East Hills has given a wide-ranging summation of the State budget. He has mentioned Hornsby on numerous occasions. I will allow him to continue.

Mr ASHTON: I thought that the first four or five minutes of my speech concerned the honourable member for Hornsby and the Hornsby electorate.

Mr O'Doherty: Tell us about the electorate of Hornsby.

Mr ASHTON: The point is that Hornsby is part of New South Wales. It has not seceded yet, even though the honourable member nearly seceded from the Liberal Party at the last election. In 1998-99 spending on asset acquisition was \$4,853 million, an increase of 13 per cent. In 1999-2000 spending on asset acquisition will be \$5,578 million, an increase of 15 per cent on figures for the previous year. Hornsby is part of that. Hornsby is enjoying all the growth and benefits that New South Wales enjoys.

Mr O'Doherty: My community will love to hear that.

Mr ASHTON: The honourable member should not be too selfish about it. Over the past five years the Carr Government has worked to build new community facilities, providing better services in the community of New South Wales and creating a more competitive business environment. Where are all the members of the National Party? Why are they not in the Chamber saying something about their electorates? They are painful when they try to look out for the country. Country Labor represents all the country areas in New South Wales. We are doing the job that the National Party used to do. The honourable member for Hornsby and his two friends from north shore electorates who are in the Chamber are saying, "We want more for Hornsby; Hornsby is the centre of New South Wales." They are the only one who believes that.

Large-scale construction projects worth more than \$7 billion will be completed before the end of this year. Projects in the Government's construction program include the \$690 million Olympic stadium; the \$700 million Eastern Distributor, which assists in getting people from Hornsby into the city and enables me to get from East Hills into Parliament much more quickly in the morning; the \$717 million New Southern Railway; the \$89 million Blacktown Hospital; the \$33 million sewerage works at Pacific Palms near Forster; the \$23 million Central Coast juvenile justice centre; and the \$26 million second stage of the Kempsey water scheme.

Mr O'Doherty: Have you ever been to Hornsby? Do you know where Hornsby is?

Mr ASHTON: Each of these projects will create many new jobs throughout New South Wales. The State's capital spending program comprises asset acquisitions for the general government and public trading enterprise sectors. The honourable member for Hornsby asked me if I knew where Hornsby was. This morning he spoke about visiting Manly High School and putting his small hand—and his hand is smaller than mine—down a hole in the back of a classroom. If he spent more time in Hornsby and less time in the electorate of Manly he might not have had an 11 per cent swing against him. I know just as much about Hornsby as he does.

Capital works expenditure in 1999-2000 is now projected at \$5.913 billion, a real increase of 15.7 per cent on 1998-99 actual expenditure. These are big figures. A big tick for the Carr Government, as the Minister for Transport, Carl Scully would say. This money will be spent across all portfolios and in all areas of New South Wales, including Hornsby. Highlights of the current year's projected program are expenditure of \$977 million by the Roads and Traffic Authority, \$111 million by the Police Service, \$67 million by Corrective Services, \$520 million by the Sydney Water Corporation, \$62 million by the Hunter Water Corporation, \$42 by the Sydney Catchment Authority and \$396 million by the Department of Housing on new houses and the refurbishment of public and community housing. I know that some of that money will be spent in the electorate of Hornsby.

Other expenditure includes \$443 million by Health to maintain and upgrade health services, including the recently announced funding increase for mental health services, which is probably an appropriate concern for the honourable member for Hornsby; \$260 million by the State Rail Authority, \$163 by the Rail Access Corporation, and \$115 by the State Transit Authority. These are all record figures in real terms. An amount of \$305 million will be expended by the Department of Education and Training for the construction and upgrade of primary and secondary schools and TAFE facilities; \$936 million will be spent on electricity services; and \$251 million will be spent by the Olympic Co-Ordination Authority on Olympic facilities and related infrastructure works such as roads and parking. In the three years up to and including 1999-2000, capital spending is forecast to increase by \$1,160 million, or 28.4 per cent in real terms. Major areas of growth over that three-year period are law and order, public safety, housing, water and sewerage, the environment, mining, and energy and construction.

On current projections the Carr Government will spend \$20 billion on new infrastructure. The funding of the general government component of the State's \$20 billion total capital acquisition program for the next four years is accommodated within the official forward estimates. An estimated total of \$12.1 billion will be spent in greater Sydney, \$1.6 billion in the Illawarra and the Hunter; and \$6.3 billion in rural areas. Once again, Hornsby will be part of that.

Mr O'Doherty: How much?

Mr ASHTON: I am not the Treasurer. The honourable member will soon get some good news. The detailed plans I have outlined indicate that the Government is moving ahead. It will be spending some money on Hornsby despite the representation, or lack of it, by its local member. [*Time expired.*]

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.13 p.m.]: What a disgrace! The honourable member for East Hills has confirmed the reason for the motion moved by the honourable member for Hornsby: the Government has no commitment to or funding for capital works in the electorate of Hornsby. It is akin to the Premier's visit to Hornsby when he addressed the Hornsby Chamber of Commerce. The best that the Premier could do was to laud the Parramatta-to-Chatswood rail link. The last time the Premier checked his UBD neither Parramatta nor Chatswood were particularly close to Hornsby—

[*Interruption*]

This is about ensuring, as the honourable member for East Hills claimed, that the Government of New South Wales represents all New South Wales. It is clear that, over the past five years the Government believes that it represents only southern New South Wales. It has been particularly harsh upon electorates centred around Hornsby Shire Council.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Private Members' Statements: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow private members' statements to be extended to allow statements by 17 members at this sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LAVENDER BAY MULTICULTURAL SEA SCOUTS GROUP

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [4.15 p.m.]: Tonight I advise the House of exciting news relating to one of my local youth groups, the Lavender Bay Multicultural Sea Scout Group. I am a strong supporter of the scouting movement as I was a girl guide many years ago. My two sons have been members of the sea scouts. I am particularly keen on the Multicultural Sea Scout Group in Lavender Bay, which has not been in existence all that long. However, in its short lifetime it has really made a mark. It now has cub, scout and venture sections and it has over 50 members. The group, which is extremely active, has the strong support of parents, friends and local community groups, in particular the Chinese. I have had the great privilege of being able to visit that group on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, on every occasion it was boiling hot and we were in non-airconditioned facilities.

The sense of fun and involvement and the sense of discipline among these young people is quite remarkable. One thing I noticed was that they live on the words of their group leader, King Lee, who obviously inspires them. He works on the philosophy that scouting is for fun but, in addition, it is also about learning and contributing. I made the remark when I visited these scouts that I believe leaders of the future are among those young people. They are making a real commitment not only to their own development but also to the community. On 11 March this year, International Day of Harmony, I again visited the Lavender Bay Multicultural Sea Scout Group. There were a number of visitors that day. It was a wonderful occasion at which a number of scouts were inducted and others were provided with awards and badges.

They also provided me with a copy of the North Sydney Green Map. The Green Map is a project undertaken by young people and communities across the world. This is the first to be done by a scouting group in Australia. It was undertaken by the Lavender Bay Venturers. The Green Map is a map these young people have plotted using the icons that are internationally recognised. It marks, in the North Sydney local government area, all the parks and reserves and all the other social amenities that are important to people. These young people did this within four months. It is now on the Internet. It is one of six projects that have been completed by young people in six countries. I am very proud that this group of young people in my electorate set the ball rolling in Australia.

I would like to mention the young people involved. Alvin Lee was the project leader, and he was joined by Tinny Wong and Carol Lee. This is a fantastic inspiration to other young people to get involved in this kind

of thing. It is also extremely valuable to the community, and strengthens their awareness of what is happening in the urban ecology. It is a map that is attractive and easy to understand. It shows all the reserves and parklands and it will be increasingly available because most people now have access to the Internet, if not in their own homes then through libraries, schools and so on.

I can imagine this being very important to people when they choose where to live, where to send their children to school, et cetera, and for local government and government departments when they are planning new facilities. This is a fantastic initiative on the part of the Lavender Bay Multicultural Sea Scouts. It is an example of the kind of initiative that scouting across Australia is undertaking. The fact that we now have the multicultural groups heavily involved in what has perhaps been regarded as a European-based movement is an excellent indication of the health of our community. In conclusion, I recommend to other scouting groups that they consider undertaking this type of thing. This map can be found on the following web site: www.greenmap.com.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for North Sydney for bringing this issue before the House. As secretary of the Baden-Powell Guild I must say that what the Lavender Bay group has done typifies what scouting is all about. Scouting is all about caring for the environment. More than 80 years ago Baden-Powell, in his famous book for boys, said, "You never chop down a tree unless it is absolutely necessary, and if you do you should replace two for the tree you chopped down." That was said at a time when nobody of any note was talking about the environment. That is how far back the interest of scouts in the environment goes. Today the scouting organisation is probably the best organisation to encourage young people to appreciate the environment. It is obviously doing that in Lavender Bay and should be congratulated for it.

MORISSET MULTIPURPOSE COMMUNITY AND HEALTH CENTRE

Mr HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [4.22 p.m.]: Tonight I wish to speak on the proposed multipurpose community and health centre at Morisset, which is in the Southlakes region of my electorate. Honourable members may be aware that on a number of occasions in Parliament I have raised the subject of the centre and the community push for it. I spoke on the issue in November 1998, June 1998 and October 1997. I have been working with the local community for some time to secure a multipurpose community centre, combined with a medical service—including an after-hours medical service—for the Southlakes region. Unfortunately, Lake Macquarie City Council decided that the centre should not be built in Morisset, which is the hub of the Southlakes region of Lake Macquarie. The council decided to build the centre on a peninsula that juts out into the lake, the Morisset Peninsula.

I worked actively with the local community to try to change the council's mind, and that was the basis of a number of speeches to Parliament. When Elizabeth Delaney, a new community planner, was appointed she took on board my concerns and organised community consultation. Obviously the council realised that the majority of people in the Southlakes region wanted the centre based in Morisset. Ms Delaney also took on board my suggestion that we could have two centres—one to service the isolated peninsula area and a larger centre to be built in Morisset to service the whole of the Southlakes region. I am pleased that council has now adopted a different position. It intends to build a youth centre on the peninsula, and the State Government has assisted with funding for a skateboard facility.

I am pleased to announce that this week the Minister for Community Services advised me that a home and community care [HACC] grant from a joint Federal-State funded program has been awarded to Lake Macquarie City Council for the construction of the home and community component of the proposed multipurpose centre. The multipurpose centre will cost some \$1.3 million. The Minister has advised me that the grant is \$358,000. A new respite care service that will operate for at least three days a week is to be set up by HACC services in the new centre. That service is for people with dementia. The HACC grant will enable the relocation of the Southlakes Neighbourhood Centre and Southlakes Carers into the new building, as well as the expansion of community transport services. Support groups for primary carers will be established. There will be improved access for clients to information and advocacy, improved access to paramedical services such as podiatry, and improved access for families from non-English-speaking and Aboriginal backgrounds.

Home and community care services give the older, frail citizens and people with disabilities and their carers access to services that enable them to remain in their own homes. This funding will allow more people in the Southlakes region to benefit from HACC services, helping them to remain independent and stay at home for as long as possible. Facilities to be provided by the funding include an activity area for centre-based respite care;

a kitchen, laundry and storage area; wheelchair accessible shower and toilet facilities; a consulting and interview room; a quiet room for people attending respite; administrative offices for Southlakes Carers and the neighbourhood centre, and administrative offices for the proposed centre-based respite care project. As I said, funding comes from the Commonwealth-State HACC program, which has been increased by some \$10 million this year for services such as this.

The multipurpose community and health centre will also allow for the provision of quality health services, and the State Government is set to provide \$450,000 towards the project. I thank the Hunter Area Health Service and the current and former Ministers for Health for commitments to combine with the local council to provide the health facility. The balance of the funding for the project will come from Lake Macquarie City Council. It is good to know that this multipurpose community and health centre will be located next to the new Morisset ambulance station that the State Government is currently constructing at a cost of \$680,000.

I thank my parliamentary colleague the Federal member for Charlton, Kelly Hoare, for her support. My thanks also go to Lake Macquarie City Council, particularly to Elizabeth Delaney, the community planning manager. I congratulate the Southlakes Neighbourhood Centre, Southlakes Carers and Morisset Senior Citizens, along with many other community members who campaigned strongly to have the centre centrally located in Morisset. I again thank the Minister for Community Services for coming to the area, meeting with the people and telling them she supported their push for this centre to be located in the Morisset area. My congratulations to everyone involved.

KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK WILD DOG CONTROL

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [4.27 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the prevalence of wild dog attacks on livestock on land adjoining the north-east corner of Kosciuszko National Park. I have been approached by Mr John Parker of "The Dip", Tumut Road, Wee Jasper. Mr Parker's property adjoins the Bondo and Buccleuch State forests in the proximity of Kosciuszko National Park. "The Dip" is 10,000 acres and accounts for the southern part of the old "Wee Jasper Station." Mr Parker runs an average of 3,000 sheep, of which 80 per cent are wethers, as well as cashmere goats and cattle. During the past four years there has been a large increase in the number of wild dog attacks on livestock. The dogs are moving unchecked out of the National Park into the State forests and then onto private property, where they wreak havoc on the livelihood of farmers. So far this financial year, Mr Parker has lost 332 sheep, the majority being attributed to wild dog attacks. The sheep are mauled and die from injuries sustained during the attack or die as a result of fly infestation of the injuries sustained in the attack.

Recently there were three attacks in three different areas of the property on one night. The three areas where the attacks occurred are isolated from each other. Much of Mr Parker's property is now useless as far as grazing livestock is concerned; 1,224 hectares are now permanently destocked, and another 620 hectares are stocked occasionally when the dog attacks decrease.

In late January Mr Parker put stock on the 620 hectares but was forced to remove them eight days later after 30 sheep were attacked. In an effort to reduce losses, Mr Parker spent more than \$80,000 on electrified fencing for one portion of this property, and he was forced to sell another portion of this property because the frequent dog attacks made it worthless to him. Mr Parker estimates that the dog attacks are now costing him \$30,000 a year. He has been forced to purchase inferior wethers due to the costs of the wild dog attacks and, as a result, the property's wool cut has fallen and its micron quality decreased.

The wild dog attacks are also consuming a lot of Mr Parker's time, as well as considerable financial resources. Mr Parker estimates that in the past he spent six to 10 days a year attending to dog-related activities; he now devotes an average of three days a week to dog-related activities. The dog-related activities refer to checking stock for attacks and consequent stock movements, treating and dressing the wounds of injured stock, destroying and disposing of injured stock, baiting and checking baits, and attending to traps. Obviously, other farm tasks are being neglected.

Mr Parker takes part in the Michael Boyce and Wesfarmers benchmarking survey, and his farm's labour units per dry stock equivalent are among the poorest in the group surveyed. As I said, an increasing amount of Mr Parker's time is spent on dog-related activities, including baiting, which is another financial burden. When labour time, the cost of baits and vehicle wear and tear are taken into account, the practice costs approximately \$1,000 a year.

Mr Parker wishes to see permanent dog management restored in the northern part of Kosciuszko National Park, and he has written support from his neighbours, who are also affected by the influx of wild dogs from the park and adjoining State forests onto their land. The National Parks and Wildlife Service must improve its wild dog control programs, and the Government must make Foxoff baits available to affected land-holders. Foxoff baits can be reused, so require less time and effort by the farmer.

Evidence suggests that land-holders in the area are contributing approximately \$30 to \$40 per hectare each year in an attempt to control wild dogs. Clearly, this should be a State Government responsibility as the dogs are coming from a nearby national park. The financial burden is too much. I call on the Government to act to help protect the livelihood of Mr Parker and his neighbours. It should be pointed out that if Mr Parker was to cease his own baiting program the likelihood of the wild dogs venturing further into the prime wool sheep country of Boorowa and Yass is great. National parks are now part of the Australian bush, but we must accept responsibility for any adverse impact they have on land that surrounds them.

COSMETIC TAIL DOCKING

Ms ALLAN (Wentworthville) [4.32 p.m.]: The important issue of the cosmetic tail docking of puppies and dogs is of grave concern to Mr Robert Wansbrough, who operates a successful veterinary surgery practice in my electorate, in Picasso Crescent, Old Toongabbie. Mr Wansbrough might even have treated a dog I used to have who foolishly one day got into a big box of the snail bait Defender and made himself a very sick puppy. For many years Mr Wansbrough has been involved in a campaign to ban the cosmetic tail docking of dogs. He has made a number of representations on this issue not only to the Government but also to his local member, the honourable member for The Hills, as well as to other Opposition members.

Also, I have received a lengthy petition from my constituents who visit Mr Wansbrough in his veterinary surgery. On current medical and scientific information, tail docking simply cannot be justified. It has not been justified on medical grounds by people who have done it in the past, and Mr Wansbrough believes that it has never been and cannot be shown scientifically to benefit dogs in any way. Indeed, Mr Wansbrough has provided me with evidence that indicates that tail docking can be harmful to dogs, and in some cases fatal.

The breeders and others who dock tails whom Mr Wansbrough has observed over many years have never disclosed how many puppies died from this practice. Tail docking has been with us for hundreds of years. It started in medieval times when dogs were taxed; working dogs did not incur the tax so their tails were cut off to show this. The middle and upper classes cut the tails off their dogs to avoid the tax. That is the history of the practice, but unfortunately it still remains in our society today.

Tail docking involves severing the skin, muscles, cartilage, bone and nerves in a puppy's tail. It is done by cutting using scissors, knives, axes or bricks, or by crushing the tail, often with rubber bands. It is a barbaric practice. Between eight and 14 nerves in a puppy's tail are severed. Obviously, that inflicts huge pain on the puppy. The human finger has only two nerves, and we experience pain if we get a splinter in a finger or a finger is cut off. Imagine how magnified that pain is for a puppy when between eight and 14 nerves are being severed!

Until recently current legislation permitted anyone to cut off a puppy's tail as long as the puppy was less than five days old. Obviously, this has driven Mr Wansbrough's campaign. Earlier today I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Minister for Agriculture, who has responsibility for animal welfare. The Minister indicated his sympathy for those who have been expressing concern and horror about this practice for some time. Mr Wansbrough met with the Minister in his Mount Druitt office on a previous occasion, and at that time the Minister expressed concern about the issue. The Minister has tightened the regulations so that it is extremely unlikely that a person will be able to dock a puppy's tail without the use of anaesthetic. Indeed, he has narrowed the regulations to such an extent that only two categories of people, including veterinary surgeons, are able to dock puppy tails.

Obviously, this issue is of considerable concern to many people in the community. Mr Wansbrough would like the Parliament to have a conscience vote on the issue. Honourable members know that this matter is not coming before the Parliament in the near future in the form of legislation, and I do not think that opportunity will be provided. However, the Minister has given me an undertaking that he will have a fresh look at the evidence provided by Mr Wansbrough. I look forward to Mr Wansbrough getting satisfaction eventually from the relevant department. Certainly, I know the Minister is sympathetic to the issues raised by Mr Wansbrough. I congratulate Mr Wansbrough on conducting his campaign in such a persistent, thoughtful manner so that the matter is at last being raised.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE CRIME STATISTICS

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [4.37 p.m.]: I shall address the recent crime figures distributed by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research for the Pittwater local government area. As honourable members know, the figures are broken down into local government areas. Although the electorate of Pittwater covers more than the Pittwater local government area, I shall address only the figures relating to the Pittwater local government area. The figures are interesting. The most important figures to note are not the year-to-year figures but, indeed, the difference between the 1995 figures, when the Labor Party came to office, and the 1999 figures, when the Labor Government was re-elected. For example, the 1995 figure for theft, break and enter, dwelling was 314; some four years later the figure was 361. That is an increase, not a decrease.

The 1995 figure for break and enter, non-dwelling, was 182; the 1999 figure was 236. The figure for motor vehicle theft increased from 134 in 1995 to 207 in 1999, and the figure for steal from a motor vehicle increased from 611 in 1995 to 661 in 1999. There has been a marginal increase for steal from dwelling from 186 in 1995 to 187 in 1999. In total, malicious damage to property offences increased from 493 incidents in 1995 to 580 incidents in 1999. Rather than seeing a decrease in these crimes, as we would hope, in line with the Government's propaganda, during the period that the Carr Government has been in office we have seen an increase in crimes such as theft of personal property, break and enter, and motor vehicle theft, which is of concern.

Of even greater concern is the drug offence category. My colleague the honourable member for Epping and shadow Minister for Police made comments on this matter in recent days which I support. Between 1995 and 1999 there was a remarkable drop in drug offences. For example, possession and/or use of cannabis offences dropped from 64 incidents in 1995 to 20 incidents in 1999; possession and/or use of other drugs dropped from eight incidents in 1995 to three incidents in 1999; cultivating cannabis offences dropped from 12 incidents in 1995 to three incidents in 1999; and the general category of other drug offences dropped from 10 incidents in 1995 to two incidents in 1999.

In a climate where it is widely recognised that across New South Wales, sadly, there is a significant increase in drug usage and drug trafficking, I am at a loss to understand why we are seeing a dramatic drop in the number of incidents reported in the Pittwater local government area. I refer to an article in today's *Daily Telegraph* headed "Charged drivers on drugs". The article reads in part:

Almost three in four drivers arrested for traffic offences were under the influence of illegal drugs, a new survey showed yesterday.

Mr Moss: They are probably from Pittwater.

Mr BROGDEN: It is a matter of shame that one of the areas in New South Wales with the highest number of prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA] charges happens to be Pittwater. That is predominantly because there is only one road in and one road out. Thankfully, there is an aggressive policing strategy in Pittwater. That matter is being addressed separately and productively. For the information of the honourable member for Canterbury, the Parliamentary Secretary, who is in the Chamber, those figures have increased from 190 in 1995 to 286 in 1999.

I am alarmed at the drop in the number of drug offences. I do not believe it reflects a drop in the amount of drug use in the community. The figures show that the trend over the past four years of the Labor Government has been a drop in the number of people charged with using drugs. That is a matter of real concern. I ask the Minister and the Government to look closely at whether policing of these issues in Pittwater has been adequate. I intend to seek a meeting in the near future with the local area commander to discuss this matter.

OLYMPIC GAMES TICKETS FOR POOR AND DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [4.42 p.m.]: For more than four years it has been my intention, if possible, to send up to 2,000 poor and disadvantaged primary school children in the electorate of Auburn to at least one event during the Olympic Games. I have received sufficient donations from at least 10 business houses in my electorate to buy Olympic tickets to send some of the poor and disadvantaged primary school children between eight and 12 years of age to the Olympic Games. Each school shall fill out its Olympic ticket booklet in the way the school thinks most appropriate. Some primary schools have their student council debating the fairest way for the tickets to be distributed amongst the students. A cheque for the purchase price of the tickets will be attached to the booklet. The cheque will cover 150 tickets, and in some cases up to 220 tickets, for poor and disadvantaged children. We estimate that from the moneys we have raised to date we will be able to send 2,088 poor and disadvantaged children and 576 accompanying adults to the Olympic Games.

At a recent fundraising event at Parliament House I was able to raise \$7,000. Part of that money will go towards buying tickets for poor and disadvantaged families being cared for by St Vincent's de Paul, the Salvation Army, Barnardos and other local charities. North Auburn primary school received 680 tickets for all primary school children to go to the Olympic Games and 268 tickets for adults to attend with them. This was done through the Minister for the Olympics and one of the sponsors of the Olympic Games. Through my efforts, another school received from a multinational company 150 tickets, valued at \$85 each, for the athletics semifinals. A further eight schools have been able to provide for the students between 150 and to 220 tickets per primary school.

I would have been able to raise more money for further tickets, but unfortunately four local primary schools decided not to participate in the scheme, and thus deprived at least 500 poor and disadvantaged children of the chance to attend the Olympic Games. The schools participating in the scheme are Regents Park primary school, Lidcombe primary school, Chester Hill primary school, West Auburn primary school, St Joachim's primary school, St Johns primary school, Auburn Central primary school, St Peter Chanel primary school, Auburn North primary school and Fascal Islamic school.

As I said in this House on another occasion, about four years ago I made the suggestion to Auburn Council that we deal with this together so that we could send between 5,000 and 6,000 poor and disadvantaged children to the Olympic Games. It must be realised that the Auburn electorate, with an 18 per cent unemployment rate and an average income of \$27,000 a year, has a lot of poverty. Here was an opportunity for Auburn Council and me as the local member to get together to raise the money to send a lot of these children to the Olympic Games. However, unfortunately Auburn Council spends most of its time criticising what is being done for the Olympics instead of getting it together.

I should like to acknowledge some of the donors and people who have supported this cause. Allied Express Couriers of Bankstown, the Arab Bank of Australia, Mr Earl Cameron, J. S. McMillan Cooper, Nick Moraitis who owns Might and Power, the New South Wales Chamber of Fruit and Vegetables, Mr Phil Gilbert of Phil Gilbert Toyota in Lidcombe, the ANZ Bank, the Australian Islamic Cultural Centre, Australia's Paint, Boyded Parramatta, Demerton Westway Bus, Foxtel, Graham Morgan, Lidcombe Catholic Club, Sydney Turf Club, the Tourism Task Force, the Turkish Welfare Association, Viking Products, White Constructions, and the Hema Medical Centre have all made donations for the poor and disadvantaged children of Auburn to go to the Olympic Games. Many anonymous donors also contributed. We were able to provide a certificate of appreciation to all those donors to thank them for their generous support. The certificate reads:

In appreciation of your generous support which has purchased over 1500 Olympic Games Tickets to send poor and disadvantaged primary school children to the Olympic Games in the Year 2000.

We now have sufficient funds to send the poor families being cared for by St Vincent's de Paul, the Salvation Army and Barnardos to the Olympic Games. I commend particularly Colin McDowell, and Cheryl McDowell of Express Couriers, Marie George, and Linda Foley and Nola Samcou of my office for their support in making this contribution to the poor and disadvantaged children of the Auburn electorate.

TICK ERADICATION PROGRAM

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [4.47 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to follow the honourable member for Auburn, especially when he has told such a good story. I offer the students in the Auburn electorate my very best wishes and congratulate the honourable member for Auburn on his initiative. I wish to raise a topic that is of major concern in Lismore electorate, namely, cattle tick eradication. Unfortunately, the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Richard Amery, could not attend the Chamber this afternoon, but I know that he has spoken to the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport, the honourable member for Canterbury, who is present.

For some considerable time the tick eradication program has been a matter of ongoing concern to cattle producers. Although departmental officers continue to assure cattle producers that the problem is under control and that fewer outbreaks are occurring than has been the case in past seasons, in my opinion that assessment does not spell out the real story. If one examines the trend in outbreak numbers in the 1970s and 1980s and compares that to the changes that have occurred from 1997 to the present day, one has every reason to be concerned. The early 1980s and early 1990s were periods of very low rainfall and were not conducive to cattle tick infestation. The climate has now changed. Tick numbers, as expected and predicted, are rapidly increasing.

While the number of properties affected by ticks may not be increasing, outbreaks have begun to occur in places such as Tenterfield and Grafton. As a person who has been involved in the cattle industry for many

years, I assure the House that the Grafton outbreak is causing grave concern to the whole of the industry on the North Coast. A number of Queensland-bred cattle, which potentially carry tick fever, are in the Grafton and Tenterfield areas. That concerns me greatly because the possibility of a serious outbreak of tick fever southwards from Grafton is very real.

Field staff morale has reached an all-time low, which does not augur well for future control. The belief among producers in the region is that the department wants to walk away from the problem. I call on the Minister for Agriculture to give an assurance that that fear will not become a reality. The Minister for Agriculture signed a letter addressed to his ministry's own tick board which states that he would like to have the "Tick Protected Area back to the Queensland border by 2001". I ask the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Amery, to assure the cattle producers of this State that that will not happen. I reinforce my request with my personal knowledge that tick fever has killed more cattle than has any other disease confronting the cattle industry in this nation.

I turn now to address the issue of penalties or prosecution for a serious breach when cattle which are sent to yards for slaughter or sale are found to have ticks despite inspection by the owner or agent. Even with the best of intentions, producers may not detect cattle ticks during inspection. Presently producers face a fine for a first-instance offence. That is not acceptable. I understand that on three occasions recently members of the department inspected cattle and issued permits but ticks were found on the cattle when they arrived at their destination. This example reinforces my contention that no-one intentionally neglects to carry out a thorough inspection, especially when it is well known that ticks will gouge overnight. Sometimes an oversight during inspection results in failure to detect ticks. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member for Canterbury, to convey my remarks to the Minister. I ask the Minister to immediately waive any fines or action for first-time offenders and replace the current penalty with a stern warning. Appropriate action could be taken with second-time offenders.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.52 p.m.]: The honourable member for Lismore raises three very good points. He mentioned that climate is a significant factor in the multiplication of ticks. That is very good information. I, for one, know very little about ticks. I am sure that matter will be taken on board by the department. New South Wales is experiencing seasons of increased rainfall and there is a fear that tick numbers will increase. The honourable member urged the continuation of the tick eradication program and the retention of staff in the Grafton and Tenterfield areas. I am sure that the Minister for Agriculture will take the honourable member's comments on board.

I confidently assure the honourable member on behalf of the Minister that if there is a tick infestation problem in the upper North Coast area, there is no way that the Government would want tick eradication to be moved back to the New South Wales-Queensland border. I am sure that the honourable member's comments will be taken seriously by the Minister. The honourable member for Lismore also suggested that imposition of a fine on graziers for a first offence is inappropriate. Obviously, it is to a grazier's advantage to take action if ticks are detected in cattle. It seems equally obvious that when ticks have gone unnoticed by a grazier, in most instances it is an honest mistake.

Mr George: I appreciate that comment.

Mr MOSS: I am sure that the matter will be reviewed by the Minister. I thank the honourable member for Lismore for his comments.

CENTRAL COAST CANCER CARE APPEAL

Ms ANDREWS (Peats) [4.54 p.m.]: I congratulate residents of the Central Coast for their overwhelming response to the telethon and phone-a-thon that was held last Saturday, 29 April, to raise money for the Central Coast CARE cancer appeal. It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I extend my sincere thanks to the sponsors and the hundreds of volunteers who worked relentlessly throughout the day—including cancer patients. I send my thanks also to the local businesses who provided food and drink in ample quantities for the workers throughout the day. The crews of television station NBN3, which was one of the major sponsors of this appeal, were absolutely magnificent. Television crews throughout the day were filming staff, their families and volunteers who were manning the phones in the classified department of the *Central Coast Express Advocate*, which was another major sponsor of the appeal. Other major sponsors of the appeal were Central Coast Area Health, Mingara Recreation Club, Tumby Umbi, NorthPower, and Central Coast radio stations 2GO and Sea FM.

The NBN3 crews at the Mingara Recreation Club were kept extremely busy conducting interviews throughout the day and arranging cheque presentations from various Central Coast organisations and from individuals who had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into this appeal. Unfortunately, cancer affects so many people, including, sadly, a number of young children. I equate it with a world war because hardly any family escapes without a family member or relative being affected by this sinister disease. The amount donated or pledged on the day of the telethon/phone-a-thon took the overall appeal to well over \$1.1 million—which is an outstanding effort—demonstrating once again that the people of the Central Coast readily and generously respond to a good cause. Radio stations 2GO and Sea FM encouraged listeners to dial 131 979 and make a donation. All day long the phones rang at the *Central Coast Express Advocate* office at West Gosford. Jan Richens, who is the promotions manager for the *Central Coast Express Advocate*, was delighted with the response.

It was a great honour for me to join my parliamentary colleagues the honourable members for Wyong and The Entrance, the Mayors of Gosford and Wyong and a number of councillors from both councils in helping out with the phone-a-thon and telethon. In between music, singing and dancing, a number of cheque presentations were made during the day on live television from the Mingara Club. Some cheques were big and others were smaller but, nevertheless, they all made invaluable contributions to the appeal's total. For example, the combined Lions clubs of the Central Coast raised \$50,000 which was presented during the telethon. That amount was raised by Lions Club members, both male and female, through cooking and the sale of thousands of steak and sausage sandwiches at a number of Central Coast events such as the annual motor show held at Mt Penang. Other Lions Club fundraising activities included the sale of Christmas cakes. Well done, Lions Club members of the Central Coast!

Lions International donated \$US75,000 to the appeal from a special fund, which translated to a massive \$A115,000. Rotary clubs also pitched in and supported the appeal. The Mingara Recreation Club, as well as providing the club's auditorium and other amenities during the day, donated \$65,000. A cheque for \$50,000 was donated on behalf of the New South Wales Minister for Health, the Hon. Craig Knowles, by the Special Minister of State, and Assistant Treasurer, the Hon. John Della Bosca. Mrs Georgia Sidiropoulos, who is chairperson of the Greek Australian Association of the Central Coast, presented a cheque for \$10,000, which was raised through the holding of the inaugural Central Coast Greek Australian Festival held on 27 February at Mt Penang. On a previous occasion I reported to the House that \$7,500 had been raised at the festival but late donations and reimbursements from the sale of refreshments, et cetera, brought the final tally to \$10,000. While I was at the Mingara Club, two families—comprising parents and a number of small children who had cycled all the way from the Central Coast to Broken Hill to raise funds for the appeal—were interviewed. Their adventurous trip succeeded in raising several thousand dollars for the appeal. Both families had relatives who had fallen victim to cancer.

That community spirit was repeated time and again during the 12 months of the appeal. With an appeal of such magnitude there are many people who should be thanked, but perhaps none more so than those who responded with a donation from their pension payments or weekly wages. I pay special tribute to the schoolchildren in Central Coast schools—both primary and secondary, both government and non-government—who worked hard to raise funds for the appeal. The patron of the appeal is the former member for Wyong, Mr Harry Moore, who took a personal interest in a number of the fund-raising events. I place on record my thanks to all those who participated in this year-long appeal, which will enable improved facilities for patients at both Gosford and Wyong hospitals.

NICOLE HACKETT

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.59 p.m.]: Nicole Hackett is a triathlete of extraordinary ability. At just 21 years of age she is the youngest ever triathlon world champion following her stunning victory at Perth on Sunday 30 April. Her success in all three fields of the sport is testimony to her dedication and determination to represent Australia in the Sydney 2000 Olympics. She was twice junior world champion. Her crowning at Perth is confirmation that Nicole Hackett is one of the world's greatest athletes. During that race Nicole covered the running course in 27 minutes 12 seconds—more than two minutes faster than the world record for women on the athletics track. Nicole is a world leader in a sport dominated by Australians.

For the first time ever the triathlon will be included as a full Olympic sport at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games in September. The triathlon will be the first Olympic event on 16 September. I am proud to state that Nicole will compete as a member of the Australian team. Given her outstanding record, I am sure she will be well placed to represent Australia successfully. Nicole is one of my constituents, and I join with others

on the Central Coast to congratulate her on her achievement. Nicole's parents, Peter and Christine Hackett, placed all four of their children in the local swimming squad when they were young, partly to overcome problems with asthma.

As she grew older, Nicole's love for the water and the beach led her to join the Terrigal and Wamberal surf life saving clubs, where she competed in both the junior and senior divisions. She attended Terrigal Public School, Green Point Baptist School and Gosford High School, where she studied for her Higher School Certificate over two years so she could continue to compete in the sport she loved. Just days after completing her Higher School Certificate she won first place in the 1997 World Junior Triathlon Championships. Nicole has completed in triathlons since only 1996 but already she is ranked eleventh in the world. Her first triathlon was, appropriately, in Gosford. That triathlon was the last triathlon for Kieren Barry, her present coach. Nicole was crowned Junior World Champion twice—in 1997 and 1998. In 1998 she also won the Australian Triathlon Championship. In 1999 Nicole came second in the International Triathlon Union's World Cup.

Despite an accident in the cycle leg of this year's World Cup, Nicole refused to be beaten, continued the race and finished sixth overall and second in the Australian competitors. Although her win in the first World Championship last week should have guaranteed automatic Olympic selection, a technical error meant the running distance was two kilometres short, which called into question her win and her place on the team. Based on a clause in the Olympic selection policy that allows athletes to appeal on the grounds of technical error, Nicole's well-deserved place in the team was placed in jeopardy, and what should have been a week of celebration and victory became for her a week of uncertainty and media speculation. However, her consistent performance has won through, and I am advised now that it has earned her a place in the triathlon for Australia's nominated team. The Australian Olympic Committee will officially announce the team on 15 May 2000, once selection appeals have been finalised.

Nicole is a role model for many young aspiring athletes on the Central Coast. She has demonstrated that those with determination and effort can achieve beyond what others dreamed possible. She will make an excellent ambassador internationally for the sport that has been included as a full sport for the first time in the Sydney 2000 Olympics. On behalf of the people of the Central Coast, and in my capacity as shadow Minister for the Olympics, I congratulate Nicole on her selection by Triathlon Australia for the Olympic team to represent Australia in September and on her achievements as a world-class triathlete. I am sure that all honourable members will join me in wishing her well for the Olympic Games. Her event will take place on 16 September.

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [5.04 p.m.]: I listened with great interest to the remarks made by the honourable member for Gosford in relation to a great Australian and champion, Nicole Hackett. Anyone who has undertaken any form of physical endurance—and certainly triathletes do—deserves the best. If Nicole's qualification for the Olympic team is held up by an error outside her province, the judgment of Olympic officials is impaired for not putting her first in one of Australia's leading Olympic events. Having this matter on her mind does not do any service to the Olympic movement. It is not her fault.

The honourable member referred to the rationale behind the sport. The ability of this young woman and her family is marvellous. Many parents introduce their children to swimming when they suffer from asthma. Nicole is a world-class athlete. It is amazing that many world-class athletes start their careers in the surf on the Central Coast. The Terrigal and Wamberal surf clubs pride themselves on the number of Australian champions they have had. Despite my bulk and size, I had the great honour of being taught by the son of one of the legends of surfing—Gary Lambert, a former police officer who tragically lost his life in a surf accident. I am sure that Gary would have taught Nicole and would be proud of the many other wonderful surfers and swimmers of Australia. I hope the Olympic committee recognises the great strain it puts on athletes by its tardiness and failure to understand that athletes do not develop overnight. This young lady should be appointed as part of the Olympic team now.

GLEN INNES EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.06 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a significant project being developed in Glen Innes in my electorate of Northern Tablelands. It is significant because it flows from and, if successful, will be run by the community. In a nutshell, the project is to build a cutting-edge educational and community centre around a new enlarged community library, on community land adjacent to the Glen Innes campus of the New England Institute of TAFE. This is an initiative of Severn Shire Council and the TAFE which funded the regional feasibility study by Professor John Sharpham, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of New England.

The next step was a joint venture funded by the Glen Innes Municipal Council, Severn Shire Council and the TAFE. As a result of Professor Sharpham's work the councils have agreed to go ahead with the project and seek support from State and Federal governments and funds from the private sector. The councils have committed \$175,000 each—that is, \$350,000—as their contribution to progress the project. Honourable members are aware that local government does not have many spare dollars these days so it is clearly making a commitment to these projects. Local government will also contribute land for the development in addition to the funds it has already committed to the steps I have already outlined.

The State Library has been supportive of the development and has pledged support. There is strong community support for this initiative that will tie all local educational providers together via the Internet and extend training and educational opportunities for the community. Many honourable members discuss technology that is available but often regional communities miss out on it. This wonderful project could be modelled in many regional centres around country New South Wales.

Both councils, in considering the structure for such a project, have set up a not-for-profit company to manage the facility and to ensure that the centre is run for and by the community. The project is an excellent model of a community seeking to develop a significant program to secure the community's future, in a time of uncertainty in our regional areas. I raise this matter today to draw the attention of the House to what is a very good model of self-help being tried in the electorate and community of Glen Innes. I appreciate the assistance given to the project by the Minister for Education and Training through the New England Institute of Technical and Further Education. The director of that New England institute, Mr Gary Pollock, has been very supportive to date. I acknowledge that, through the Minister, Mr Pollock has provided strong and ongoing support.

I want to place on the record also my congratulations to Ken Marcintelli, the Mayor of Severn, and Bob Dwyer, Mayor of Glen Innes Municipal Council, for their strong support and continuing commitment to this project. I acknowledge the former mayor of Severn shire, Malcolm Ware, who also continues to be very supportive of this project, as he was during his term as Mayor, and the general managers of Severn Shire Council and Glen Innes Municipal Council, Robert Langford and Colin Francis, who also have been very supportive. I hope that we can attract support from the Federal Government for this most important project, which has enormous potential to extend education and training for young people in the region and to bring more opportunities to regional communities through modern technology.

CROWN LANDS TRUSTEE INDEMNITY

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [5.11 p.m.]: I apologise to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation for not having notified him that I would speak on these matters tonight. I realised only a few minutes ago that I would be given the opportunity to make a private member's statement. I draw to the attention of the House the matter of indemnity of Crown land trustees. These are community persons who are invited, or who volunteer and are invited, to serve as trustees of Crown land. Many pieces of Crown land these days have trustees. Those lands include showgrounds, racecourses, sporting fields, and National Parks and Wildlife holdings such as those that come under the Wyangala Dam Trust, upriver from Cowra. There are probably up to 25 such trusts appointed under the government.

In recent years, in an increasingly litigious society and with increasing demands being made by government for management probity, the responsibility that has been thrust upon such trustees has increased dramatically. As evidence of that I cite one case that was recently resolved by the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. I appreciate his participation and that of his staff in efforts to bring the matter to a conclusion. The trustees, who were appointed some 14 or 15 years ago, found themselves being sued by a former employee for an amount that exceeded \$100,000. It took the trustees nearly three years to reach with the Government an agreement whereby they would have indemnity in respect of prosecution.

Why did that case occur? Because, at the time of the change of government in 1995, for a certain period the persons continued to function as trustees although they had overrun their term of appointment. The trustees carried on in good faith for a period of five or six months not knowing that they were no longer the legal trustees. During that overrun period a considerable amount of money was spent by an employee on improvements to the ground. Following the discovery that the trustees were not legally empowered at the time, an altercation broke out. I will not go into the details of that. Suffice it to say that the trustees found themselves, through no fault of their own, being sued by the employee. The Department of Land and Water Conservation admitted that it had been at fault in not advising the trustees that their commission had expired. Even after that was acknowledged, it took some three years for the trustees to be given an indemnity by the Crown. I repeat, that has now occurred, and I again express my appreciation for that not only to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation but also to the Attorney General.

The other matter that I raise relates to the appointment last year of new trustees for the Young showground. This is not a case of mismanagement; a large number of new trustees were appointed along with a number of longer-serving trustees. One trustee had served for more than 20 years. He, his wife and his family were credited with raising more than \$100,000 for that trust through serving meals, snacks, afternoon teas and so forth at regular auction sales and other events that had been held on the showground. A second trustee, who had been appointed and had served for some seven years, was a local licensed electrician. He in effect did all the electrical work on the showground for the seven years, without charge. It is estimated that that was worth probably \$5,000 or \$6,000 a year to the Young Showground Trust and the people of Young. That was quite apart from the convenience of having an electrician on call when he was wanted.

Those two trustees, along with four others, were just dropped from the trust, and they did not even get a thank you letter after all their years of services. There was no acknowledgement whatsoever. I wrote to the Minister, who did eventually write to them and thank them for their services. But, if we want to get community people to serve on these trusts, then the Parliament, and particularly the Government, has a responsibility to ensure, first, that these trustees have legal indemnity and, second, that their services are recognised in a right and proper manner in that they bear the onus of responsibility for and on behalf of the people of New South Wales in carrying out their trust duties, all on a voluntary basis. They are non-wage receivers. If we do not recognise their efforts we may well find it hard in future to find people of repute who will be prepared to undertake those responsibilities.

SANDON POINT COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [5.16 p.m.]: It is on the theme of contributions to communities that I speak this evening, particularly in a suburb in the electorate of Keira, at a place called Sandon Point. As the name suggests, Sandon Point is basically a headland on the coastline. Traditionally, it has been home to many people who live in Department of Housing homes, such as coalminers. However, the area is undergoing change these days as people choose to relocate from Sydney to the northern suburbs of Wollongong and Keira and move to places like Sandon Point.

Sandon Point has a great surf break, and many surfing competitions are held there, most notably the recent and successful Konica Skins. Sandon Point also has a tremendous surf club. It does not have many senior members, but of late there has been a great increase in the number of young people and children going through the Nippers movement. A huge effort has been put into that by Terry Hagan, who grew up in Sandon Point, went away for a few years to Coledale, but recently returned. He is putting in a great effort. Terry and I often joke his self-proclaimed title is mayor of Sandon Point.

Recently at the surf club I met with Terry and John Puddle, another long-term local resident. I might add that John's wife, Janice, is the chair of the Bulli hospital auxiliary—showing again the sense of community through their involvement in undertakings in this particular suburb. I met also with Jack Wall, who was a mathematics teacher at Corrimal High School when I was there, and Marcel Van Wijk. There I announced funding for the Sandon Point Surf Club, under the Coastcare scheme, of more than \$12,000 for the Sandon Point restoration project. Those people, along with Max Ackerman, another local person, involved themselves in Coastcare initiatives to restore native vegetation around the headland at the adjacent beach dune. They aim also to develop community awareness and pride for the protection of the coast under that project.

I also announced funding of \$11,000 to the adjacent McCauleys Beach-Tramway Creek Wetland restoration project. That project aims to enhance and broaden the diversity of flora and fauna in that area, with the long-term objective being the formation of a green corridor, or at least part of the green corridor network. Sandon Point has volunteers and community members who are prepared, on a voluntary basis, to take part in these projects. I want to acknowledge in particular Marcel Van Wijk, a person who works very hard to co-ordinate a number of Bushcare and Coastcare regeneration groups in that part of the electorate of Keira, at Sandon Point.

Sandon Point is wedged between the more well-known suburbs of Bulli and Thirroul. Another local resident is Fay Haines, who has lived in Sandon Point for many years. She raised a quite large family in Sandon Point and some of those children have now spread further afield. Fay is the driving force behind what we call the Black Diamond Museum, which basically started out with artefacts and the history of coalmining in the Bulli area. The museum is located in the former waiting room of Bulli railway station, which is adjacent to Sandon Point. Fay puts a huge effort into being the curator of the collection. She wanders around, arguing, debating, cajoling and pushing people for support and funding. Fay also acts as a local tour guide of and interpreter for that museum.

I pay tribute to Fay Haines of the Sandon Point area. Sandon Point is served by Woniora Public School, a relatively small public school; nevertheless it is a place where kids experience excellence in teaching and they receive the support of professional teachers, as do children at Bulli High School which is located at Sandon Point. I acknowledge some long-term residents of Sandon Point—Ann and Keith Wilcox—a couple of personal friends of mine, who will be celebrating a sixtieth birthday on Sunday. They do not know that there is to be a surprise party. I am looking forward to enjoying their company and to swapping stories about Sandon Point—a great place.

WAGGA WAGGA ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATIONS

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.21 p.m.]: On Wednesday 3 May a matter of public importance was debated in this House—the relevance and importance of Anzac Day. Unfortunately, I did not have an opportunity to speak then, but I would like to do so now. On Anzac Day I marched with members of my community—returned service men and women. I marched as their representative but also as patron of the National Servicemen's Association, which is about to celebrate its second year in Wagga Wagga. I want to speak tonight about the importance of Anzac Day. I welcome the relevant focus that has been placed on Anzac Day by the media. Most pleasing to me was to see family members and children, wearing the medals of returned service men and women, marching in their place. It is important that that tradition be kept. More important, we must encourage people to remember the great sacrifices that were made and the futility of such battles.

Wagga Wagga is the home of the soldier—it is the home of 1st Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka, where most soldiers must be trained before they go into the services. Wagga Wagga also has a Royal Australian Air Force [RAAF] base. It has a strong connection with the services. I am an honorary member of the 1st Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka and the RAAF base at Forest Hill. Honourable members may be surprised to learn that there is a Navy in Wagga Wagga. Wagga Wagga's involvement during the war was immense. It housed training bases, one of which was located at Uranquinty, where suitable memorials are now in place for people who trained there and, unfortunately, lost their lives. We must commemorate Anzac Day, and educate our youth about war and Australia's involvement.

More recently soldiers have been involved in the Timor conflict. This year an address was given by Major Nerida Byrnie, a doctor from Kapooka, who served in Timor. Her address was inspirational. I certainly enjoyed listening to her speech about the work that was done in Timor by our soldiers—a subject that has been discussed on other occasions in this Chamber. Four or five years ago we celebrated "Wagga Wagga Their Service—Our Heritage" under the chairmanship of retired Wing Commander Jack Mullins and Lee Wright. Over the past four years they have been responsible for the creation of a compact disk [CD] which contains the history of World War II. The CD was put together by members of the Wagga Wagga High School, guided by Mr Mullins.

The committee believes that that CD should become a subject for study in schools throughout the nation. A maximum effort should be made to provide an entire history of World War II. The Australia Remembers project is now in its final production stage. Now that sound bytes have been added enough material has been gathered to fill two CDs. An encyclopaedia fits on one CD. The project has received information from places as far away as Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Dubbo. Mr Mullins said that the content of this CD-ROM is an extremely important part of our city's history. I agree. It represents the only time that the shores of our nation have come under attack from enemy fire.

Whilst this CD-ROM was being made unfortunately 137 of the contributors—the people who fought in the war, the people who supported our home front, the personnel, the citizens of our city who acted as hosts and carers to allied service men—have passed away. This has been a worthwhile project. I would like to give a copy of the CD-ROM to the Premier, who I know is greatly interested in history, and to the Minister for Education and Training for inclusion in libraries and schools throughout New South Wales. It will serve as a valuable education tool and a history resource. [*Time expired.*]

WESTERN SAHARA HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.26 p.m.]: Tonight I draw to the attention of the House an issue that has been raised with me by several constituents, that is, the current political situation in Western Sahara. I have been approached by Kamal Fadel, the representative in Australia of Polisario. Polisario is the popular front for the liberation of Western Sahara. Its full title is Frente Popular Para La Liberacion de Saguia El Hamra Y Rio De Oro. The immediate significance of Western Sahara to me is the comparison that can be made between what has

happened there and the situation in East Timor. I first met Kamal Fadel, the Polisario representative at a pro-Timorese event. He was introduced to me by one of the then senior members of Fretilin in Australia, Harold Moucho, who has recently returned to Timor.

Western Sahara is situated in north-west Africa and, until 1975, it was a Spanish colony. Spain then signed a secret agreement with Morocco and Mauritania, which handed the territory to them. The Polisario liberation movement had a degree of success which resulted in a peace treaty being signed in Mauritania in 1979 with the Saharawi Republic. Some 76 countries officially recognised the republic at that time. The Moroccan's actions and their invasion subsequent to that were particularly bloody and brutal, using cluster bombs and napalm against civilians. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have catalogued the dismal record of human rights abuses by Morocco.

The question of Western Sahara has been on the agenda of the United Nations as a decolonisation issue since 1963. Morocco eventually agreed to a United Nations-Organisation for African Unity [OAU] peace plan in 1988 involving a ceasefire which was declared in September 1991, with a referendum proposed for January 1992. Polisario and the inhabitants of that area are still waiting for that referendum. Kamal Fadel recently sent me a letter, part of which I would like to read for the benefit of honourable members. The letter reads as follows:

Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara in 1975 mirrors Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. Morocco invaded just before the UN was about to organise a referendum to determine the wishes of the indigenous population, after almost a hundred years of rule by Spain. Most Saharawis fled to refugee camps in Algeria and have lived there ever since.

Since 1991 the UN and OAU have been trying to organise a free and fair referendum to allow the Saharawi people to exercise their right to self-determination. The referendum was originally scheduled for January 1992. But the UN has not succeeded in its efforts to organise the referendum because of Morocco's obstructions.

The main obstacle has been Morocco's attempts to include in the voting lists thousands of Moroccans who have no connection whatsoever with the territory.

On 17 January 2000, the UN published the results of the identification process, which lasted five years—86,386 were deemed eligible voters out of 198,486 people. A referendum was due to take place in July 2000. The letter continued:

Unfortunately, the referendum is now delayed indefinitely, because Morocco is once again insisting that all of those who were rejected will have to appeal. Morocco has handed the UN a list of 135,000. The majority of these people live in Morocco and have no new evidence to provide to the UN. This will mean a delay of many more years of the referendum. It is indeed a flagrant violation of the agreements signed by Morocco.

The latest UN Secretary-General report on 17 February contained a "sobering assessment" of the peace plan. He doubted that it would be "a smooth and consensual implementation of the settlement plan and other agreements". His assessment is that the "timetable envisaged is no longer valid ... and the date for the referendum can still not be set with certainty". He proposed to the Security Council the intention to ask his personal envoy James Baker, former US Secretary Of State, to initiate a new round of mediation between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

Mr Baker has three months to complete his mission. The Council approved this initiative on 29 February and asked the Secretary-General to provide an assessment of the situation before 31 May 2000.

The UN mission for Western Sahara (MINURSO) has spent so far US\$437.9 million, and nine years without achieving its mission. The human cost to the Saharawi, in terms of suffering in refugee camps and human rights abuses by the Moroccans is far greater ...

Since the cease-fire was declared in 1991, Morocco has enjoyed the *status quo*. It suits Morocco to keep the UN in Western Sahara since Morocco has the absolute control of the majority of the Territory and its resources and any kind of protest from the Saharawis in the occupied areas is brutally suppressed.

Polisario believes that if the UN is not able to organise the referendum by this year its presence would become irrelevant and there could be a return to hostilities.

The role of the international community to prevent a UN failure in Western Sahara and a return to war is of utmost importance.

I would like to request to urge the Federal Government to use all available means to help in a successful implementation of the UN peace plan for Western Sahara. I would also be grateful if you could raise this issue in Parliament.

As a matter of basic humanitarian need, there is an urgent need to raise this issue. John Donne wrote in the seventeenth century that no man is an island and all the humanities are connected. That, together with the comparison between this and East Timor, make this a relevant matter for the House.

WATER REFORM

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [5.31 p.m.]: I speak this afternoon about water, our most valuable resource. I commend the Government's white paper on water reform and I commend the decision of the House today on the action the Government is taking on the white paper. Nothing can survive without an adequate supply of water. Water is the key to future survival and growth in regional New South Wales. Australia is the driest continent on earth, and the tyranny of distance and high evaporation rates mean we have to monitor constantly how water is channelled into different areas of New South Wales and Australia. In cities and towns such as Dubbo where a user-pays system has been introduced, people are more conscious of how water should be used. There must be a balance between the environmental movement and commercial irrigators with regard to considerations about water. There must be property rights for water, and the rights to river valleys need to be assured for the future of those river valleys. That means we do not want water rights or water entitlements moving from one river valley to another.

The New South Wales Irrigators Council has recognised the need for water reform but is also seeking security for the irrigation industry, as outlined in its blue paper in response to the Government's white paper. The irrigation industry in New South Wales is worth more than \$2.5 billion annually at the farm gate and \$10 billion to regional economies. Thousands of jobs in rural New South Wales depend on a viable and sustainable irrigation industry. Property rights would guarantee a fixed share of water resources with reliability of supply, and the ability to transfer those rights and use them to secure investment in the future. Water management is not only an irrigation issue; it affects the whole community. For example, in the Macquarie Valley irrigators use only 26 per cent of the water in the Macquarie River system.

Towns, including the city of Dubbo, use approximately 2 per cent. The Macquarie Marshes use 35 per cent, and 10 per cent goes to the marsh in flooding. Twenty per cent of water in the Macquarie Valley is lost to evaporation and 7 per cent flows into the Darling River. They are relevant figures and they are probably not known by the general public. No new irrigation licences have been issued for the Macquarie Valley since 1979. In recent times there has been great co-operation between environmental groups and commercial interests, as evidenced by the Landcare movement, river catchment groups and the recent very successful Salinity Summit held in the city of Dubbo.

This co-operation has been expanded to include water issues, and it is vital that the consultative process be extended as widely as possible to incorporate feedback for the Government to make a final decision and for the House to endorse the decision. Above all, governments must have vision—vision constantly to monitor and update their management of rivers, water storage and water usage across the State. As I said earlier, the economy of regional New South Wales depends on water as well as infrastructure development. Of course, infrastructure development is tied in with the water and relates also to roads, rail and telecommunications. In recent times great steps have been made in relation to those matters. That is evidenced by the announcement of the Minister for Transport yesterday. The Roads And Traffic Authority is expanding its role into regional New South Wales and its business administration will be conducted in the regions where it operates. This has been brought about because of the better infrastructure development in telecommunications and transportation.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO HOMELESSNESS

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [5.36 p.m.]: There is a crisis in Woolloomooloo because of the increasing number of people sleeping rough in the area. Many residents have reached the end of their tether with the conditions at Tom Uren Square and the Walla Mulla Reserve. They are concerned not only about the plight of the homeless but also the growing health problems and harassment. Many residents, including a large number of Department of Housing tenants, do not dare to go to Nick's Supermarket as they have to walk through the rubbish, faeces, abuse and antisocial behaviour of the homeless, who are often drunk. Local women are harassed and propositioned as they go to the supermarket, the only convenience store in the local area. Residents are confronted by people urinating, defecating and copulating in the public square. Mattresses and bedding are stored in the area, even in the area adjacent to the police station.

I was first alerted to the situation in December 1999 and wrote to the Minister for Housing asking him to investigate and take action to improve conditions for the homeless people and for local residents. I was shocked when I witnessed the worsening problem.. To find urgent solutions I called an emergency meeting at my office of the agencies that provide services in the area, as well as representatives of the Premier's Department from the King's Cross Place Management Project. It was agreed at the meeting that the situation has accelerated to crisis point with 30 to 40 people sleeping in Tom Uren Square. It was also agreed that the situation is untenable for the residents of Woolloomooloo, particularly Department of Housing tenants, who must deal on a daily basis with antisocial behaviour.

Despite discussions and community meetings, many letters and two further emergency meetings with the local agencies, the problems worsen. There has been no direction from the Government, which does not appear interested in responding seriously to the growing crisis. In March, when the Minister for Housing responded to my initial letter, he claimed that those sleeping in the square are transients who do not want permanent accommodation. In fact, when outreach teams visited the square on 5 April, after my first emergency meeting, most of the 60 people they spoke to wanted suitable accommodation but were unaware of the available options. Although the Department of Housing reported that 20 people from the square sought help at their office next day, they were able to house only six people. The outreach team found that most homeless people slept in the area to access services at the Matthew Talbot hostel. Some had been Department of Housing tenants whose tenancies had failed due to lack of support. The main reasons for homelessness in this group were family breakdown, drug and alcohol issues and rent increases.

Most receive Centrelink payments, but no other form of support. They need individual, ongoing case management; immediate short-term crisis accommodation; access to services to address mental health, drug and alcohol, and gambling problems; support and training in living skills; and access to long-term housing options. Despite the willingness of key agencies in the area to work toward a solution, there are insufficient resources for real change. I call upon the Premier to take an all-of-government approach involving the Department of Community Services, New South Wales Health, the Department of Housing and the Police Service. To respond to the Woolloomooloo crisis the Government must provide urgent, adequate and additional funding for an outreach team to work with the homeless and to ensure that each person can be case managed and treated appropriately.

The Minister for Police, Commissioner of Police and Kings Cross Local Area Commander must give clear direction to Woolloomooloo police at the coalface about what action is to be taken to prevent antisocial behaviour continuing in Tom Uren Square. The 2000 Olympics are a matter of months away. I have been assured repeatedly by the Minister for Housing that the Government has appropriate strategies in place to address homelessness in the lead-up to and during the Olympic Games. However, if the Government fails to address this shameful situation in an area ringed by Olympic sporting and entertainment venues, I question its commitment to reducing the negative social impacts of the Games. Dealing passionately and effectively with the homelessness crisis in Woolloomooloo could be the best way to test the Government's strategies that are allegedly in place to address this problem.

Private members' statements noted.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That the House at its rising today do adjourn until Tuesday 23 May 2000 at 2.15 p.m.

House adjourned at 5.41 p.m. until Tuesday 23 May 2000 at 2.15 p.m.
