

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 25 May 2000

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

CORROBOREE 2000

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the importance of the forthcoming Corroboree 2000, to be held on the weekend of 27 and 28 May.
- (2) reiterates its bipartisan commitment to reconciliation.
- (3) recognises that this weekend is the culmination of efforts by not only the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, but many communities, organisations and individuals in their desire to achieve genuine reconciliation for all Australians.

The unprecedented national reconciliation event Corroboree 2000 will be held this weekend in Sydney. It is fitting that all members of Parliament show their commitment to reconciliation by attending this landmark event which will honour and celebrate the achievements of reconciliation so far, and set a framework for continuing the process well beyond 2000. Corroboree 2000 will be held on the first two days of National Reconciliation Week, which is from 27 May to 3 June. This is a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate in a practical and symbolic way our commitment to the reconciliation process. On Saturday 27 May the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation will hand to the Commonwealth Government its considered proposal for the Document for Reconciliation.

The council's final documents on reconciliation were released just a few weeks ago. The documents are in two parts: a one-page Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation and an eight-page Roadmap for Reconciliation, which outlines four national strategies to advance reconciliation. At the same time, the Prime Minister also released his own version of a reconciliation document. In 1991 the Federal Parliament established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to promote a formal process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community. On Sunday 28 May this process will culminate with many thousands of Australians, probably more than 250,000 people, joining in the Peoples Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The New South Wales Government has led the way to achieving reconciliation. We are making real progress. This is not only in statements, but in practical initiatives on the ground to deal with the issues of reconciliation. The \$200 million capital upgrade and construction program is thriving evidence of our commitment to developing sustainable outcomes and futures for Aboriginal communities that will lead to genuine self-determination for Aboriginal people well into the new millennium. The key program is the Aboriginal Communities Development Program, better known as the ACDP. It serves as a major part of the Government's commitment to reconciliation and rural communities. The ACDP is generating training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. We are taking every possible step to create long-term and short-term jobs for local Aboriginal people.

The ACDP also seeks to establish traineeships and apprenticeships for Aboriginal people that will lead to a far greater skilled Aboriginal workforce and provide opportunities for permanent employment that have not existed before. This excellent initiative will redress one of the greatest imbalances for Aboriginal people in the unacceptably high level of unemployment and lack of opportunity. Recently, work worth \$35 million was approved by me to commence in the Murdi Paaki region in western New South Wales. The ACDP has already created eight apprenticeships in building and carpentry for Aboriginal people in Muli-Muli in northern New South Wales. The apprentices have built four houses, which are now occupied by family members, and a further four houses are under construction.

A contract to build another four houses has been awarded to the apprentices and that will assist in relieving some of the overcrowding and associated health problems experienced by the Muli-Muli community. Many Aboriginal communities have had sewerage and water problems rectified by the ACDP in the past year. For example: in Erambie sewerage pumps and switchboards were installed to fix a serious sewage overflow problem in the community; and in Murrays Flat the ACDP rectified septic tank problems; in the Nanimal-Wellington area, the local school sewerage system, which frequently overflowed and caused serious health problems, was repaired; and in Dareton a filtered water supply was connected to 30 houses.

The New South Wales Government is the only State Government to have made a whole-of-government response to the draft Document for Reconciliation. In June 1997, the New South Wales Parliament was the first Australian Parliament to formally apologise to Aboriginal people for the Stolen Generations. Chief executives of all New South Wales public sector agencies have also made a joint Statement of Commitment to Reconciliation. This acknowledges Australia's true history, apologises for damage done by previous government policies and practices, and commits chief executives to working with Aboriginal Australians to address disadvantage.

I am pleased to report that many agencies carry out a range of reconciliation activities in partnership with Aboriginal communities. Individuals and work units are also often involved. People have carried out reconciliation in their workplaces by inviting members of local Aboriginal communities to speak, acknowledging traditional landowners as part of meeting protocols, building better relations with Aboriginal staff and local communities, and challenging racist attitudes. This weekend we have provided financial and logistical support to Corroboree 2000 by making the Sydney Opera House available, closing the Sydney Harbour Bridge, making police and other services available and co-ordinating government and non-government agencies in planning this national people's event.

We are proud of our achievements in Aboriginal affairs and believe our leadership is helping all Australians move towards a fairer and more just society. Reconciliation is fundamentally important to the future of this country. It is the future that most Australians clearly desire. In making a commitment to reconciliation, we are meeting our responsibility as part of the community. We are making a contribution to social justice and investing in the future of our community. On Sunday, by walking with our families and friends we will show the nation and the world that we want true reconciliation, that we value the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and that we want justice and equity for all Australians.

Aboriginal Australians have a unique culture that we can all share and enjoy. In a very real sense this is the time for shaping the future of our nation. We, as a committee, need to understand Aboriginal Australians' relationship to the land, sea and rivers, and appreciate what happens when this relationship is denied. The diversity and strength of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in Australia need to be recognised so that they can be truly valued. Australia has a history that extends far beyond the 1770s. Knowing more about Australia's true history is fundamental to understanding the multiple disadvantages experienced today by Aboriginal Australians.

Reconciliation is a process that strives to improve relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider community. It is about social justice for indigenous Australians. Indigenous issues and cultures have grown in status and visibility, and this has much to do with the work of many non-indigenous Australians and a lot to do with a work of indigenous Australians. Partnerships and agreements between indigenous and other interests are an integral part of reconciliation and are increasingly being adopted by industry and government. They offer a practical opportunity to build relationships and trust. Reconciliation is not about guilt. It is a time to celebrate the beginning of a new understanding and a way of restoring hope to people in despair. It is a government responsibility, a community responsibility, and an individual responsibility. It is our responsibility.

I am pleased to report that a range of New South Wales government departments have recorded progress towards reconciliation through the development of indigenous training and employment programs and health and housing initiatives. We still have a lot to do in the reconciliation process. There is so much more to be done. The Government appreciates the work of the State, regional and local reconciliation groups and it pledges its ongoing support for the reconciliation process. My aspiration is for the New South Wales Aboriginal population to be empowered, self-managed and self-sufficient and for governments to be responding actively to ensure that Aboriginal people have proper access to service provision as a basic right.

We will continue to provide leadership for reconciliation, monitor progress and support the many groups that contribute to the reconciliation process. Reconciliation will not stop at Corroboree 2000. It will

continue well past the new millennium as both a people's movement and a process of legislative change. In the past few years we have seen great developments towards achieving social justice and reconciliation. Over one million Australian people have signed sorry books across the country. Communities and local governments have developed small-scale, but important, commitments and regional agreements in partnership with Aboriginal people.

There have been marked developments in the basic building blocks to provide better housing, education and health for Aboriginal people. Our nation is working together, slowly but surely, to empower Aboriginal people through social, economic and cultural independence. So there is a true sign of the power of reconciliation. We are proud to say that the New South Wales Government is the only State or Territory Government to both support the reconciliation process of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and to provide financial and infrastructure support to the process of the State Reconciliation Committee. We will continue that support.

We have learned from our involvement that reconciliation is not just about government, and it is more than simply a process. Reconciliation is about all people in this country coming together with mutual respect. It is about aspiring to become a society that is inclusive, tolerant and one that values all. Improving outcomes for Aboriginal people and achieving reconciliation requires sustained effort from all levels of government, from the general community and from Aboriginal people. It is well known that achieving reconciliation is no easy task. It takes teamwork and a common goal to build a better future for our children and our children's children. We must ensure that we do not miss the opportunity that has been presented to us today. I urge all honourable members not just to talk the talk but to walk the walk for reconciliation.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [10.13 a.m.]: The New South Wales Opposition—the Liberal and National parties—supports the motion moved by the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. This Parliament has a proud history of bipartisanship and support for Aboriginal reconciliation. This motion is one more step in the long walk towards achieving reconciliation. The Deputy Premier, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs said that this Parliament first tendered an apology to Aboriginal people in June 1997. Several motions have been moved since that time and each of those motions has received bipartisan support.

The Opposition supports this motion and hopes that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians will move down the path together towards reconciliation. Reconciliation, as we see it, is important for the future of our nation. Full reconciliation amongst indigenous and non-indigenous Australians will enable Australia to develop its full national identity as we move through the twenty-first century. Corroboree 2000, which will be held this weekend, is an event worthy of great note. The event, which has been made possible through the work over the past few years of many indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and at all levels, both government and non-government, is one of the first steps towards achieving the vision to which I referred earlier—the vision of a national identity.

We must fully understand, relate to and empathise with the history of indigenous Australians and play an integral part in their future. The Aboriginal Council for Reconciliation has done some marvellous work over the past few years. The New South Wales Reconciliation Committee has had an integral involvement in that work. A number of activities have been arranged by the New South Wales Reconciliation Committee and, on behalf of the Coalition, I acknowledge the excellent value of that work to the reconciliation process. A range of activities has involved community groups, schools and local councils. A few months ago the "Talkin' Up Reconciliation" conference was held in Wollongong. On a broader scale the National Aboriginal Reconciliation Conference was held in May 1997.

It is with a great sense of hope for the future that the Coalition joins with the Government in acknowledging Corroboree 2000, which will be held this weekend. The New South Wales Coalition is hopeful that many people will take this opportunity to involve themselves, even if they have not been involved previously, in specific Aboriginal reconciliation activities. This is an opportunity for everybody to come onto the streets of Sydney and to show strong support for reconciliation. I am hopeful that the march on the bridge on Sunday morning will see many people coming together in a spirit of hope for the future and with a spirit of understanding of what Australia can be when we acknowledge that proud and long history of Aboriginal people in Australia.

The march will certainly demonstrate to the world that Australia, a mature nation, wants to pursue its vision for the future built on a sound relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. I look forward to the events on Saturday at the Sydney Opera House. I am given to understand, through the Australian

Council for Reconciliation, that the purpose of those events is to bring together indigenous and non-indigenous people—and, in particular, the leaders of those groups—to celebrate the steps that have been taken and will be taken towards reconciliation. I understand that the council will be declaring its vision, or what might be considered to be its perceived pathway, for Australia's shared future.

I understand also that other leaders will have an opportunity to declare their vision for that shared future. I encourage members of the community to focus on the shared aspects of those visions. Because of the differing views amongst people in the community and the decisions that each individual has to make, based on his or her experiences, no-one could expect every aspect of the vision or visions that will be discussed or shared on Saturday to necessarily find total community acceptance. However, that is not what we should be concerned about. We should be concerned about the overriding view that Australia would be a better place, a more mature country, if we all acknowledged that reconciliation is important and that it provides the basis for us, as a nation, to move forward.

The fact that there may be differing views on some issues is largely irrelevant, unless it is made relevant by individuals for political reasons. I encourage members of the community to focus on the broad support for reconciliation rather than on what might be slight differences in views—a word here or a word there. It really does not make all that much difference as long as there is an overriding commitment and a heartfelt desire to see reconciliation as the pathway forward for our great nation. The Deputy Premier spoke of Aboriginal disadvantage. In the context of this debate, I should also mention issues that concern the Coalition. The Liberal and National parties are greatly concerned that any group in our community suffers disadvantage.

Our philosophy, and our commitment, is to ensure that every group and individual has a fair say and equal opportunity in our community. The fact that Aboriginal people suffer great disadvantage in a variety of areas is of great concern to the Coalition. The life expectancy of Aboriginal people is up to 20 to 25 years less than that of non-indigenous Australians. Aboriginal people suffer a range of medical problems, including diabetes and renal failure, at up to five to six times the rate for non-indigenous Australians. That should be a matter of great concern not only for this Parliament but also for the whole community.

The Council on the Cost of Government recently provided some interesting statistics. The report noted, for example, that Aboriginal people suffer asthma at the rate of approximately 15 per cent of the population, more than double the general population rate of approximately 8 per cent. The comparison rate for people under the age of 15 years is not as alarming, but it is still an issue. Although both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians under 15 suffer a high rate of asthma, the rate for indigenous Australians exceeds the general rate. For Aboriginal males it is 17 per cent and for non-indigenous males 13 per cent.

The report notes that for people over 35 years the percentage of the population with diabetes is 2 per cent, whereas in the Aboriginal population it is 11 per cent. The rate in the general population for males with kidney disease is 1 per cent, but in the Aboriginal population it is 7 per cent. On average, that is in accordance with the figures I gave earlier. The rate of Aboriginal males with high blood pressure is 33 per cent, and for the general population 17 per cent. The rate of ear and hearing problems for Aboriginal males under the age of 15 years is 11 per cent as opposed to 2 per cent for the non-indigenous population. Such health statistics at the turn of the twenty-first century are alarming. These problems should have been addressed long ago. I inform the House and the community that the National and Liberal parties are committed to addressing those health issues.

Aboriginal people are currently gaoled at 15 to 16 times the rate of non-indigenous Australians. Obviously, that is a matter of great concern. The Coalition believes that not enough has been done to address the causative factors that brings Aboriginal people in touch with the law, resulting in 15 to 16 times the average gaol rate. Unemployment generally has dropped due to the marvellous economic work being done by the Howard Government. The unemployment rate across the general population is 6 to 7 per cent, whereas, sadly, in some Aboriginal communities it is 85 to 90 per cent. In some places, such as Wilcannia, the unemployment rate is even higher. Unfortunately, a recent television program portrayed members of the Wilcannia community in a negative way—although I suspect that was not the intention of the people who spoke to the media. I am saddened that in some country towns—and I do not intend to name or label them—young Aboriginal children, aged four and five years old, are sniffing petrol.

I will take a moment to recount a story of a visit I made to Broken Hill prison some years ago as shadow Minister for Corrective Services and shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I sought out and talked to Aboriginal inmates about issues that affected them and asked them what we might do to reduce the rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal people. I took the opportunity to talk to one inmate whom I had been warned not to

talk to because he was in gaol for a long time for committing a serious offence. When I asked him what issues I should look at, he did not focus on himself, his colleagues in gaol or his conditions, as one might expect an inmate to do. He did not complain about the food or the cold nature of the cells. He said to me, "Sir, you're probably wasting your time focusing on my generation because you've probably lost us already. You need to go to some of the small towns around New South Wales and look at our young people, the next generation. Some of them, four and five years old, already have no hope for the future and are already sniffing petrol and destroying their lives."

I do not want to give up on the current generation. The New South Wales and Australian community should not do that. But we certainly need to get it right in the future for the younger generations of indigenous Australians. As a community we must offer them hope and a sense of direction, so that they know they will get an education and a job and their self-esteem will grow. I am not satisfied that we are doing enough in those areas. As part of this debate, I encourage all overnments across Australia to be active in attacking those fundamental problems. As the Minister raised these issues in this debate—and without wanting to be political about it—it is important that the Minister and the Coalition when in government take note of the Council on the Cost of Government recommendations to introduce benchmarks in achieving and evaluating outcomes. The Council on the Cost of Government report states:

There has been little measurement of the performance of funded organisations, even though these organisations received just under half the State funds available in 1996-97. As an example, data were included in this report on the number of Aboriginal applicants who were provided with housing under the Department of Housing's programs. However, similar data were not available on the number of Aboriginal applicants housed by Aboriginal housing associations. This is despite the fact that these associations now receive over 80 per cent of the annual funding available for Aboriginal housing through the Department's "Housing Aboriginal Communities" Program.

The fact that no clear benchmarks have been applied across the portfolio is similar to what has happened, or not happened, in other areas, such as health and education. This Parliament—no matter who is in government—must give direction to overnment departments and other agencies that dispense taxpayers' funds and ensure that benchmarks and practical outcomes are set for these departments and various agencies to work towards. If we do that and we are open and transparent about whether we are achieving that, rather than hiding it away, we might force some of these departments and agencies to get right down to the nitty-gritty of delivering better services and better outcomes for all Aboriginal Australians who currently suffer disadvantage.

This weekend is an opportunity for all Australians—certainly people in New South Wales—to come out and tell the world and the rest of the community that they support reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; that they want to see people being treated fairly and equally; that they want people to have the chance to achieve the best in life and develop a sense of going somewhere and doing what everyone else can do. It will take only a short time to walk across the bridge, but that short walk will ensure that the whole world hears our message. To that extent, I congratulate the organisers, the Australian Council for Reconciliation, on this Corroboree 2000 event.

Again I congratulate the New South Wales committee for its involvement on the long processes leading up to the event. I encourage all of us, no matter what words may or may not be included in the reconciliation document, to commit in a broader sense to the process of reconciliation, and not to nitpick and play political word games with. We should join together as a community in a genuine desire to see better outcomes for Aboriginal Australians. I assure honourable members that the New South Wales Liberal and National parties join in that. We want to see better outcomes for Aboriginal people. We want them to have a greater sense of their importance to us and we want all Australians to understand the importance of Aboriginal Australians to what we see as our national identity at the turn of the 21st century.

Mr MARKHAM (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.31 a.m.]: I support the motion of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. That motion is very timely, given that one of the greatest events that Australians can become involved in is going to take place this weekend. That event, the walk across the bridge, will enable many of the one million people who signed the sorry book to reinforce their desire for reconciliation. Last year, for more than three days in August, some of Australia's most respected public figures joined approximately 600 representatives of indigenous organisations, industry, government, churches, and professional and ethnic groups from across the State. They joined together to participate in the "Talkin' Up Reconciliation" convention held in Wollongong. The first of its kind in New South Wales, the convention came at a critical time in the reconciliation process.

Those invited ranged from political veterans Gough Whitlam, Hazel Hawke and Faith Bandler to Jason Li, Debra Mailman and Leah Purcell. Those three young people, in the way they expressed their feelings for

reconciliation, were a credit to the young people of this nation. The central themes of youth, citizenship and land and culture were addressed over the three days. The convention was the largest single meeting in this country to consider the draft documents of reconciliation. The results of the workshops have been fed into the national deliberations over the documents. Six issues were discussed over three days. The first was the need for a legislative base to guarantee future reconciliation programs after the existing legislation expires in December next year. This Parliament has been in the forefront of trying to achieve that aim, and I call on the Federal Government to make sure it is achieved.

Other issues were: addressing social justice issues with benchmarking and independent monitoring of progress, that is, measuring how national, State and local governments deliver programs to indigenous people; keeping in mind the issue of recognition of human rights; emphasising the important role of education in the reconciliation process, given that it has been the driving force behind our thinking on reconciliation; understanding that mutual respect is a cornerstone of reconciliation; and, finally, considering how best to sustain and nurture the people's reconciliation movement. It is the people's reconciliation movement. Anyone who has had anything to do with reconciliation knows governments are not playing a role in leading the charge to assist reconciliation. It is the people's movement and we have to support it. That is what we will be doing on Sunday when we walk across the bridge, where more than 100,000 ordinary men and women, boys and girls of this nation will be making a declaration of reconciliation with the indigenous people of this country.

The "Talkin' Up Reconciliation" convention proved to be enormously successful. When the draft documents of reconciliation were originally released for public discussion, the Government undertook to provide forums for the people New South Wales to have real input. We had what we called the travelling roadshows on the run-up to the convention and we had many workshops, led by the National Council for Reconciliation throughout the whole of Australia to allow both indigenous and non-indigenous people an opportunity to look at what the documents meant and how they could have input into them. The convention provided such an opportunity for many, many people. In the final analysis, there is no alternative to reconciliation.

I believe the Australian community understands one simple reality—that indigenous issues are with us and they are not going away. Aboriginal people have been on this continent for more than 40,000 years, and they are here to stay. The sooner the people of this nation realise that, the better, so that we can get on and make sure reconciliation happens. I feel proud to be party to the document that will be discussed on Saturday. The draft document for reconciliation spells out quite a number of reconciliation issues, but the main elements are the national strategies outlined in the social justice section of the document. I will read into *Hansard* the headlines of those social justice strategies:

A National Strategy for Economic Independence

A National Strategy to Address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disadvantage

A National Strategy to Promote Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights

A National Strategy to Sustain the Reconciliation Process

They are four social justice initiatives this nation has to take on board. They cover all the issues that speakers will raise during the debate about disadvantage. We can overcome disadvantage to indigenous people in this country if we all put our shoulders to the wheel, think about what those strategies say and put them in place and into practice. This world will be better for it and the nation will be better for it. This nation will feel no greater pride than when we are all going along the same path together. Reconciliation will achieve that. The ordinary men, women and children of this nation will achieve reconciliation. I am not saying it will happen next week, next year or the year after.

Reconciliation is what we all feel we should be doing ourselves, and we want to make sure it happens. This weekend we have a great opportunity in the walk across the bridge, during one of the most important weeks in Aboriginal affairs in this nation. National Reconciliation Week starts on the 27th of this month—the anniversary of the referendum that gave Aboriginal people citizenship in their own country—and continues until 3 June, the anniversary of the Mabo decision, which gave Aboriginal people, for the first time since colonisation, a right to their own land.

Mr ROZZOLI (Hawkesbury) [10.40 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion and encourage all citizens of New South Wales, particularly the citizens of Sydney, to participate in the walk over the Harbour Bridge on the weekend. I would have preferred paragraph 3 of the motion to have read,

"Recognises that this weekend is an important milestone in the efforts ..." because the word "culmination" tends to indicate that we have reached a point of finality in reconciliation, and I am sure that was not the intention of the motion. Reconciliation is not a statutory element. We cannot pass laws to achieve reconciliation through the legal process, although we can use that process to facilitate reconciliation. Reconciliation is a state of mind.

Reconciliation is an attitude that has to be absorbed into the psyche of all people in this country, or in any country or interest group to which reconciliation applies, so that the qualities of reconciliation are accepted as part of daily life. We must reach a point at which we no longer have to think consciously, "We must do this because this is fair and reasonable by my brothers and sisters with whom I live side by side", but rather because it is a natural part of our psyche, our attitude and our way of thinking. What are the elements of reconciliation? The first element is understanding. We cannot achieve that synergy of mind and attitude without understanding the ways of those with whom we wish to be reconciled.

The second element of reconciliation is tolerance. Once we understand what our brothers and sisters are thinking we will always find elements of their beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking with which do not see perfectly eye to eye. It does not matter to what element of society that applies. We need to be tolerant of their differences, just as they need to be tolerant of our differences. Mutual understanding and mutual tolerance is essential. The third element is a genuine expression, gesture and implementation of support for the poor and the disadvantaged. Reconciliation is not so important for people who are perfectly capable of looking after themselves, who can bat on in society and mix it with the best of them.

But it is very important to those in the lower socioeconomic groups and those who, for various reasons, are disadvantaged in our community. We need to support those people and help them to reach a place in society where they are self-sufficient and able to take their place with pride and dignity in the society in which they live. The fourth element of reconciliation, and this might seem a contradiction of what I said earlier, is helping the strong and the capable in their capacity to help the poor and the disadvantaged. Many people within the indigenous community have immense capabilities, talents, capacity and eloquence, but they must overcome many barriers to achieve their place in society to further the cause of their people.

We must assist those people to take their rightful place in trades and professions, and in all walks of life to act as role models and advocates so that they can reach out and help in a way that is readily understood and appreciated, rather than relying on people from a non-indigenous background whose help may not be so readily understood or accepted. The four elements of reconciliation, therefore, are understanding, tolerance, support for the poor and disadvantaged, and helping the strong within our indigenous people to help their brothers and sisters. The honourable member for Wakehurst referred to some of the health issues that continue to seriously affect some of our indigenous people.

Drug and alcohol addiction is a serious problem for our indigenous people, as it is for all other peoples in this country. The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, of which I have the great pride and pleasure of being chairman, has done excellent research into the addiction of indigenous people. The honourable member for Wakehurst mentioned glue and petrol sniffing, which is often a precursor to using harder forms of drugs, such as alcohol and a variety of other drugs that affect indigenous people, as well as non-indigenous people. The relationship between lifestyle, cultural background and the physiological background of our indigenous people and their addictions requires special research.

Although we have had the wherewithal to conduct some research into that area, more research needs to be done to try to tackle the problems of addiction in indigenous people. We need more funding to carry out that research. It cannot be carried out over a short time: it is an ongoing research program for which evidence has to be garnered on which to base research over an extended period. It is important that funding is allocated to critical areas, and I cite that example of one particular area of which I have knowledge. Such research is critical to the wellbeing of our indigenous community and, therefore, to the reconciliation process.

It is interesting to note the situation emerging in the Hawkesbury, which was the first area outside of Sydney and perhaps Parramatta to be settled by the white man after Captain Phillip landed in 1788. There was a very early and interesting interaction between the Aboriginal people and the early white settlers. Many relationships were formed, particularly between white males and Aboriginal females and, of course, there was offspring from those relationships. For many years such relationships were hidden and regarded with a degree of social stigma. A very important and priceless part of our heritage was shut out from our understanding. In recent years that situation has changed dramatically.

These days we are able to research those family backgrounds, and I talk to people in my community who speak of their Aboriginal descent with great pride. They speak of the stories that have been handed down

through the family, which to date we have not been privy to, that speak of great pride in the qualities of the Aboriginal mothers and the children that resulted from relationships between white males and Aboriginal females. Those families are now an important part of our community. It is a great thrill for me to hear them talk so freely and with pride about their background, the contributions they are making to re-establishing links with their past culture, and the contributions they are making to various community projects that are a practical means of going down the path of reconciliation.

Finally, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust, of which I am the deputy chairman, is presently embarking on developing a strategic plan, as required under our regulation. The trust has identified the need to include reconciliation and the role of indigenous people in development of the strategic plan for management of our catchment. We feel we have a lot to learn from them, and we want to embrace them and take them with us side by side down the path of developing a healthy and productive catchment for all those who live in it.

The background to the role of indigenous people within the Hawkesbury catchment shows an enormous nexus between their way of life and a productive valley that gave them a good way of life because food was plentiful, climatic conditions were moderate and there was a strong concentration of Aboriginal people in the Hawkesbury prior to white settlement. The trust has set up a consultancy involving the Aboriginal people in our community. We will take them down the path of reconciliation as equal partners with us. The trust now has an indigenous representative; Tony McAvoy is making a good contribution to the trust, and we are pleased to have him on board and working with us.

Mr Markham: He has just gone to the Bar.

Mr ROZZOLI: Tony McAvoy has just gone to the Bar. That links with what I said earlier about the promotion of indigenous people through the professions. Despite the fact that Tony has just gone to the Bar and is making a great contribution there, he is also taking time out to work with us in management of the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment area. And we are very grateful for that. Our catchment support committees are drawing in the local land councils to work with us. An interesting comment was made at a meeting the other day when Kevin Cavanagh, from one land council, said, "We have heard plenty of talk over the years. We have heard plenty of people saying they were going to do things but they rarely get around to doing anything." He said he was impressed with the program the trust was undertaking, which had a practical application and which sought to include the indigenous people in a meaningful way.

We must deliver on that. We must talk the talk, and we must also walk the walk. These practical measures, which add to the reconciliation process day by day, which help to change the psyche of the people around us, and which are the true path to reconciliation, are important and invaluable. I hope that Corroboree 2000 this weekend will be an outstanding success, that many people will join in the walk across the Harbour Bridge and that this will be not so much a culmination of effort but an important milestone in the long path towards true reconciliation.

Mrs GRUSOVIN (Heffron) [10.53 a.m.]: I strongly support the motion before the House, which notes the importance of this weekend, declares a continuing bipartisan commitment to reconciliation and recognises the efforts of many community organisations and groups, as well as the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, in working to achieve genuine reconciliation for all Australians. In 2000 there have been many signs that the people and the Government of New South Wales believe in social justice and reconciliation, that we believe in the value and importance of the Aboriginal peoples' special belonging to this land and the value and importance of reconciliation. Reconciliation is about a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all.

The reconciliation process provides us with the opportunity to grow into a more mature, inclusive Australian society which recognises the values of our relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In keeping with the New South Wales Government's Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People, we have continued to promote reconciliation in New South Wales. This is more than a Government-related duty; it is also a personal responsibility for each of us. In early 1999 the New South Wales Government launched Reconciliation and Change as a reaffirmation of its ongoing commitment to Aboriginal people in New South Wales. The document outlines the New South Wales Government's commitment to building a partnership with Aboriginal people based on justice, equity and respect. It sets a firm agenda for Aboriginal affairs and provides clear direction for major policy areas, such as housing, health, infrastructure, justice and education.

The New South Wales Government has continued to fund the State Reconciliation Committee [SRC]. Last year that committee conducted a series of reconciliation travelling roadshows through regional New South

Wales. Members of the SRC and other key speakers travelled to regional centres, where they were joined by local elders and local speakers. Roadshows were held at Bowraville on 12 March, Moree on 23 March, Bourke on 28 April, Narrandera on 4 June and Broken Hill on 11 June. Later in the year road shows were also held at Nowra and Dareton. It is a high priority of this Government that it maintains constant contact with the grassroot issues faced by Aboriginal people in New South Wales. The roadshows fed into the New South Wales reconciliation convention, "Talkin' up Reconciliation", which was held at the Wollongong Entertainment Centre for three days between 13 and 15 August. That event was overwhelmingly successful. This is an historic occasion. In December leaders in the move towards national Aboriginal reconciliation also gathered in Wollongong to release a blueprint for action. The blueprint came in the form of reports on the New South Wales "Talkin' up Reconciliation" convention and the travelling roadshows. It contained details of speeches and the 118 recommendations made during 40 workshops held at the three-day convention.

More than 150 local reconciliation groups are now operating in Australia. New South Wales clearly leads the reconciliation process with 34 local reconciliation networks in country towns stretching from Albury to Lismore and a further 20 across greater metropolitan Sydney. At the beginning of the new century and a new Australian Constitution, and just four months before our country will host the world during the Sydney Olympics, Aboriginal people, governments and the wider community have a great opportunity to work in partnership to shape a just and harmonious future. On Sunday members of my family and I will be joining in this very historic and important occasion.

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby) [10.57 a.m.]: I join other speakers in supporting this motion. I guess each of us comes to this debate and support for this motion from different directions. My own experience of Aboriginal issues goes back to my time as a journalist with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation when I took Senator Neville Bonner to Redfern for what was a fairly confrontational debate with urban Aborigines. I think that was a forerunner to the debate which continues to this day. One of my personal insights into the Aboriginal issue was with the former Whitlam Government Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Les Johnson. Again as a television journalist, I accompanied the Minister to Aboriginal communities in Wilcannia and Walgett. One observation I made in Walgett was that at one end of the town was a Federal Government-provided housing estate where the reasonably new houses were in an extremely poor state of repair. Windows had been smashed, roofs had warped, the sewerage system had broken down and yards were full of rubbish.

At the other end of town was an Aboriginal community built by Aborigines with materials they had obtained for themselves. Interestingly, all of these properties were in extremely good repair. These people were very houseproud. Their yards were immaculately clean and tidy. It showed the same sense of ownership and possession that any of us feel. The lesson to be learnt from this is that Aboriginal people want to be empowered to help themselves. They want to be able to do things for themselves. They do not want some kind of hand-me-down government mentality. That is the sort of lesson that we in this place must learn.

All members of this Parliament must, at some time during our parliamentary career, work out a way in which we can right the wrongs of the past, in whatever manner that may be and for whatever section of the community that may be. The Aboriginal community is one community that we should pay attention to because the policies implemented in this country in the nineteenth century were, in some instances, barely short of genocidal, and there is much to be done to make up the difference. It is encouraging to have a debate and reaffirmation like this and for the Australian community to have the opportunity to participate in Corroboree 2000 and the events of 27 and 28 May. This important occasion will draw in the community and not only members of Parliament as representatives of the community.

One of my proudest moments in this place was in 1997 when, as Leader of the Opposition, I supported the Premier in a motion that extended an apology to the Aboriginal people for the stolen generation. If there are any politicians in this country who remain to be convinced about the stolen generation issue, I suggest they see the play *Stolen*, which I and my colleague the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the honourable member for Wakehurst, saw about two months ago at the Belvoir Street Theatre. If anyone requires further convincing that there was a stolen generation or of its impact on families, they should see that play. I suggest attendance at that performance should be mandatory for any politician in Australia who remains to be convinced about the stolen generation. Of the many plays I was fortunate to see as shadow Minister for the Arts and as the Minister, *Stolen* was one of the most outstanding performances and presentations of the issues.

I return to the motion that this Parliament passed in 1997. It should not be forgotten that this place was, quite appropriately, the first Parliament in Australia to pass such a motion. We must continue to show that leadership for the people of New South Wales and Australia. Since 1997 every State Parliament and the two

Assemblies of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have passed similar motions. Every State Parliament and Territory Assembly in this nation is on record as having extended an apology to the Aboriginal people. That is something of which we as Australians should be proud. Australians must note also that if there were any legal liability attaching to the extension of such an apology, the opportunity has been there for the Aboriginal people to take up in the last three years. The Aboriginal community has not made a single mention of any kind of legal flow-on effect from such an apology. To my knowledge, not a single Aborigine anywhere in this country has said, "You have apologised, now pay up."

In this debate we need to pay tribute also to the Aboriginal people for their sense of decency and consideration. They simply want recognition of an historical fact. That is what we gave them in 1997. We reaffirm it with this motion, with Corroboree 2000, and with the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sunday, in which all Australian people can take part. For those who still require convincing, I say this: Look at what has happened over the last three years and at the magnificent response by the Aboriginal people. I welcome the motion, as do my colleagues. I am one Australian who will walk across the bridge, both physically and metaphorically, on Sunday 28 May. I commend the motion.

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [11.05 a.m.]: I compliment the honourable member for Willoughby on an excellent speech. He has always been consistent and positive in his attitude to and his support for matters dealing with the Aboriginal people of Australia. Corroboree 2000 will give the people of Australia an opportunity to show the world that they support reconciliation and as a nation are ready to move forward. The people's walk for reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge next Sunday will showcase to the world that we support reconciliation and as a nation we are ready to move forward. The walk will clearly demonstrate that reconciliation is a people's movement and that the Australian people recognise and understand the injustices of the past, are sorry and want to move forward. I am often asked what is meant by reconciliation. My response has generally been to quote from a document from the New South Wales State Reconciliation Committee as follows:

Reconciliation is a process which strives to improve relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. It is based on recognition of:

the unique position of Indigenous Australians as the original inhabitants of this continent;

the need to overcome the continuing disadvantage they suffer as a legacy of policies and practices which dispossessed them of their traditional lands, separated them from their families, and actively discouraged their participation in Australia's economic and social development; and

the wish of the vast majority of Australians to participate in the creation of a confident, harmonious nation as we approach the Centenary of Federation in 2001.

It troubles me greatly that some elements in Australia, including some people in high places, continue to deny our country's true history. They will not accept the facts of the past, and deny that there was or is any sort of racism in the actions and policies of governments, officials or individuals. They say it is all in the past, it is behind us and we should get on with life. They say it was done for the best of motives and that the overall effect was benign. Frankly, I feel a measure of disgust and resentment that, because of their high office, the rest of the world could think they speak for me and my family or for all Australians. That is definitely not the case, and it is not the Australia I know.

I do not want Australia to be regarded throughout the world as some sort of moral backwater. That is why the people's movement for reconciliation is so important and why the people's walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge next Sunday has such great significance for Australia and its people. Next Sunday ordinary citizens will have a chance to set the record straight in the eyes of the world. In spite of the dreadful message that the rest of the world has received about our relationship with Aboriginal Australians through what I would term insensitive and divisive comments and actions, the world will see that the people of our nation do care and want to do something about it. I commend all parties and individuals in this House to embrace reconciliation in a true bipartisan manner. This House has a second-to-none record in that regard.

I also pay tribute to the many communities throughout New South Wales and Australia that are involved in a whole range of activities to promote reconciliation on their own local terms. They are the evidence that the reconciliation process is alive and well and is a people's movement. I have been particularly impressed by the involvement and support of young people in the process. As people become more aware of the truth of dispossession, murder, rape and degradation of Aborigines that European settlement brought, they realise the real need to face up to and admit the truth, to express their sorrow for the actions of the past and to strive to put things right, to build bridges and go forward in unity with a common purpose. I believe that the great mass of

Australians want reconciliation to progress and to be attained. As the State Reconciliation Committee has expressed, the vast majority of Australians wish to participate in the creation of a confident, harmonious nation as we approach the centenary of Federation in 2001. Corroboree 2000 will be visible evidence to the whole world of that wish.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [11.11 a.m.]: I support the motion and publicly reaffirm through participation in this debate my commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation. As stated by other members, we should also acknowledge on this occasion the excellent work of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the State Reconciliation Committee in relation to the ceremonies that are about to occur on the eve of National Reconciliation Week. The National and Liberal parties have a very proud record of giving bipartisan support to reconciliation motions in this Parliament. As the honourable member for Willoughby and the shadow minister said, the New South Wales Parliament has a very proud record of being the first Parliament in Australia to tender an apology to the Aboriginal people for the suffering that too many Aboriginal people experienced through policies of separation of families. We have played a leadership role in the past and I hope that we will continue to do so in the future.

As the honourable member for Willoughby said, each of us comes to this issue of reconciliation from our personal experience. I grew up on a property in the upper Clarence which was not very far from Baryulgil reserve, so I had a lot of contact with Aboriginal children at school. Children do not recognise racial differences; it is only when people get older they realise through circumstances that people have different attitudes from those of children in a classroom. People inherit values. They are born without any prejudices and they should try to return to that state.

It is very fulfilling for an individual to shed all the baggage he or she has accumulated from influences in the community. People should try to make that personal journey of reconciliation as well as the other things we are trying to do in a more societal sense. I have been surprised by the number of people who have asked me what is really meant by reconciliation. I have gone back to the definition provided in a publication entitled "The path to reconciliation: Renewal of the nation" published by the Australian Reconciliation Convention. In response to the question "What is reconciliation?", the publication states:

Reconciliation is about building a new relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider community, one that heals the pain of the past and ensures we all share fairly and equally in our national citizenship.

I take on board what the honourable member for Hawkesbury said about the use of the word "culmination". It is an ongoing process, even though there is a combination of effort in relation to Corroboree 2000. Reconciliation is an evolving business. The publication says that there are essentially five steps to reconciliation. They are, firstly, understanding and accepting the history of the shared experience between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. So we have to understand and get some knowledge of what actually happened. The second step is respecting indigenous cultures and identity. That comes with an understanding of the first step. The third step is recognising that past injustices continue to give rise to present injustices for indigenous Australians. The fourth step is particularly important: identifying what more needs to be done and making changes within Australian society. The fifth step is revaluing our citizenship to live together in unity and harmony.

I want to focus on the fourth step, identifying what more we can do to ensure that reconciliation is not just something we talk about. As the Minister said, let us not just talk the talk, let us walk the walk. I would like to see true reconciliation translating into better outcomes for indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. We need to put greater emphasis on translating reconciliation into practical improvements in the quality of life of Aboriginal people in particular, including improved health outcomes, better educational opportunities, greater job opportunities leading to economic independence, improved housing options and more equitable justice outcomes for Aboriginal people.

In my role as a local member I have become more aware of Aboriginal issues in my electorate. Many country people will not be able to take part in the walk on Sunday because it is impractical for them, although I am pleased that the Leader of the National Party will walk on Sunday at the invitation of the Premier in a true sense of bipartisanship, as will the Leader of the Opposition. People in country areas will do different things. In Mullumbimby tomorrow, for example, a ceremony will involve what we might loosely term the white leaders of the community, members of Parliament, councillors, students, Aboriginal elders and members of the community.

We will gather outside Byron Shire Council chambers and there will be a walk up to Mullumbimby High School, which will be led by the Aboriginal elders. There will be a presentation of flags—the Australian

flag, the Aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait Islander flag—and we will raise the Aboriginal flag. It is encouraging that the ceremony will be held at Mullumbimby High School, which has something like 1,100 students, who will all be involved in the ceremony. The school principal, Ron White, is very keen on reconciliation. He will donate a fantastic painting that he has done. Lawns at the front of the school will also be dedicated to reconciliation. Ron's invitation to me made this important point:

It is not intended that this day should be a political protest against racism or government policy but rather it will be a community celebration of reconciliation and the power of community action.

The fact that it will occur in a school with so many young people augurs well for the future of reconciliation. In the electorate of Ballina we have done a couple of helpful and practical things to assist with reconciliation and improve the lot of Aboriginal people. Several years ago Inspector Barry Leacy, a very progressive police inspector, hit on the idea—I think he got it from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In Custody—that when an Aborigine is arrested an elder from his group or family should talk to him straight away. That policy was implemented and worked very well.

In Ballina we also set up one of the first crime prevention plans in New South Wales. The genesis of the plan was a meeting of community leaders including, importantly, Aboriginal people. In the past Ballina had a problem with Aboriginal crime, but the Aboriginal community has been involved with the crime prevention plan since it began and practical measures are being taken to improve the situation. As I said at the outset, New South Wales should be united on reconciliation. It should not be treated as a political issue. I am pleased that the motion has been moved today and I am happy to support it.

Ms ANDREWS (Peats) [11.20 a.m.]: I give my wholehearted support to the motion on Corroboree 2000 because reconciliation is about people—people who care enough to put up their hands and be counted and who want to try to make a difference. The starting point for reconciliation is for non-indigenous Australians to pay tribute to the resilience and survival of these tough and remarkable people, Aboriginal Australians. Reconciliation is possible only because Aboriginal Australia has said, "We ask for a solemn, official apology, and we will contemplate forgiveness of the crimes against us." It behoves us all to respond to that remarkable generosity of spirit. We cannot be silent about our history, the dispossession of this ancient people, the killings, the true purpose of assimilation, the stolen generation and the true fact of Aboriginal resistance—fierce, ferocious resistance to dispossession; the taking of their lands.

Today's young people will be the first to grow up with the idea that the principle of terra nullius is a myth. The High Court ruled that legally it was wrong, that there were people here before European settlement and that those people were the ancient custodians of the land. It abandoned the principle of terra nullius. Following the High Court's ruling, the principle of terra nullius has been abandoned by Australian parliaments. The Mabo and Wik decisions liberated us from the damaging myth that before 1788 this was an empty continent. It certainly was not.

It is a sad fact that the health of Aboriginal people is much worse than that of any other demographic group in Australia. Australian Aboriginal people have a life expectancy of about 20 years less than the non-Aboriginal population, and infant mortality is three times higher. Unemployment is at 39 per cent. The earnings of Aboriginal people are, on average, about 65 per cent of the earnings of others in Australia. Young Aboriginal people are grossly overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. We can do better. Aboriginal people will survive because of their resilience; because of what they have survived to date.

Sydney is a city with a great heart and New South Wales is a great State with a great heart. If together we have not achieved real and tangible progress by 2001, not only towards reconciliation but towards equality on all levels, there will be a shadow over the centenary celebration in 2001—100 years of a federated Australia—as there was over our bicentenary in 1988. But my faith and my expectations are otherwise, because of indigenous survival, the truth now being told about our history, the forgiveness of indigenous Australia, the readiness of non-indigenous Australia to say that we are sorry, and the refreshing approach brought to this issue by young Australians.

The apology of the New South Wales Parliament was unanimous. It acknowledged the personal hurt and social dislocation that past policies caused to generations of Australia's first people. I believe that talking up reconciliation, achieving that reconciliation and then moving on will ensure that Australia's national identity is properly forged to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. There has already been tremendous work and commitment from many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and communities, and through the co-ordinating efforts of groups such as the New South Wales State Reconciliation Committee and Australians for

Native Title and Reconciliation [ANTAR]. As a result, the majority of Australians now acknowledge that individual Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities have suffered injustice and disadvantage. More importantly, we have recognised that such injustice and disadvantage must be addressed and reviewed.

For the majority of Australians the unfinished business of reconciliation can best be summed up thus: Having acknowledged the faults of the past, where do we go from here? To continue the journey of reconciliation we need open hearts, open minds, commitment and participation across the community. We must articulate our objectives and strategies clearly to achieve those objectives. When the majority of Australians share the spiritual wonder and awe of visiting special places like Uluru or Snake Rock in western New South Wales, we will know we are well along the track. When the majority of Australians have a spiritual affinity with, and feel part of, 60,000 years of history in this land, we will know the journey is almost over. When the health, education, employment and justice outcomes for Aborigines are the same as for the rest of the Australian population we will know the journey is over.

Race relations need to be addressed because that issue goes to the heart of our national identity and national spirit. It has important moral and practical dimensions. Those moral dimensions are that indigenous Australians are dying 20 years earlier than the rest of the population. According to all social indicators, they are much worse off than all other Australians. They have been dispossessed of their land and have had their children stolen from them. Social justice for Australia's first people has been sadly lagging behind that for the rest of the population. Certainly, reconciliation is about going forward but it is equally about social justice.

The practical dimensions are that the Olympics will expose Australia to the rest of the world because 30,000 journalists will be here and some will bring harsh international spotlights to bear on our society. Indigenous Australians are also testing their legal rights in the courts. Native title is here to stay, the human rights agenda is well established, and cultural heritage protection is entrenched in law. Indigenous people have legal rights and are now at the negotiating table by right, not by largesse. I feel quite sure that this weekend will go down in our history as being one of the most important since the recording of our history began. I am proud to have been given this opportunity to be part of Corroboree 2000.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [11.26 a.m.]: It is a pleasure to follow the honourable member for Peats, who is my near neighbour; we share the Hawkesbury River as the boundary of our electorates. As I listened to her speaking—I agreed with every word she said—I was reminded that the process of reconciliation between black and white does not stop there, and I shall touch on that later. The process of reconciliation needs to take place between every Australian, whatever their background. The honourable member for Peats and I are from different political parties and other boundaries exist between us and our communities—the border of two State electorates, two local government areas and two Federal electorates. The river has been a barrier to getting things done for the communities of Brooklyn, Mooney Mooney, Dangar Island and people who live on the river.

Those boundaries should not matter. As I listened to the honourable member and realised how much common ground there was between us, as there is on many issues, I was reminded that despite the artificial structures that we create for ourselves in our communities—and even between political parties—at the end of the day they do not really matter in the bigger picture. What matters are the relationships we can have, the communities we can build and the way in which we can progress our common causes. In that small way the reconciliation process has been of benefit to me today because it has altered my thinking towards one of my colleagues and the community in general.

Reconciliation is a process for all of us; it is an active thing that needs to be continually rehearsed and celebrated. The *Macquarie Dictionary* definition of reconciliation is "the act of reconciling". It is an act, an ongoing process, and, as the New South Wales Reconciliation Committee has said, it is a process that needs to be continual. The second meaning of reconciliation in the *Macquarie Dictionary* is "the state of being reconciled". Therefore, it is something we should celebrate time and again.

I mention that particularly because it seems to me that some people in our community suggest that once reconciliation takes place—whatever that means to them—the past should be wiped and we must move on, forget about it and not mention it again. Those people have a problem with the sorts of things that will happen on the weekend with Corroboree 2000. I believe this process involves not digging up the past and revisiting past hurts but continuing to celebrate the state of being reconciled—to pick up the second definition of the word "reconciliation" in the *Macquarie Dictionary*. We need to do that time and time again. We should not be afraid; we must continue to celebrate. The third meaning of "reconciliation" in the *Macquarie Dictionary* is:

... the process of making consistent or compatible.

That is a very good description of what must happen in our community. The *Macquarie Dictionary* says that the word "reconcile" means:

... to bring into agreement or harmony; make compatible or consistent.

These are active terms, and it is important that our community does what is needed to continue the reconciliation process, a process of bringing together. It is important that we celebrate Corroboree 2000 and the walk across the bridge. I congratulate those who have organised those events, which will actively celebrate the things that unite rather than divide us. I have said that reconciliation is for everyone. I believe reconciliation must occur between individuals as well as between broad community groups. Furthermore, I believe individual reconciliation begins when people become reconciled with themselves, and I suspect that is the sticking point for many black and white Australians. The reconciliation process requires a wholeness of being. It is important that the community, and particularly governments and their policies, do not view the process in terms of government programs or physical and social barriers and structures.

We must recognise that people have psychological, spiritual, community and family needs. Government policy is usually not good at recognising those human needs, but it is incumbent upon all of us in this place and in the community to do that. As non-indigenous Australians come to the question of reconciliation, they must understand that Aboriginal people must be able to express their sense of meaning and well-being, their personal sense of wholeness and their spirituality in culturally appropriate ways. I think that has been a stumbling block for many in the non-indigenous community, who say, "Why can't everyone be like us; why can't we all be the same?". The fact is that we are not the same: we do not have the same backgrounds, needs or cultural desires. We must explore our sense of self from different perspectives and, above all, we must give people room to do that. We need to consider that problem.

I am privileged to know Pastor Bill Bird, an Aboriginal pastor who is known also to many other honourable members. He has the most incredible ministry as an Aboriginal Christian pastor. He often tells non-indigenous Australians that he must deal with his own past before he can be reconciled with them. Bill Bird says that a real turning point in his life came when he realised, as a young Aboriginal man, that the anger he was harbouring in his heart about what had happened to him and his people was standing between him and a complete and open relationship with white Australians. Bill Bird says, "Brother, I want you to forgive me for the anger that I have harboured over the years". When someone comes to the issue from that perspective, exhibiting that much grace, it is impossible for even the hardest-hearted person to do other than say, "No, it is I who must be forgiven for the anger that I have in my heart".

In graciously seeking the forgiveness of white Australians, Bill Bird unlocks their ability to say, "I suddenly realise where the problem lies: in the hardness of heart, the wrong motives, misunderstandings and in the anger that I have harboured about black Australians". That is reconciliation: individuals dealing with whatever is blocking their process of understanding themselves so that they may have an open, equal and loving relationship with others. I pay tribute to Bill Bird and to his ministry of community reconciliation. Bill Bird also taught me about the Makarata ceremony, which is held by elders in the Kimberley region. There is no word for forgiveness in that Aboriginal language, so people deal with the past by writing grievances on a log, which is then burnt and buried. When the ceremony is concluded, the past is forgotten and those Aboriginal people move forward into a new future.

I am reminded that the reconciliation process must recognise the different needs of people from different cultures to deal with their past in different ways. We must act to ensure that that occurs. Anyone who says that we can deal with the reconciliation issue and then forget it is wrong; it denies people the opportunity to forget the past through their ongoing actions. Each individual must reach that point themselves, but we must afford them many opportunities. In a few weeks, I will attend Stadium Australia, where Sydney's Christian community will hold Celebrating 2000. I am pleased to report that a reconciliation ceremony will take place at that gathering in front of about 50,000 people. Those who have planned that ceremony have taught me something about the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. During the reconciliation ceremony, Aboriginal elders will symbolically provide water to non-indigenous Australians. That is what occurred when the first white Australians sought to share the land—I am using the most generous terms; they just came and took over—with the original inhabitants.

Aboriginal people taught the first white Australians about this land's resources, and they continue to teach us many things about their culture and their relationship with the land. Symbolically sharing water with the 50,000 or so people who will attend the Celebrating 2000 gathering on 10 June will be a powerful demonstration of the need for non-indigenous Australians to recognise the things that Aboriginal people have

given us. That is a different perspective on the reconciliation issue that we must remember and continue to celebrate. I am certain that all of those present at the ceremony will desire reconciliation one with the other, regardless of colour, race or creed. I believe this Parliament reflects the true desire of the Australian people for reconciliation to take place and to continue to be celebrated: it as an active process. That is what the Australian people tell us, and I am pleased to be a member of a Parliament that recognises that desire. I am pleased to support the motion.

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.38 a.m.]: It is with great enthusiasm and spirit that I speak in this House today in support of Corroboree 2000. In so doing, I congratulate the Government and the Opposition on their united, bipartisan stance, which is in line with the focus of Corroboree 2000 and important to the general focus of reconciliation in Australia. As a young man, I visited Condobolin in central New South Wales—I think it was about 1978—where I met a bloke called Kevin Gilbert, who changed my life and my way of thinking forever. Kevin Gilbert is a renowned Aboriginal poet, songwriter and activist. He was the focus of the Aboriginal Embassy that was constructed in front of Parliament House in Canberra in 1972, which not only forced Australians to recognise the plight of Aborigines in this country but also brought international focus to that issue.

At that time Australia as a community was at the crossroads, and the international spotlight was starting to focus on us as a nation and on what we were doing about the reconciliation process. Very little had been done at that stage, but we had started. Kevin Gilbert taught me that Aboriginal culture in New South Wales is alive and well in both the city and the country. Aboriginal people are not only another minority group: they are the first people of this land and they continue their own internal systems of law, culture, land tenure, authority and leadership. That should be understood and respected as part of the enhancement of our great nation. However, there is much to be done before Aboriginal people can feel that they are treated with the true justice and fairness that they deserve.

Australian Aboriginal people have a life expectancy about 20 years less than the non-Aboriginal population; Aboriginal infant mortality is three times higher than the non-Aboriginal rate; Aboriginal unemployment is 39 per cent, compared to around 8 per cent for the non-Aboriginal population; Aboriginal people earn on average around 65 per cent of what the rest of Australians earn; Aboriginal young people are overrepresented in the juvenile crime system; and the health of Aboriginal people is much worse than that of any other demographic group in Australia. We have a long way to go to fix those problems. In New South Wales some Aboriginal communities still do not have access to basic services. In some communities the water and sewerage services are poor and in others they are non-existent. Families are living in inadequate, overcrowded housing and children do not have access to recreational facilities.

There is compelling evidence that the nature of the problems and the costs of eliminating them have been consistently underestimated. However, I am pleased to say that over the past three decades there have been marked improvements in housing, education and health. It is true that there are cultural differences between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, and that there are also severe social problems in many Aboriginal communities caused by alienation, cultural breakdown and demoralisation. We need to have some understanding and appreciation of the causes of those problems so that we can prevent rather than cure them. Understandably, Aboriginal people have a different perspective on Australia's history from that of many other Australians. What Europeans called settlement, Aboriginal people called invasion. That needs to be understood, admitted and accepted if we are to move ahead as a nation. A proper acknowledgement of history is basic to understanding the present circumstances and claims of indigenous Australians.

While Australians today cannot be held responsible for the past—and that is not what this debate is about—it is important that we have a balanced picture of our history, one that acknowledges not only the achievements of the settlers but also the terrible consequences of those achievements for Aboriginal Australians. Today many indigenous people are affected by the consequences of their lost cultural identity and their land. Australians who know the facts of the frontier may be unaware of what followed the defeat and dispossession of Aboriginal people over much of settled Australia. Our history is embedded with terrible stories that we are afraid to tell our children. For instance, the anniversary of the Myall Creek massacre is not far away. In that horrific event dozens of Aboriginal people were slaughtered: some were poisoned with strychnine and rounded up, and others were murdered in front of women and children. Unfortunately, that terrible situation was indicative of similar happenings elsewhere on the mainland and in Tasmania.

Every one of the estimated 5,000 children who were removed, separated or stolen from their families had, and have, their own private and bitter memories of separation and later problems with adjustment. We

cannot hide from that fact; we must confront it. I doubt that there would be one Aboriginal person in New South Wales who does not know or is not related to one or more of the stolen generation—and it was a generation, because it affected both a generation and generations to come. Friday 26 May is National Sorry Day. Many thousands of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians will remember and commemorate those Aboriginal people who have been affected by separation. It is not about guilt; it is about remembrance and acceptance. Aboriginal people dedicate this day to their loved ones who never came home or who are still finding their way home.

As I have said, National Sorry Day is not about guilt. It is a time to celebrate the beginning of a new understanding; it is a way of restoring hope to people in despair. Saying "sorry" means one understands and is willing to make a commitment to help Aboriginal people overcome the devastating effects of forced removal. Two significant dates in Aboriginal affairs fall during Reconciliation Week: the anniversaries of the 1967 referendum and the 1992 Mabo judgment. The referendum on 27 May 1967 was overwhelmingly carried and discriminatory references to Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution were removed. An acknowledgement of those relatively recent aspects of Australia's history is vital to understanding the present position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australian society.

In the Mabo judgment of 3 June 1992 the High Court of Australia determined that native title survived the colonisation of Australia. The court enshrined indigenous land rights in Australia's common law, and that is what this is about. Over much of Australia the judgment is a symbol of what Aboriginal people have lost, and the restoration of at least some land has been a powerful cry in Aboriginal politics. In remote areas of Australia some groups have been granted secure tenure to land that they and their ancestors have nurtured for thousands of years. Land rights have become a means of preserving culture and reaffirming Aboriginal values. Land is also central to the culture of the Torres Strait Islanders, so much so that Eddie Mabo spent the best part of 10 years pursuing a court case to gain recognition of his rights to family land, only to die shortly before the final judgment was handed down in 1992.

Reconciliation is an important process that strives to improve relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. Reconciliation Week is about a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all. Yesterday I met briefly with the Prime Minister. During that meeting I asked him to give the Aboriginal community a fair go. My reception was a blank stare and no comment. I say that in the context of recognition, because we are making a bold bipartisan move today. That needs to continue and the message needs to be understood. I am sure that the Prime Minister is doing his best to progress this issue as he sees fit. As a nation we have to convince all strata of government that they have a responsibility to acknowledge that we are sorry and that we can move on.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.47 a.m.]: I join in the bipartisan support for this motion and remind the House that these issues have always enjoyed bipartisan support in this House. On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, I state her support for the motion. If she had not had an appointment this morning she would be here, once again demonstrating her strong commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation. As Deputy Leader of the Opposition I am more than happy to join in the debate. I am also here as the member for Ku-ring-gai, one of only two electorates in this House whose names derive from Aboriginal culture. Ku-ring-gai was a tribe, and my electorate name is described officially as meaning "belonging to the Kooris". It would do the Electoral Commission and successive redistribution commissioners no harm if, when they are creating or recreating electorates in the future, they consider Aboriginal culture and seek to make greater use of Aboriginal names for electorates rather than the tried and tested approach of honouring serving and past politicians.

I speak also as someone who attended the first Aboriginal studies course at the Australian National University, which was presided over by Professor Derek Mulvaney. The study of pre-history, history, anthropology and sociology certainly gave me a great appreciation of the sorts of issues involved in this reconciliation debate. However, we all come to this place as creatures of our experiences. I was fortunate to undertake all my primary and secondary education in Darwin. I did so through the Catholic parochial school system. As a result, I attended classes from grade 1 to year 12 with Aboriginals from Melville Island, Bathurst Island and Port Keats. The majority of the Aboriginal students there were from traditional settlements, although some, such as the Riolis and the Cubillos, were long-term residents of Darwin. That association has helped me in addressing these issues. I was fortunate throughout those years to travel across the Northern Territory and visit Bathurst Island, Melville Island, Nhulunbuy and Bamyili and settlements at Maninguder, Oenpelli and Daly River-Port Keats.

I cannot claim that every year I did that as a school student I fully appreciated the significance of what I saw and experienced, and I cannot say in this House that my behaviour throughout the time was necessarily admirable. But as I concluded my school years, I fully appreciated the additional burdens and stresses that were placed on those I attended school with for 12 years. One student I went to school with was Stanley Tipoloura, the former brother-in-law of the former Senator for the Northern Territory, Bob Collins. Stanley went on to become an elected member of the Labor Party in the Northern Territory Assembly, which was a great credit to him. He was always a person who looked like he was going places on behalf of his community. I was saddened when Stan died in his early thirties. Again, that is a reminder to us all of the disadvantages that can be suffered by indigenous people.

Reconciliation is a matter of the heart, not of the head. One must have a generous heart. I do not think any Australian could have a cold heart to the fact that Aboriginal people in this country still have a life expectancy of approximately 20 to 25 years less than the rest of us; that Aboriginal people still suffer a range of medical problems, including diabetes and renal failure, up to five and six times the rate of non-indigenous Australians; that Aboriginal people fill our gaols at a rate of 15 or 16 times the rate of the rest of the community; that in some communities the unemployment rate among indigenous people is as high as 85 per cent to 90 per cent, at a time when for most of us the rate is decreasing; and that to this day Aboriginal children rarely progress past junior levels of high school. I do not know that anyone who reads those statistics and recognises the problems could close his or her heart to this reconciliation debate.

I will not be able to march on Sunday. The Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, will march. I will be at the rededication of the new Pymble Uniting Church by the Moderator of the Uniting Church of Australia, Dr Manton. I have no doubt that during the service, given the significance of the day, the fact that it is a Sunday and the fact that we will be in a Uniting Church, Corroboree 2000 will not be forgotten. The community I represent will not miss the opportunity to express its heartfelt wishes for reconciliation in this country and for the march on Sunday. The community I represent hopes that this reconciliation debate—this opportunity for renewal, as the honourable member for Ballina has described it—is successfully launched.

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [11.53 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion. This weekend represents the culmination of 10 years of effort not only by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation but by the many communities, organisations and individuals who have worked tirelessly to promote reconciliation. As we reflect on what Corroboree 2000 means to us as a community, it is also timely for us to reflect on the rich and unique heritage of the first Australians. Through a greater understanding of our past we are better able to appreciate the reasons our country and our community exist and function in the way they do today. The history of indigenous Australians has been deeply affected by government policies of the past, such as terra nullius, the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers and the policy of assimilation adopted by earlier Australian governments.

The evidence of Aboriginal culture, a culture that is more than 40,000 years old, is all around us. On Tuesday evening Mr Alan Madigan, a Gadigal elder, gave us an insight into that culture during his welcome speech when the Premier opened the exhibition of Illawarra Aboriginal artists on the Reconciliation Wall in the Fountain Court of Parliament House. The Carr Government recognises that acknowledging our indigenous heritage is a priority and it is working to expand the State Heritage Register to reflect that heritage. The New South Wales Heritage Council and the National Trust are both increasingly focusing on our indigenous heritage. A day or so ago the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who is also responsible for heritage matters, announced that the Carr Government is seeking the community's views about whether the Brewarrina fish traps should be listed on the State Heritage Register.

Those fish traps are of great importance to Aboriginal people in western New South Wales. They are a complex arrangement of stone fish traps and walls nearly half a kilometre in length, which I have had the joy of inspecting. They were built by Aboriginal people prior to European settlement. The fish traps are built on a rock in the Barwon River, which is a major tributary of the Darling River. The traps tell the story of Aboriginal people in western New South Wales: their history, culture, spiritual beliefs and their distinctive way of life, including highly developed fishing techniques. This is the first site of natural indigenous heritage to be proposed for listing on the State Heritage Register. It is a major step in recognising Aboriginal sites, places, landscapes and artefacts on the register.

I welcome the priority being given to acknowledging the unique nature of our indigenous heritage. During Corroboree 2000 we should reflect on the richness that has been lost during the past 40,000 years. We

should also acknowledge that we have a long way to go. Last week the Federal member for Charlton, Kelly Hoare, told me that she would be speaking on a similar motion in the Federal Parliament this week. She asked me if I would provide her with one sentence, because she wanted to quote the community leaders in her electorate to the Federal Parliament. This is the sentence I gave to her:

Reconciliation is a lifetime experience across the generations, both in words of sorrow for past injustice, and in actions on health, housing, education, jobs and land that give credit to the special place in the Australian community of our first people, the original owners of this land.

I emphasise that much remains to be done. I look forward, as I am sure all members of this Parliament do, to the continuing challenges. The significance of the events of the coming weekend, Corroboree 2000, is somewhat overwhelming. I welcome and applaud the leadership on Aboriginal reconciliation that has been shown in recent years in New South Wales public life. That leadership has come from the political sphere, the community, Aboriginal institutions and individual Aboriginals. The Labor Party, the Liberal Party, the National Party, the Democrats, the Greens and most of the small parties and the Independents have been supportive of Aboriginal reconciliation, the processes of community involvement and community development of reconciliation. Sometimes leadership results not from opinion polls but from what one knows is right and from persuading others to agree with one's viewpoint. I believe reconciliation is an example of that. I am proud of what has happened in New South Wales in recent years and what is happening now.

I will be taking part in the people's walk on Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sunday 28 May. I congratulate and welcome everyone else who will be walking. I accept that some individuals are not able to walk and that some choose not to share the walk. However, I am disgusted that one or two individuals outside New South Wales are intimidating others not to walk. That is a deplorable denial of freedom of political and social thought in this country. That sort of action, particularly if it is taken by a political leader outside of New South Wales, is divisive. It tries to turn reconciliation and the efforts to achieve reconciliation into a partisan political issue. Thankfully, that has not happened in New South Wales. I am proud to be part of a broad-based multipartisan united front on reconciliation. On the weekend I will celebrate 212 years of Aboriginal survival, and I will support every clause of the declaration. I particularly welcome this clause of the proposed declaration:

As we walk the journey of healing, one part of the nation apologises and expresses its sorrow and sincere regret for the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the apologies and forgives.

I am happy to accept that clause. I believe every member of this House would be happy to accept it. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.01 p.m.]: I support this very important motion in support of Corroboree 2000, the culmination of 10 years of very hard work not only for people such as Evelyn Scott and the Reconciliation Council but also for many schools and local government organisations across the State. I wish them well for the day. I would like to take this opportunity to raise a matter about an Aboriginal issue that is of great concern in my electorate. I draw to the attention of the House the loss of the Aboriginal Education Assistant position that was removed from Yass Public School at the end of 1998. It was indeed a great loss to the Aboriginal children in the Yass district.

Ever since 1998 the local Aboriginal community has been campaigning for the position to be reinstated, but, unfortunately, it seems to have hit a brick wall with the Department of Education and Training. An Aboriginal Education Assistant provides specialised services to the indigenous Australians in our schools, offering counselling and support, and encouraging students to pursue their studies. But most importantly it gives the students, who are a minority group, somebody with whom to identify within the school system; something that otherwise could be lacking. It gives them a role model, someone to whom to aspire. The position of Aboriginal Education Assistant was attached to the Yass Public School. The decision to terminate the position was apparently made on the basis that there was a drop in the number of students at the school.

Mr Moss: Point of order: I thought that this debate was a bipartisan debate dealing with Corroboree 2000. The honourable member for Burrinjuck has spent the greater part of her remarks on a local issue concerning funding for an Aboriginal facility in her electorate. You should bring her back to the main thrust of the debate, and that is Corroboree 2000.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! Whether the debate is bipartisan is not relevant. The relevant matter is the leave of the motion. I would have thought that the remarks of the honourable member for Burrinjuck thus far have been outside the leave of the motion. I suggest that she should tailor her remarks and return to the subject matter of the debate

Mr Hazzard: To the point of order: It is unfortunate that a point of order has been taken at this time. Precedent was set this morning in a bipartisan way, and honourable members have had licence to raise practical issues in regard to reconciliation. At this stage the honourable member wanted to raise a matter that was very important to the Aboriginal people in her local area. That is all that is happening. I would ask you to allow the honourable member to continue in that vein. She certainly is not seeking to make this a political or partisan debate.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Burrinjuck has spent several minutes discussing a matter that is outside the leave of the motion. I have suggested to her that she should return to the subject matter of the motion.

Ms HODGKINSON: It is very important for the children of Burrinjuck to be dealt with fairly. They have had to deal with the ramifications of Wik and Mabo and the tension that exists in any small country town. Racial tension in the area is active. The children really need a role model, someone to whom they can aspire. An Aboriginal Education Assistant would provide such a model. I draw this matter to the attention of the House. We support Corroboree 2000 and we actively support reconciliation. But if we cannot support it in the New South Wales Parliament in a practical way it may well be seen as just another soft and fluffy idea, and no-one will take us seriously. We cannot have a practical impact on reconciliation in this State, this country, or certainly within my electorate if we are barred from mentioning this matter in the House, in this forum. It is a sad indictment on the Parliament. I do not raise this matter as a political issue, but as a very important, practical and necessary action in my electorate.

I appreciate the invitation forwarded to me by Mrs Evelyn Scott. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend Corroboree 2000 as I have commitments within my electorate on the day. We look forward to the Corroboree being well attended. I also would like to congratulate one of the assistants to the Reconciliation Council, Mrs Kilmeny Bencken-Vinckers, who has worked very hard assisting with the organising of the walk on Sunday.

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [12.04 p.m.]: I am delighted to be able to support the motion moved by the Deputy Premier. The motion endorses Corroboree 2000 this weekend, which is to be welcomed. The motion also reiterates the bipartisan support in this House for reconciliation, which I join with enthusiasm. It also implicitly supports the concept of an apology, which I also endorse. Those principles are a recognition of our history. They are not particularly extraordinary, nor are they a surprise to anyone who has any concept of the history of this country. The dispossession of Aboriginals of their land and the destruction of their community structures and their culture are matters of historical record, they are not matters of rhetoric or ideology.

If one does not understand and accept one's past, one is condemned to relive it. It is critical for us to accept what has happened in the 200 years since European invasion in order to understand how we have reached this point. I use the word "invasion" deliberately, not as a rhetorical device but as a simple description of what happened without accepting anything that flows from it. Some very detailed historical work about Aboriginal dispossession in Liverpool has been done. The guerrilla warfare that waged in the area reached a peak in 1816-1817. It has a lengthy history. People like me are very proud of the Irish heritage of Liverpool and the Irish rebels who lived there. We must equally accept and recognise the role that all non-Aboriginal people played in murder and death in the warfare that was waged in our area.

In contemporary terms it is also appropriate to note that my electorate is the home of Nancy De Vries, who spoke in this Chamber and who is a victim of what happened to the Stolen Generation. Although these matters are about coming to terms with our past, they are certainly not restricted to the past. They are very contemporary issues. Recently I had the opportunity of reading *Aboriginal Workers*, in edition No. 69 of the *Labour History Journal*, which was dedicated to stories of Aboriginal labour, of things that occurred and are still occurring. To a large extent the pastoral industry was built on the backs of Aboriginal workers who were paid virtually nothing. Even in jurisdictions where award wages were paid, money was held by protection boards. This practice occurred until very recent times. Those matters are not simply matters of history, they are of great currency.

A number of people say that reconciliation is not real and that it is not important. Several politicians have been running around saying that they do not know what it means and that they do not think it is very important. Any politician in this country who does not know what reconciliation is has been asleep on the job for a number of years and has been taking his or her salary under false pretences. Some of those politicians say, "We should not worry about right; we should worry only about delivering services. We should not worry about airy-fairy concepts like reconciliation." Those views represent a gross misunderstanding and a monumental stupidity about the way in which our society works.

You cannot deliver anything like equality of services unless you concede that everyone has an equality of right to those services. That is where debates about issues and concepts, such as reconciliation, become very important: Unless you get the first step, the rest of it cannot flow. My comments are not directed against anyone in this Chamber or anyone in parties other than mine. People from all parties hold silly and reactionary views that somehow or other we should not pursue rights and we should not pursue reconciliation. They believe there is an easy way to do it. I am happy to support the motion.

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [12.09 p.m.]: I strongly support the motion. The eyes of the world will be upon Australia in the months leading up to the Olympics. Nowhere will greater attention be directed than at the plight of Aboriginal people in this country and at the way in which governments at Federal, State and local levels are responding, or are failing to respond, to racism, discrimination and social disadvantage. Just last Saturday at a reconciliation barbecue on the Block I encountered a Korean television crew; the week before, when I was visiting the home of an elder in the Block, I met a Finnish journalist who was documenting that community. I understand also that French and German crews will be in the area in coming weeks. This media attention will only increase in the coming months.

I particularly draw attention to the urban Aboriginal community in the Block, who became constituents of my electorate at the last boundary change. Recently I spoke with local residents both on and off the Block, and with representatives from the Aboriginal Housing Company, the Aboriginal Medical Service, the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, the Settlement Neighbourhood Centre, members of the metropolitan land council, the director-general of Aboriginal affairs, the Director-General of the Premier's Department, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Despite complex and diverse problems—particularly drug and crime related—with housing and unemployment, a strong desire exists for long-term solutions. It is vital that we work together to find those long-term solutions so that the current toddlers on the Block are not caught up in the devastating heroin cycle by the time they are 12 years of age.

I shall never forget the image of young 10- to 12-year-old girls in Caroline Lane with needles hanging out of their arms and glazed expression in their eyes. Nor will I forget the heartbreak of mothers telling me about their 15-year-old daughters having to leave their newly born babies in hospital to detox whilst their daughters were back on the streets to get their fix. This is the tragedy that many in this Chamber can only imagine, but it is a reality for far too many Aboriginal families. I support the call by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to recognise the importance of Corroboree 2000 and the efforts of the reconciliation movement carried out by the Council for Reconciliation and local residents groups, which are learning and promoting reconciliation at a grassroots level.

However, it is essential that Sunday's walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge is not seen as the culmination of the reconciliation process; rather, that it is just a stage along the way. The wrongs of the past must be corrected. More importantly, the needs of the future have to be addressed. A whole-of-government approach must be taken to tackle the very real problems of social and economic disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people in this country as well as a concerted effort by government to listen to and hear what communities want, and to commit to long-term solutions.

Mr GIBSON (Blacktown) [12.12 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the motion. I should like also to give a big pat on the back to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the honourable member for Wollongong. He has had a long and fair dinkum relationship with Aboriginal people and his work in this area should be noted. I take this opportunity to congratulate him. This week has seen many activities promoting Aboriginal Australia to all Australians in the lead-up to Corroboree 2000. I draw the attention of honourable members to a launch that took place on Tuesday at the Powerhouse Museum. With the assistance of many Aboriginal people the museum launched its exhibition called Bayagul. The exhibition details the many ways Aboriginal people are speaking out through contemporary technology and industry. The exhibition showcased a close relationship of Aborigines with the land through four main sections: tourism, fashion and textiles, media and performing arts.

Visitors to this country want to experience Australian life and to know what it means to be an Aboriginal person living in this city in the year 2000. This unique gallery of contemporary and indigenous communications is well placed to open the window of opportunity to a booming trade in tourism. More importantly, it can offer people a valuable and interesting insight into contemporary Aboriginal life through its visual expressions of modern-day Aboriginality. Too often Aboriginal people are portrayed in Australian and international media only as dark-skinned people living in rural areas. They are portrayed as producing only traditional dot paintings and boomerangs. The greatest tragedy in our history is the loss of the Aboriginal story

as we know it. It is a pity, but we have probably lost one of the greatest cultures the world has ever seen. With the way the world is today, with communications bringing us together, I am certain that Aboriginal culture would be most sought after by people internationally.

In this House and elsewhere we often talk about multiculturalism and how great this nation has been. We are a nation of many nationalities living under the big umbrella called multiculturalism. We are probably the envy of most of the world as we live in virtual peace because we have respect and love for one another. I hope that never changes. The multicultural sector that seems to have missed out is that of the indigenous people of this country. I am proud to represent the Blacktown electorate. Blacktown was so named because many Aboriginal people lived in the area, but over the years many people have tried to change its name. It would be a tragedy if that ever happened. The Blacktown electorate has Nurrungy Reserve and other areas that are synonymous with local Aborigines.

My previous electorate of Londonderry had many Aboriginal constituents, particularly from the Dharug tribe, which is a proud race. The roots of that tribe go back many hundreds of years. Its people do a lot of tremendous work in the area. Blacktown has 5,240 Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders—the highest number of any New South Wales electorate. Those people are an asset to the area. I suppose the biggest mistake we have made with the Aboriginal people since Captain Cook arrived was that we have tried to turn Aborigines into white people instead of allowing them to live in and foster their own culture. Most of our problems today have fallen from that mistake.

It is a shame that this Parliament does not have an Aboriginal member. It must be noted also that not too many Aborigines are doctors, dentists or judges. The Parliamentary Secretary informs me that there has been one Aboriginal judge. If anyone had any doubts about how the Aboriginal people of this nation have been treated, they should examine those statistics. The other side of the pendulum, of which I and any other Australian would not be proud, is that the Aboriginal population has the highest percentage of glaucoma sufferers of any race in the world, the highest percentage of leprosy and the highest percentage of infant deaths of any nationality. In this great country we should not be proud of those statistics.

During this debate it has been mentioned that certain sections of the community, including the Prime Minister, will not say sorry. I feel sorry for the Prime Minister having that attitude because saying sorry would build the bridge between Aboriginal people and the rest of Australia. It should have happened a long time ago. I grew up with Aboriginal people at Young, some of whom remain my best friends. One such friend is a successful businessman and is a credit to his people. I am pleased that we are moving towards reconciliation. Corroboree 2000 gives us the opportunity to say what we feel about the Aboriginal people. I will be very proud to march on Sunday. I look forward to a better future with the Aboriginal people in Australia.

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [12.20 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion, which seeks to re-endorse this House's commitment to reconciliation and to acknowledge the importance of Corroboree 2000. Reconciliation is about bringing together indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and working towards a shared and common future. It is about recognising the strengths of what we all hold in common and using this as a platform to remedy what differences we may have and to chart a future together. Reconciliation is also about achieving equity of health outcomes, education outcomes and opportunities. And it is about being honest about our past.

What indigenous and non-indigenous Australians hold in common is that we inhabit an island continent with a rich natural heritage. Whilst much has changed since 1788—whether those changes are regarded as positive or negative—we must learn to live better together as Australians. Reconciliation is a process by which Australia can become a stronger nation. Corroboree 2000 is the start of a process which, over time, will hopefully change attitudes and improve outcomes. It is important that we acknowledge the wrongs of the past in the context of yesterday and today. We need to acknowledge that Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land, that families and communities were divided, that there were deaths through violence and disease. Non-indigenous Australians should be prepared to acknowledge these wrongs and understand the distress which has been caused to Aborigines since non-indigenous people arrived on this continent in 1788. The statistics tell a sad story, as some members have already stated.

In relation to law and justice, Aboriginal juveniles are apprehended by police at something like six times the average rate of the general community. Juveniles are presented to court by police at about nine times the rate of the general community. Aboriginal incarceration rates range up to 15 times the rate of the general community. The health status of Aborigines is far poorer than for the general community. Life expectancy at

birth may be up to 19 years less. Aborigines have higher rates of asthma, diabetes, kidney disease and high blood pressure. Their rate of ear and hearing problems is four or five times worse than that of the general community. Aborigines have higher rates of smoking and substance abuse with alcohol and other drugs. The rates can be seven to 11 times worse than in the general community. We must acknowledge the problems and work together to address them.

Reconciliation is also mutual. Indigenous Australians need to continue to meet the challenge of working towards achieving better outcomes for their own communities—not just through receipt of funding but also working within their communities to improve attitudes and values. Relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in the past have often been characterised by conflict and apportionment of blame. We need to move beyond and away from that. On many occasions over the past 25 years I have visited Bourke. It has been saddening to see the trend over that time. Bourke has gone from being a typical country town to one which is divided, visibly and in an underlying sense. Windows in shops have been boarded up or have had grilles placed on them. There is an underlying feeling of hatred and distrust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Whatever reconciliation can achieve, it can be measured in a town such as Bourke. I am sure that the situation there is reflected in other small towns around New South Wales.

Whilst many non-indigenous people in Bourke will not speak publicly about the situation, their private comments in their own homes show that they hold a great depth of hatred and dislike of Aboriginal people. I am sure that the feeling is mutual. If reconciliation over time can achieve something that can be measured it will be to see that trend over the past quarter century in places such as Bourke reversed. It should not be just things on the surface that change but what people say and think privately. The solutions will not be easy. But it is time that we focused more on rectifying the causes of the problems than on attacking the symptoms. Reconciliation will gain strength from acceptance of the need to work together both within and between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. I look forward to a time when the success of reconciliation can be measured by what has been achieved together rather than separately.

Ms SALIBA (Illawarra) [12.25 p.m.]: The first time I spoke in this Chamber was on National Sorry Day in 1999. I specifically chose that day because I wanted to display my support for the reconciliation process. It was not about feeling guilty for something that had happened; it was about feeling sad for the injustices that the Aboriginal people had faced. It was about saying, "I am really sorry that it ever happened to you."

Speaking with one voice, we the people of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together recognising the gift of one another's presence.

Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of the past so that we can move on together at peace with ourselves.

And so we take this step: as one part of the nation expresses its sorrow and profoundly regrets the injustices of the past, so the other part accepts the apology and forgives.

These are the words of the draft declaration for reconciliation. And what meanings these words hold. For too many years Australians have grown up without ever knowing Aboriginal Australians, their culture and traditions. Getting involved in reconciliation is a great way we can share knowledge, cultures and experiences with each other. Reconciliation is a process which strives to improve relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It is based on recognition of: the unique position of indigenous Australians as the original inhabitants of this continent; the need to overcome continuing disadvantage suffered as a result of past policies and practices which dispossessed Aboriginal people of their traditional lands, separated indigenous children from their families and actively discouraged their participation in Australia's economic and social development; and the wish of the vast majority of Australians to participate in the creation of a confident, harmonious nation as we approach the centenary of Federation.

In a very real sense this is the time for shaping the future of our nation. Indigenous issues and culture have grown in status and visibility. This has much to do with the work of many non-indigenous Australians and a lot to do with the work of indigenous Australians. Partnerships and agreements between indigenous and other interests are an integral part of reconciliation and increasingly are being adopted by industry and government. Reconciliation is not about guilt. It is time to celebrate the beginning of a new understanding and a way of restoring hope. It is a responsibility of government, the community and the individual.

Reconciliation is central to the renewal of this nation as an harmonious and just society which lives out its national ethos of a fair go for all. Until we achieve such reconciliation this nation will remain diminished. Building new relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and all other Australians is

fundamental to achieving reconciliation. It is important that all Australians recognise that we, as a nation, have a shared history. Sharing history involves changing the way the story of Australia is told and understood. It involves people from the wider community identifying with aspects of indigenous peoples' cultures and histories. It also involves indigenous people sharing their knowledge and perspective of history with non-indigenous people. The challenge to the nation is to achieve equity in basic areas such as education, health, housing and the justice system. We have come a long way. However, we still have much to do in the reconciliation process and I look forward to the time when we can have peace.

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [12.29 p.m.]: I speak in support of the motion on Corroboree 2000 and reconciliation. The name "Monaro" is derived from Aboriginal history and heritage. The honourable member for Ballina, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Government members have spoken in a friendly and bipartisan fashion about the prospects and outcomes that we desire for reconciliation. I echo their words. Unfortunately I will be unable to attend the celebrations and ceremonies in Sydney over the weekend, but they have my full support. I have been involved with the reconciliation process for some years through the Australian Capital Territory and Region Reconciliation Committee and the relevant association.

I pay tribute to those organisations. In particular I pay tribute to Ian Spicer for his work as chairman; Matilda House, the local Ngunnawal land council member; Geoff Pryor; Robyn Bancroft; and Flora McDonald for getting people together to form the Australian Capital Territory reconciliation committee. I mention also Michael Quall, the Australian Capital Territory Federal Police liaison officer, who has stories to tell about Aboriginal people. I commend Catherine Clarke and others from Jigamy Farm, north of Eden, for their work in furthering the storytelling and community work for Aboriginal people, particularly in the far south-west of New South Wales. I recently had an interesting meeting with the Munday sisters from Cooma and Queanbeyan. They told me about their documentation of Aboriginal involvement in the Monaro district and their ancestry, which has been traced back to the early 1700s. They are seeking funds to properly document that history.

The book entitled *The Moth Hunters* refers to high country summer meeting-ground stories related to the bogong moth and Bogong Mountains, an area where many tribes and clans met. We need to tell these stories of reconciliation, Aboriginal history, and white settlement over the past 200 years to help sort out where we are going. We must overcome the comparative disadvantages that the Aboriginal people are confronted with. We must address problems of health, education and other disadvantage. The Department of Community Services has agreed to fund an early intervention program at Queanbeyan South Public School in which many Aboriginal children and families will receive support and be educated on how to integrate into the school system. I am sure this will pay good dividends for Aboriginal people throughout Australia.

I reiterate the words of honourable members that we need to move forward. As times change we must change and grow so that we become a united people and a united Australia. We must learn from the past by telling and listening to Aboriginal stories. We need to build on our wonderful, colourful history together so that we can move forward. I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this important motion.

Mr BARR (Manly) [12.34 p.m.]: I support this important motion. I remember seeing a television interview on *This Day Tonight* with Dexter Daniels, who worked hard for Aboriginal rights, in this case for people working on a Vestey-owned cattle station. He was asked by the interviewer, "Are you a Communist?" to which he replied, "I'm not a Communist. I'm a blackfella." The television interviewer and politicians were trying to give that person, who was legitimately fighting for the rights of his people to decent wages and appropriate conditions, a west European and ideological label. That is symptomatic of how things have gone wrong. We now want to recognise common humanity and the right and obligation for us all to get on well together. I grew up in South Africa in the heyday of apartheid and I am well aware of the damage and social disadvantage caused by racism and people being judged because of their colour. We must ensure that petty prejudices are overcome so that we can move forward with dignity and self-respect and allow everyone to have an equal opportunity to realise their potential, irrespective of the colour of their skin.

My electorate has a long connection with Aborigines. Manly was the first port of call for Captain Phillip. There he met the Kayimai tribe, who were such fine looking fellows that he called the place Manly. The NAIDOC committee has been in existence in Manly since 1992. That committee will march at 10.30 a.m. with the Manly Aboriginal support group, which has been going for more than 20 years on the peninsula. I understand that Manly Council was the first council on the North Shore to raise the Aboriginal flag, in July 1992. We are about to celebrate two landmark anniversaries: the referendum of 1967 on 27 May and the Mabo decision. We must get on together. The walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sunday is one way of doing that.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove—Leader of the Opposition) [12.37 p.m.]: I speak in support of the motion, and in doing so I note that this is not the first occasion on which I and many honourable members have spoken about reconciliation in the House. It was this Parliament that passed the first formal apology to the Aboriginal people and that has operated in a bipartisan way along the whole route towards reconciliation. I have attended conferences at Wollongong with the honourable member for Wollongong. We met at the Talkin' up Reconciliation conference, which was one of the steps along the path to Corroboree 2000.

I have been invited to attend the meeting on Saturday at the Sydney Opera House. I look forward to watching, listening and learning. Many national leaders and Aboriginal leaders will be present, and I am delighted to say that many young people will participate in what will truly be a community-based celebration of reconciliation. That meeting will be followed by the walk across the bridge on Sunday. I note that some have an early mark and will start walking at about 8.00 a.m. This will be a great community event in which people from all walks of life will come together to celebrate what is truly a step along the path towards reconciliation in this country. I expect and anticipate that hundreds of thousands of people will attend that celebration, each making a personal commitment to a reconciliation process that must be owned by all Australians.

I know that people have different views about the way in which the reconciliation process should proceed. However, at the heart of this issue is an acceptance by the overwhelming majority of Australians that we must work together towards a glorious and united future. Many are trying to come to grips with how to follow that path and ensure that in five, 10, 15 or 20 years the community works together. Why should we need even to talk about the reconciliation process in five, 10, 15 or 20 years? If we are genuinely committed to this process, we will achieve reconciliation within that time frame. I look forward to the weekend celebrations and to continuing bipartisan support for reconciliation. As a member of Parliament, I have had the great pleasure of visiting and learning from Aboriginal communities across the State.

However, I have not had the same opportunities as others. I recently met some Catholic nuns who told me about the Aboriginal people's great spirituality of which they became aware while living on Aboriginal communities around the country. They told me of Aborigines' connection with the land and how much it meant to them as Catholic nuns to learn about that spirituality, which enhanced their own. I have not had the opportunity to gain that sort of experience—perhaps I will do something similar when I leave this place and have more time on my hands. People who have had some experience in the area tell me that working with Aboriginal communities can be life changing. I know some of those who have been extensively involved with Aboriginal communities, and their experiences have not always been good. Aboriginal communities around Australia have had difficulties, but the reconciliation process is about ensuring a better quality of life. It is about making sure that Aboriginal people have the opportunity to decide how to live their lives.

When the community gets together on the weekend to attend Corroboree 2000 and to walk across the bridge, we will be celebrating publicly our personal commitment to the reconciliation process. I commend the Australian Council for Reconciliation and the New South Wales State Reconciliation Committee and all of those who have been involved in this process. It has not been easy: they have done an enormous amount of work at grass-roots level in an attempt to draw the process together and make sure that everyone is committed to it. As I have said, this is only one step along the road. This is not the end of reconciliation; it is simply a building block that will give the process a solid foundation.

As a former Minister for the Status of Women, I have often said that I look forward to the day when a women's ministry will no longer be required because the many disadvantages that women have suffered over the years have been overcome and have disappeared. The same sentiment applies to the Aboriginal community: we look forward to the day when Aborigines will not require special ministries and special assistance and can participate in our society as they choose. We will then not have to discuss reconciliation because the issue will be resolved.

Mr TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [12.43 p.m.]: Like all honourable members who have spoken so far in this debate, I believe it is appropriate that on Sunday as many Australians as possible publicly display their support for reconciliation. I believe there is overwhelming support for reconciliation throughout New South Wales in particular and Australia as a whole. Some have suggested that support for reconciliation is not as great in country areas, but I dispute that claim. While some hold unfortunate views and do not interpret past events accurately, the overwhelming majority of people in New South Wales—certainly those in my electorate—are very positive about reconciliation.

As a former mayor of Armidale city, I recall—almost as though it were yesterday—a celebration at which we raised the Aboriginal flag. The honourable member for Wollongong joined us, and I acknowledge the

support of the then deputy mayor of Armidale City Council, Councillor Pat Dixon on that occasion. We worked together closely for five terms as mayor and deputy, and, as with so many in the Northern Tablelands area, her efforts in support of the reconciliation process should be commended. The raising of the Aboriginal flag at the Armidale celebration, which was attended by hundreds of people, was an emotional occasion—not because we raised that flag but because we acknowledged the true meaning of reconciliation.

The spirit of reconciliation was in the room with us as we united as one people. That says a great deal about the progress that has been made towards achieving reconciliation and recognising its true meaning. I look forward to participating in the walk on Sunday. I will be joined by the former deputy mayor of Armidale, and it will be good to meet her again for that celebration. Communities in my electorate comprise up to 35 per cent Aboriginal people, and they work hard to maintain basic services. I believe reconciliation means enjoying—as one people—everything that this country has to offer.

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [12.46 p.m.]: I shall be brief as I know that other honourable members wish to speak in this debate. The reconciliation process that began officially more than 12 years ago will not conclude on the weekend. It will continue, and I place on record my support for all that has happened so far, particularly in this Parliament and in today's debate. When this debate began, no-one anticipated how many honourable members would wish to speak to the motion and go on the record as supporting reconciliation—particularly the process in New South Wales. Both sides of the Parliament support the reconciliation process and the walk across the bridge on Sunday—it will be the biggest organised crowd of people to cross the bridge since its opening in 1932. I fully support the entire reconciliation process and I thank the Opposition for allowing me to speak about it today. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr STONER (Oxley) [12.47 p.m.]: As honourable members will be aware, there are significant Aboriginal communities in my electorate at Kempsey and Bowraville and some outstanding examples of reconciliation in action. The Booroongen Djugun age care facility to the west of Kempsey—which accommodates both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people—is a leader in its field, and I pay to credit to Garry Morris and Val March for their work at that facility. Steve Blunden at the Durrie Aboriginal Medical Service, with which the Deputy Premier would be familiar, also does a great job for the people of Kempsey and the Macleay region.

Harry Brandy—who also chairs the Kempsey tourism organisation—and his partner Beth Scaysbrook have a great tourism venture at Brandybrook Lavender Farm. The Kempsey Assistance Patrol do some great work in the community, particularly with Aboriginal people, and Mark Bugden, an Aboriginal police officer, plays an important role. I must also mention the police ACLO at Kempsey, Karen Rhodes and also Debra Ballenger—many people are doing a great job. They are supported by Uncle Blue—Harold Smith—who is an elder of the Dunghutti people. Unfortunately, I am booked to attend another function on Sunday, but I signal my support for the motion and for Corroboree 2000.

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [12.49 p.m.]: I am proud to speak to this motion, with which all members of Parliament agree. We are fortunate in New South Wales to have a Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and a Parliamentary Secretary who are dedicated to the cause of Aboriginal reconciliation. Leadership of that process comes not from us but from the Aboriginal community, and we all benefit when its leaders can work with the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary. The walk on Sunday has been described as a step in the right direction from which all sorts of advances will flow.

During my time as mayor, Dubbo City Council was the first council in New South Wales to offer an apology for the stolen generation. Many other councils did likewise. I was closely involved with the Aboriginal movement in Dubbo and Gilgandra. Both those centres have a high Aboriginal population. It is through working together that we can do great things for all communities, but at times distressing comments are made by a small minority of people. I feel that the heart and soul of all people in New South Wales will be demonstrated in the walk that is to take place on Sunday. I commend the motion.

Dr REFSHAUGE (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [12.51 p.m.], in reply: I thank all honourable members who have spoken in this debate; I know that others wanted to speak, but we have run out of time. I thank my Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member for Wollongong, and the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the honourable member for Wakehurst, for ensuring that as many members as possible were able to speak. They helped ensure that this motion is a positive move towards reconciliation.

I thank all members who contributed more than words in this House by speaking about their personal experiences. They show very clearly that this Parliament is a leader in the parliamentary scene in bringing reconciliation to this country. They have done more than support the motion; they have put some of themselves into it. Corroboree 2000 is more than a people's movement, but it requires leadership. Members of this Chamber have shown leadership by supporting reconciliation. We all need to be part of it in a bipartisan way. Our political differences should not be inflicted upon the difficulties that Aboriginal people have. However, there is a long way to go, but as honourable members have pointed out today is another step towards reconciliation. I hope the House will unanimously support the motion.

Motion agreed to.

[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 12.53 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

PETITIONS

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**.

North Wallarah Peninsula Development

Petition praying that community concerns relating to the north Wallarah peninsula development be not ignored and that an inquiry into the process be considered, received from **Mr Orkopoulos**.

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**.

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 Richardson** and **Mr Rozzoli**.

Septic Tank Inspection Fees

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

Recreational Fishing Licence Fee

Petition praying that a licence fee on recreational fishermen be not imposed, received from **Mr Stoner**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RAIL FARES

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given his admission that the State's rail network is so bad that he is spending \$2 billion to try to compensate angry commuters, will he now give a guarantee that there will be no fare increases until he fixes this shambles of a system, as highlighted again yesterday when fewer than half of all peak hour trains were running on time?

Mr SCULLY: I think the Leader of the Opposition is unaware of the decision—

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

Mr SCULLY: —that has already been made by the Government in terms of the application of a consumer price index increase.

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

Mr SCULLY: At my request, CityRail has already informed the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] that CityRail will not seek a fare increase in respect of the consumer price index [CPI]. That has already been announced.

Mrs Chikarovski: What about the goods and services tax [GST]?

Mr SCULLY: What about GST on caravan park sites?

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

Mr SCULLY: The GST is not our tax.

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

Mr SCULLY: We have advised the IPART that under Commonwealth legislation we are required to pass on John Howard's and Kerry Chikarovski's GST. We have to pass that on. We have no choice. I did not ask for the GST. No-one on this side of the House asked for the GST. Do we want the GST? No! No-one wants the GST. In fact, when I go out to the bush and people ask me what the Federal budget was like I say, "Well, I had a look at the Federal budget, and all I can assume is that they were so dazzled by the blazing lights of the GST that when they were preparing the budget they forgot about the bush."

Mr Debnam: Point of order: I would like to remind the Minister that—

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

Mr Debnam: The GST was signed off by the Premier on 24 June last year.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I call the honourable member for Blacktown to order.

Mr SCULLY: The State Rail Authority is not applying for CPI increases in respect of fares as its performance has not been as good as it could have been. I have acknowledged that fact. Honourable members opposite might find it a laughing matter, but I do not. The fare-free day next Wednesday is not to compensate people for the inconvenience they have suffered, it is not as an alternative to fixing the problems; it is a gesture of goodwill to thousands of commuters who have been inconvenienced over the last few weeks.

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

TEACHERS DISPUTE

Mr STEWART: My question without notice is to the Minister for Education and Training. What is the latest information on salary negotiations between the New South Wales Government and the Teachers Federation?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! While the Minister is approaching the table I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of students and teachers from the Minnamurra Public School. I welcome them to the Parliament.

Mr AQUILINA: I too wish to welcome the students and teachers of Minnamurra Public School. Today I can announce an agreement between the Government and the Teachers Federation to enhance public

education and training and an end the teachers salary dispute. A few hours ago the federation advised me that its executive endorsed a document this morning, and that meetings will be held on Friday 2 June for members to vote on the recommendation to ratify the agreement. This is a \$1.8 billion package, a historic package that represents a win for public education, a win for teachers and a windfall parents.

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

Mr AQUILINA: Most importantly, it is a win for students, like those here present in the gallery today from Minnamurra Public School. For the first time in New South Wales history—

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

Mr AQUILINA: The only ones not smiling are members of the Opposition.

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

Mr AQUILINA: In a few moments I will announce that the first salary increase teachers will receive is actually higher than the rating of the Leader of the National Party! For the first time in New South Wales history there will be a single industrial award covering all public schools and all TAFE colleges. For the first time schoolteachers may be programmed to teach in TAFE colleges, and TAFE teachers may be programmed to teach in schools. This flexibility will allow much greater articulation between school education and vocational education and training. It will allow much closer relationships between schools, colleges and industry.

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

Mr AQUILINA: It means that the expertise of our teachers will be available to all our students. It will greatly enhance our capacity to ensure that students have the high-quality skills they need to compete in today's global work force. For the first time we have a salaries agreement in our schools and colleges for at least the next 3½ years. The agreement provides for salary increases of 16 per cent and runs until 31 December 2003. Teachers will receive a 4 per cent increase from 3 April 2000, another 3 per cent from 1 July 2001, a further 4 per cent from 1 July 2002 and a final salary increase of 5 per cent from 1 January 2003. This means that from January 2003 a beginning teacher will start on a salary of \$41,109 and a teacher on the top of the scale will receive \$58,992. Principals of large high schools will receive \$95,100 per annum, putting them on a par with the highest earning members of the community. Teachers will receive a cash payment equivalent to 2 per cent for the nine months from 1 July 1999 when the previous award expired to 2 April 2000. This will give teachers an up-front payment of \$750.

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

Mr AQUILINA: The package provides for considerable improvement for casual teachers. Long-term casual teachers appointed for two terms or more will receive pro rata the same conditions as permanent teachers. All casual teachers will benefit from a 16 per cent pay increase. Our message to all teachers is this: Teaching is a valued profession and we value your contribution.

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

Mr AQUILINA: This value is reflected, in part, in the new measures adopted to support teacher quality. All members of the teaching profession, in both schools and TAFE, will be involved in a strengthened annual performance review process including written feedback from their supervisor. This will involve class observations, review of lesson plans, conferences between teacher and supervisor, and discussion of student work. This is the first time that the performances of all teachers will be assessed—not just those who are considered to be underperforming. It will be an important step in assuring the community that the quality of teaching is meeting expectations.

For the first time, this agreement will provide more flexible teaching hours for year 11 and 12 students. No longer will the formal timetable for young adults be limited to the traditional hours of 9.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. It will maximise the choice of courses available to those students. It will ensure that they can study TAFE and school courses in the one program and that they can get on-the-job training in the workplace. It will ensure the successful implementation of the new High School Certificate. Each school will decide on the core hours in which it delivers the equivalent of eight 40-minute periods. If they wish, this can be between the traditional hours of 9.00 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. On top of that, and in order to maximise the available curriculum, classes may be programmed outside those core hours between 7.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m.

The package includes further steps to improve the quality and performance of TAFE New South Wales. As with schools, there will be a strengthened quality review process for TAFE teachers. The operation of TAFE will become more flexible with the capacity to average teaching hours over a year to meet times of peak demand. TAFE will continue to be more responsive to the training needs of industry and the skill needs of students. Strategies will be introduced to increase the number of student contact hours by TAFE's teaching work force, but at this point I must say that the Government is disappointed that our negotiations were unable to agree on increasing the number of face-to-face teaching hours.

This package includes also an express guarantee that external tests and accountability measures that underpinned public confidence in our education system will proceed without the threat of industrial action. This includes basic skills tests, the ELLA tests, the new Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program, the new Computer Skills Assessment for years six and 10, the new School Certificate and the new Higher School Certificate. Further, there is an explicit guarantee of the implementation of annual school reports, school development policies and procedures for managing teachers who are experiencing difficulties with their teaching performance.

I repeat: This agreement is a win for educational quality and a win for teachers and students in government schools. This agreement looks to the future. It has been arrived at in the way I always anticipated: by negotiation. I always hoped we could produce a productive and positive agreement. We have spent many hours, weeks and months in discussions and negotiations. Away from the public spotlight talks have continued and an agreement has been reached between the Government and the executive of the Teachers Federation. Now we can move ahead.

This agreement will be the framework of a new award, which will be lodged with the Industrial Relations Commission and come into effect as soon as possible. Obviously I am delighted that agreement has been reached. I thank all those who participated in the negotiations for their persistence, patience and diligence in concluding these matters. I look forward to working with our teachers and parents to continue to improve our quality public education.

CITYRAIL SERVICES

Mr O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given the Minister's admission today in the middle of Public Transport Week that CityRail is failing commuters, will he finally commit to a customer service charter, as recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, to give long-suffering commuters some redress when trains fail to meet the benchmark the Minister and Premier set just weeks ago?

Mr SCULLY: My colleagues should be aware that Opposition policy is to put private into public transport. I remind honourable members of an appalling statement that was made last night by a member on the Opposition side of the House. During debate on the Parking Space Levy Amendment Bill the shadow Minister for Transport talked about the purchase of North and Western bus company by the Government.

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

Mr SCULLY: This is the first government in this city's history to put government buses into Parramatta. One can now take a bus from Parramatta all the way into Circular Quay.

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. My question was about train commuters—

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

Mr SCULLY: This is one of the best initiatives this Government or any other Labor Government has taken. As a member of Parliament I represent an electorate in western Sydney. Frequently I have had it put to me that we should take government buses to western Sydney. I am proud of the decision. Last night the shadow Minister for Transport railed against the decision as the worst example of government mismanagement imaginable. How dare we buy a private bus company to put government buses in western Sydney! I challenged him and asked, "Does that mean you would sell Sydney buses?" He nodded in the affirmative, and that nod is recorded in *Hansard*. A Coalition government would sell Sydney buses. There has been considerable concern expressed about track maintenance. Do honourable members remember Mr Photios? The Minister for Fair

Trading remembers him! In November 1998 Mr Photios gave a commitment that if the Coalition were elected to Government he would sell the track maintenance company known as Rail Services for \$300 million.

I am sure my colleagues remember the newspaper barometer during the election campaign. The Coalition announced its transport policy, but as the *Daily Telegraph* barometer rose higher and higher, and as the mercury blew through the top with the \$1,000 giveaway, the Coalition made a decision to put its transport policy in the bin, and that is where it has remained. We have heard nothing from the Coalition for five long years. The Coalition has no plans, no ideas and no policies, only a commitment to privatise public transport. One might ask: What evidence do you have of this, Mr Minister? I have a letter that I think the House should be informed about. It is written by a member on the other side of the House and it is dated 21 March 2000. It is addressed "Dear Steve", so the writer is on good personal terms with the recipient. It is addressed to the Hon. Steve Bracks, MLA, Premier and Treasurer. It states:

Dear Steve,

I write with an unusual request.

Listen to this! This is the clincher if anyone wants evidence that if the Coalition is elected we can forget public transport in this State. It will be privately owned and operated. It will be all flogged off by the Coalition if it is elected to government. We should not listen to any of the pious concerns of Opposition members. They are not fair dinkum. The letter is unbelievable. I was absolutely astonished and appalled when I read the rest of the letter.

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: I have a very simple point of order. Last night 400,000 commuters were inconvenienced by a single dispute presided over by this Minister.

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

Mr O'Farrell: He will not provide an answer in the House today—

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

Mr O'Farrell: —as to what commuters in this State can expect in relation to ongoing problems in the railway system.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr O'Farrell: The form of the letter is irrelevant when 400,000 commuters want some answers about last night's disaster.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition obviously wants me to dispense with his services so that he can convene a press conference. He will remain in his seat for the remainder of the session. Any similar outburst in the future will result in the Deputy Leader of the Opposition being immediately placed on three calls to order. I issued a similar warning to him yesterday. The Chair is disappointed that a senior member of this House would abuse the standing orders in the way the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has.

Mr SCULLY: Mr Speaker—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is able to read the letter without any assistance from members of the Government.

Mr SCULLY: The letter continues:

I am interested in the franchising of public transport in Victoria. I am visiting Melbourne next month to talk to a couple of private sector companies involved and would appreciate the opportunity to learn of the public sector perspective on the deals.

As I don't know your Transport Minister I thought I should write to you. If the Victorian Labor Government doesn't want to help a NSW Liberal MP I would fully understand!

Kind regards

Barry O'Farrell

He is down there snooping, looking at franchising deals. We have it on record. I am happy to table the letter. The only transport policy that the Libs have is to Kennetise public transport in this State. I should inform the House of decisions I have made today in respect of public accountability. The Opposition raised the question of public accountability and I have been considering implementing a better accounting process that will both inform the public and keep the rail agencies on their toes. Earlier today I announced that as soon as possible the on-time running performance by CityRail in the a.m. and p.m. peaks will be posted on the CityRail web site so that the public can be well informed as to the performance. The reasons for any incidents will also be posted on the web site on a daily basis. I expect that to be posted in the very near future. In addition, I propose to seek second-opinion advice from a substantive engineering firm in respect of the performance of infrastructure and rolling stock as it relates to on-time running performance.

KURNELL OIL REFINERY FIRE

Mr COLLIER: My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. How did State emergency workers and volunteers help avert a major accident at the Kurnell oil refinery last night?

Mr DEBUS: I am proud to report to the House that last night a possible catastrophe at the Kurnell oil refinery was averted due to the extraordinarily swift and professional response of our emergency service workers and volunteers. I am sure I do not need to spell out to the House the danger from a large fire on a high-risk site such as the Kurnell oil refinery. The response last night involved extremely effective co-operation between a number of agencies including New South Wales Fire Brigades, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, the New South Wales Police Service, the Ambulance Service, the Sydney Ports Authority and staff from the Kurnell refinery.

So effective was the effort that a potentially quite disastrous incident was brought under control in only two hours—a remarkable achievement. More than 100 highly trained and well-equipped firefighters and volunteers were on the scene within an hour of the fire commencing at 7.20 p.m. They included New South Wales Fire Brigades officers from Cronulla, Miranda, Sutherland, Kogarah, Hurstville, Rockdale, Alexandria, Chester Hill and Greenacre units. Volunteers from 12 New South Wales Rural Fire Service units including Kurnell, Illawong, Menai, Heathcote, Engadine, Grays Point, Loftus and Sutherland communication unit also responded quickly to the blaze.

This was an extraordinarily rapid response with massive equipment and resources available. At the fire scene a clear command structure, which is vital to a smooth and efficient response in an emergency, was quickly put in place. It is believed that the fire commenced in a crude oil processing unit that ruptured under pressure and caught fire. As it burned it produced a pall of thick, black, acrid smoke and flames up to 30 metres high. Assistant Commissioner Royce Atkinson of New South Wales Fire Brigades described the scene as not only spectacular but highly dangerous. He said, "Although our firefighters are trained to face these situations it is always a frightening thing to be fighting a fire in such a high-risk area". These workers deserve our respect and admiration.

Firefighters worked with foam to extinguish the flames pouring from the crude oil vat. At the same time, a malfunctioning pump continued to discharge oil into the fire while workers battled to shut off the fuel supply. Adjacent to the fire is an electrical substation that could not be shut down. That presented further danger to firefighters as unknown ground areas were alive with electricity. There was a real possibility of an explosion and therefore firefighters set up a fixed hose and withdrew to a safer area. The threat of ignition of surrounding fuels stores was also a major concern. I am informed that had these stores ignited there was the potential for a major catastrophe. To avert the threat firefighters worked quickly to cool down the machinery containing the fuel by mounting aerial platforms and applying foam to the highly flammable load.

These \$1 million hydraulic platforms are an essential component of the firefighting armoury. Firefighters on the scene reported that the aerial platforms were extremely effective in directing sprays onto both the fire itself and the rapidly heating fuel tanks. More important, the use of the aerial platforms increased the safety of firefighters taking on their difficult task. I am informed that approximately an hour into the incident, at about 8.20 p.m., New South Wales Fire Brigades advised Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport to suspend all flights over Kurnell because of the danger of explosion, and flights were diverted for a more than half an hour.

The swift response by emergency workers and volunteers in containing the blaze also prevented potentially devastating environmental damage. None of this was a fluke or a result of sheer good luck. On the contrary, our firefighters are now extremely well equipped and highly trained to deal with such an emergency.

In fact, New South Wales Fire Brigades conducts fortnightly pre-incident rehearsals with Caltex firefighting staff to ensure that a well planned and co-ordinated response can be put into place in the event of an emergency such as that last night.

There can be no question that the Carr Government's commitment to emergency services is yielding results in the way that was amply demonstrated last night. This commitment has been given yet another boost in this year's budget, with a record \$469 million to be spent on emergency services. That means more pumpers, new and updated fire stations, better resources and better training for our emergency workers and volunteers. After they put in such a terrific effort last night I am sure that all honourable members will join with me in thanking those workers who put their lives on the line to protect our community.

REDFERN RAILWAY STATION

Ms MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Has the Minister directed CityRail staff to evict shopkeepers from Redfern railway station for the Olympic period to prevent locals accessing the station, who, according to a CityRail memo, threaten safety and customer service?

Mr SCULLY: I have given no such direction. However, I will certainly seek advice on whether State Rail has taken any action such as that described by the honourable member.

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO STATEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE NATIONAL PARTY

Mr PRICE: My question without notice is to the Premier. What is the Government's response to recent statements by the Leader of the National Party on the Olympics, the environment and other matters?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that a number of them are on three calls to order.

[Interruption]

Mr CARR: George, don't take it like that! You have been at it again; you have been a very naughty boy. The Government has been in constant communication with the web site of the Leader of the National Party and the Stasi have been picking up the messages. I would expect that with a bit of luck within minutes they will have someone running down the stairs, rather like the honourable member for Gosford doing the Olympic torch caper, with the latest from the National Party web site. But I must make a comment on George's suggestion the other day that \$70 million was allocated in this year's budget for the transportation of IOC committee members during the Olympic Games.

Mr Souris: Not accurate.

Mr CARR: George said the members of the Olympic family—

Mr Souris: You have corrected it now. My point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the National Party wants to take a point of order he should stand in his place and move to the lectern when he is given the call. Does the Leader of the National Party wish to take a point of order?

Mr Souris: It is often difficult to take a point of order because the Premier refuses to obey the standing orders of this House, and it is a pointless exercise.

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

Mr CARR: I have his press release, and the fact is that we are not talking about IOC members.

Mr Souris: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the Leader of the National Party seeking to make a personal explanation or to take a point of order?

Mr Souris: The point of order is that the Premier is abusing the privileges of this House by speaking untruths.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! No point of order is involved. The Leader of the National Party is well aware that if he objects to any statement made in the House he has the opportunity at the end of question time to make a personal explanation. He may avail himself of that opportunity at the appropriate time.

Mr CARR: We all heard the Leader of the National Party on ABC radio this morning saying that privileged members of the Olympic family were being transported at a cost of \$70 million out of the State budget that might have been spent in rural New South Wales.

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

Mr CARR: First, that \$70 million figure provides for the transport of 15,600 athletes and team officials, 17,600 accredited media, 5,000 technical officials and, yes, 1,500 officials of national Olympic committees, IOC heads, heads of State and heads of international sporting federations. Second, that \$70 million is SOCOG money raised from television rights, ticket sales and sponsorship and paid to the Olympic Roads and Traffic Authority [ORTA]; it does not come from the taxpayers.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr CARR: Third, it is provided for in clause 14 of the host city contract, which reads:

Such transportation shall be provided free of charge to the accredited athletes, coaches, officials and media to and from all sites and venues, including the training sites related to the Games.

It is in the host city contract.

Mrs Beamer: Who signed it?

Mr CARR: The honourable member for Mulgoa does not miss a thing; she has anticipated my fourth point: that the host city contract was signed in September 1993 by Premier John Fahey, and Georgie boy was in the Cabinet. The transcript is not yet here. I certainly hope we get it before I have to sit down. Another example of George's intervention in a public debate was provided on 2SM on 15 May. George was asked whether the National Party in New South Wales might be prepared to go it alone. This was his response:

I don't want to rule it in or rule it out. We've ruled it out. At the moment for the long term.

That is what is called a clarifying statement. He was then asked about the Opposition's recent media performances, presumably including his own, and he said:

I'd say finally though I'm just wondering whether in fact there is too much of a difference between the Opposition and the people in government. That's why you can't say much.

I think the transcript is ready: the latest from the cyberspace web site. This is what George said only recently. Honourable members will recall that, on the web site, George offered his emphatic support to the idea of a traffic tunnel under the Blue Mountains.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation from the Opposition benches. If the Leader of the Opposition and the Whips want to discuss party matters, they should do so outside the Chamber rather than talking at the same time to individual members.

Mr CARR: That was the traffic tunnel, but the Leader of the National Party is now entertaining a different idea: he is sponsoring a discussion on the web site about a rather different proposition for the Blue Mountains. The matter arose when he received an inquiry from someone called Colin S., which was followed by inquiries from Jacqui and Jeff De Silva. I hope these people are not provocateurs; I will be very disappointed if I learn that they are. They threw out the bait and George swallowed it. On that web site, Colin S. wrote:

It really frustrates me how politicians ridicule anyone with a new idea.

Mr Hazzard: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport will remain silent.

Mr Hazzard: I draw your attention and the attention of the House to Standing Order 82, which states that personal reflections on members of the House are disorderly other than by substantive motion. We have listened for eight minutes to the Premier attacking the Leader of the National Party. The question was clearly designed to invite a personal attack and the Premier's answer is a personal attack. The Premier has made personal reflections about a member of Parliament. If there is to be any order in this House you must give some sort of direction that this is totally unacceptable behaviour by the Premier or anyone else.

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

Mr Hazzard: There are no rules in here.

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

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair needs no assistance from the honourable member for Mulgoa or the honourable member for Murray-Darling.

Mr CARR: Sad, isn't it?

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

Mr CARR: I remind the House that Colin S. said:

It really frustrates me how politicians ridicule anyone with a new idea. The bush is bleeding! I was reading somewhere that in Japan they pump sewage inland and use it to fertilise their barren lands. It is great for cultivating land. (I thought I might send the article to George Souris for his info. It would be a great election selling point - the National Party reclaiming the desert. I hope they will give us some feedback on this concept.

The idea was supported by Jacqui, who said:

I've heard of something similar in the USA.

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

Mr CARR: Jeff De Silva sent in his message, saying that this would be a great concept for decentralisation. George waded in: he said it was time to do the same thing in government and that he was more than nodding in the direction of the concept of sending sewage across the Blue Mountains. I asked the Sydney Water Corporation for an analysis of that concept, and I have received that analysis of George's latest proposal.

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

Mr CARR: Sydney Water says:

To construct a pipeline to transport a bare 14 percent of Sydney's high quality effluent—

I do not know what it means by that—

from four of its inland treatment plants would cost over \$1 billion.

Sydney Water referred to the need to treat the effluent before it was sent to render it halfway suitable for inland rivers. Sydney Water also said that additional capital expenditure of well over \$1 billion would be required with ongoing additional operational costs of about \$100 million. We must then consider the energy that would be required. To pump 1,000 megalitres of effluent 200 kilometres inland and raise it 1,000 metres would require increased energy use in New South Wales of about 7 per cent, and would result in approximately 2.7 million tonnes of additional carbon dioxide a year. There would then be a storage problem: storage equivalent to one-quarter of the Warragamba Dam would be required when this lugubrious load arrived on the other side of the Mountains. A brief from the Environment Protection Agency entitled "The Use of Sydney's Biosolids and Sewage Effluent for Land or Agricultural Improvement", says that this material would contain contaminants, including salt. That is just what the bush needs: more salt.

It goes on to state that if all of Sydney's effluent were treated and transported west it would result in an extra 250,000 tonnes per year of salt into the Murray-Darling basin. It is no wonder the Opposition's media strategy is to pull George back from the media. That is the only explanation for the latest Rehome Report, which listed the Leader of the National Party, which was once a great party, not at No. 3, 4, 5 or 6, but at No. 12 behind the honourable member for Bathurst, the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the Hon. A. B. Kelly. It is no wonder they are saying that the honourable member is the worst Leader of the National Party-Country Party since Ernest Buttershaw. Those who join me in attending the annual Ernest Buttershaw commemoration lecture will know how obscure and controversial his career was. On behalf of my colleagues, I have a message for George: Keep it up; we love it.

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: Although the Premier has now concluded his answer and returned to his seat it is relevant to point out that his answer took well in excess of the amount of time that a Minister's answer is normally expected to take. There is a normal time for answers to questions without notice. Mr Speaker, in your capacity as the honourable member for Drummoyne, you raised this issue with the former Speaker. Speaker Rozzoli ruled, at your request, that there was an accepted amount of time for a Minister's answer. He said that Ministers should have only an ordinary amount of time in which to provide answers. Today the Premier grossly abused that ruling, and I ask him and his Ministers to bear that ruling in mind in future.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The point of order taken by the honourable member for Gosford would have had some validity prior to the change in the standing orders. At that time question time was subject to a time limit. However, there is now no such time limit: there is a limit only on the number of answers that must be provided. Hence, there is no time limit whatsoever on the length of the answers given by Ministers.

GREYHOUND RACING INDUSTRY ADMINISTRATION

Mr OAKESHOTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development. Five years ago the Minister sacked two men from the Greyhound Racing Control Board for making allegations of corruption in the greyhound racing industry. In light of recent evidence given to the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry, will the Minister admit that he was wrong and take this opportunity to apologise to Mr Ted Humphreys and Mr Peter Atkins, both of whom are in the public gallery today?

Mr FACE: The answer to the first part of the question is no. The answer to the second part of the question is that all the historical information regarding that was forwarded by me to the ICAC some time ago and taken into consideration during the hearings. As I said yesterday, I have no intention of pre-empting the outcome of the ICAC inquiry. When the commissioner publishes her final report I will look at her recommendations.

LIVESTOCK THEFT

Mr MARTIN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Police. What is the latest information on Country Labor's call for the Government to help curb stock theft?

Mr WHELAN: I thank the honourable member for Bathurst for his ongoing commitment to matters affecting rural and regional New South Wales. Recently I received representations from the honourable member for Bathurst and several other Country Labor members regarding a law enforcement issue of particular concern to farmers. Of greatest concern was the theft of livestock, agricultural products such as chemicals, and farm equipment. That type of crime can cripple a farmer's daily work and threaten a family's business and financial security.

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

Mr WHELAN: The Minister for Agriculture and I have forged a partnership between police and farmers to target criminal raids on country properties. I invited the Minister for Agriculture and representatives of the New South Wales Farmers Association, including its President, John Cobb, to discuss these issues. I am pleased to say that the meeting agreed to form a working party to develop viable and cost-effective solutions to agricultural crime. As members of the House would know, the New South Wales Police Service has adopted smarter policing tactics and used leading-edge technology to drive down crime. It is encouraging that smarter policing can be applied to pastoral and agricultural crime.

I am advised that new electronic branding methods are being assessed by the Department of Agriculture, which will give farmers the equivalent of serial numbers for their stock—and I am sure that that is good news for the honourable member for Bathurst. The downturn in home burglary confirmed by this year's Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures shows that smarter policing can drive down crime. Better legislation and improvements in tagging and tracing technology have already resulted in the return of over \$4.4 million worth of stolen property recycled through pawnbrokers.

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

Mr WHELAN: A similar scheme could well bring success to the bush. Stock tags currently used in the European Union contain stores of information, including the ownership and heritage of the animals as well as notes used for food purity. Regional and rural communities can benefit from technological improvements just as much as their city counterparts. Law enforcement is no exception. Safety and security for families in country New South Wales is a priority for every member of the Government and of the Police Service.

I am pleased to announce that the inaugural meeting determined that it would, amongst other things, investigate methods of stock identification, and examine crime strategies to prevent theft of stock, grain, wool, agricultural machinery and chemicals. In addition, the Police Service is working with the Orange Agricultural College to develop a stock theft investigation course. I have asked the working party of four, on which the Farmers Federation is represented, to report back to me by September. I look forward to their recommendations. Earlier today the honourable member for Moree gave notice of a motion and I am sure he would be interested to learn that the investigation of the theft I have referred to—

Mr Slack-Smith: Point of order: I am the member for Barwon, not Moree.

RURAL ROADS FUNDING

Mr BARTLETT: My question without notice is to the Minister for Roads. What is the Government's response to Opposition comments about country roads funding?

Mr SCULLY: Before answering the question I seek leave to table a letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to Steve Bracks, which honourable members should have access to.

Leave not granted.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may lay the document on the table for the information of members.

Mr SCULLY: This roads budget is very generous for rural and regional New South Wales. It will give better road safety for country families and better travel times for freight and tourists. Major Pacific Highway commitments include \$160 million—the fifth instalment in a 10-year commitment—towards 26 projects either under way or planned this year. The biggest project, Yelgun to Chinderah, has been granted \$42.2 million towards the estimated \$334 million and will create 1,400 jobs. The budget allows for completion of the \$67 million road from Raymond Terrace to Karuah, and completion of the \$27 million section from Bray Street to Arthur Street, Coffs Harbour. As with the Coffs Harbour hospital, the Government did not receive any thanks from the honourable member for Coffs Harbour in respect of its commitments to the Pacific Highway.

Other projects include \$14 million for the North Kiama bypass; \$18 million for the west Charlestown bypass; \$9 million for the Great Western Highway at Faulconbridge; and \$7.3 million for the Oak Flats interchange. What has the shadow Minister for Roads, the honourable member for Myall Lakes, had to say about the Government's roads budget? He has been busy spreading obvious misinformation. On radio 2KP-TR in Kempsey yesterday he claimed that country roads would receive just \$150 million in funding this year; that more than \$700 million will be spent on bus transitways entirely in my electorate; and that the \$129 million, five-year Country Timber Bridges program to restore or replace 140 bridges would be extended to a 10-year program. All those claims are absolutely false.

A total of \$1.08 billion will be spent on rural and regional roads this year. More than 60 per cent of the roads budget will be spent on road maintenance and capital works in country New South Wales including \$115 million for rebuilding country roads. The \$770 million bus transitway system, which he referred to as being entirely in my electorate, is actually for the 90-kilometre transitway across a large tract of western Sydney,

which the former Government never even thought about building. The former Government never thought about western Sydney. The \$129 million bridge program is spread over five years. Last Tuesday, during the radio interview, the shadow Minister admitted that he was not aware that the Government has a five-year bridge program. On Dubbo radio he said that there was no proper program to upgrade bridges.

Honourable members may be familiar with Bucketts Way, which I travelled along at the request of the mayor of Gloucester. At a subsequent meeting with the mayor the Federal Minister, John Anderson, turned up with a small cheque. He said, "Here is \$690,000 for the community, for a couple of black spots." The honourable member for Myall Lakes praised him and said, "Congratulations John Anderson. The Federal Government is terrific. That is \$690,000 of terrific Federal money for Bucketts Way." This Government budgeted \$6 million for that roadway, and the shadow Minister criticised us.

The Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development would know that the shadow Minister claimed that the Charlestown bypass would be completed in 2005. False! This morning on his local radio station I said that the honourable member for Myall Lakes should not be interviewed until he has taken a beaker full of truth serum. I said to the radio announcer, "When John Turner has taken a beaker full of truth serum he will tell you some of the honest things about this budget. One, it is fantastic for country New South Wales, and, two, items like the Charlestown bypass are on target." I am disappointed members on the other side of the House are untruthful. It is up to us to make sure that they are called to account.

Mr BARTLETT: I ask a supplementary question. Would the Minister confirm that Bucketts Way, part of which is in the Port Stephens electorate, is getting \$2 million?

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: That did not arise from the Minister's answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I was unable to hear the supplementary question. I ask the honourable member for Port Stephens to repeat it.

Mr BARTLETT: In light of your answer, Minister—

Mrs Skinner: That is not what he said before.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the supplementary question because the honourable member for North Shore is interjecting.

Mr BARTLETT: In light of your answer, Minister, will you confirm that there is \$2 million for Bucketts Way, part of which is in the Port Stephens electorate?

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: The point of order is twofold under the standing orders. First, a supplementary question has to arise from the answer that has been given. Second, a question cannot provide information. The supplementary question provides information about \$2 million for a certain roadway. Accordingly, on both counts the question is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Port Stephens has asked a specific question relating to his electorate, so in that respect it is in order. The question seeks information, so it is also in order in that respect.

Mrs Skinner: Point of order: The question that the honourable member for Port Stephens repeated was not the same as the original supplementary question he asked. He was prompted by the member sitting beside him to change his question. I believe that his question is out of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore has asked me to rule on the first attempt by the honourable member for Port Stephens to repeat his question. As I indicated to the House, I did not hear what the honourable member for Port Stephens said and I asked him to repeat the question. The question he has now asked is the question that is before the House. The supplementary question is in order.

Mr SCULLY: The question relates to Bucketts Way. The honourable member for Myall Lakes alluded inappropriately to the budget figure of \$8.5 million—\$6 million of State Government money and \$2.5 million of local government money, which we made clear. The honourable member for Port Stephens should also be aware that the honourable member for Myall Lakes issued a press release asking where the 3 x 3 funding has gone. I would like to give the honourable member for Myall Lakes a copy of the Constitution, because the High Court has said that it is now unconstitutional. That is where it has gone.

Questions without notice concluded.

CITYRAIL SERVICES

Personal Explanation

Mr O'FARRELL, by leave: In the course of a rambling answer during question time in which the Minister for Transport refused to tell commuters what he will do to fix the rail system in light of the current crisis, the Minister claimed inaccurately that *Hansard* recorded last night that I supported privatisation of the bus industry. *Hansard* does not record that. It records that I highlighted to taxpayers the fact that his acquisition of North and Western bus lines has incurred an \$8 million a year extra liability for the taxpayers of this State, something I will not apologise for.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Tabling of Document: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the incorporation in *Hansard* of a letter from the Deputy leader of the Opposition to the Premier of Victoria

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.23 p.m.]: On a day when 900,000 commuters could not get to work because of a poor quality rail service to the city, I will not apologise for trying to find solutions to the rail crisis addressing this State.

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That the question be now put.

The House divided.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Clerk has drawn my attention to paragraph 5 of Standing Order 405, which provides that closure shall not apply to a motion for the suspension of standing and sessional orders. The Government Whip may move the motion in some other form if he so desires. However, it is not my function to give him advice.

Division called off.

Mr O'FARRELL: Last night 400,000 people were inconvenienced because the Minister, this clown opposite, cannot run a rail system. He cannot give any assurance that commuters in this State can have some certainty about getting to work on time.

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [3.27 p.m.]: I move:

That the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai be not further heard.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

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

Noes, 34

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

Pairs

Mr Gaudry	Mrs Chikarovksi
Mr Hickey	Mr O'Doherty
Mr Knight	Mr J. H. Turner
Ms Meagher	Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

Ms Allan	Mrs Grusovin	Mr E. T. Page
Mr Amery	Mr Hunter	Mr Price
Ms Andrews	Mr Iemma	Dr Refshauge
Mr Ashton	Mr Knowles	Ms Saliba
Mr Bartlett	Mrs Lo Po'	Mr Scully
Ms Beamer	Mr Lynch	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Black	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Mr Brown	Mr McManus	Mr Tripodi
Miss Burton	Mr Markham	Mr Watkins
Mr Campbell	Mr Martin	Mr Whelan
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Mr Crittenden	Mr Moss	
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Mr George	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Torbay
Mr Glachan	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Webb
Mr Hartcher	Mr D. L. Page	Mr Windsor
Mr Hazzard	Mr Piccoli	
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Richardson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Humpherson	Mr Rozzoli	Mr Fraser
Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton	Mr R. H. L. Smith

Pairs

Mr Gaudry
Mr Hickey
Mr Knight
Ms Meagher

Mrs Chikarovksi
Mr O'Doherty
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Document incorporated.

21 March 2000

Hon Steve Bracks MLA
Premier and Treasurer
Parliament House
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Steve

I write with an unusual request.

I am interested in the franchising of public transport in Victoria. I am visiting Melbourne next month to talk to a couple of the private sector companies involved and would appreciate the opportunity to learn of the public sector perspective on the deals.

As I don't know your Transport Minister I thought I should write to you. If the Victorian Labor Government doesn't want to help a NSW Liberal MP I would fully understand!

Kind regards

Barry O'Farrell

PS When is the first official visit to Lebanon?

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Budget Debate: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that on each sitting Friday when debate on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills takes precedence of all other business:

- (1) no member shall be permitted to call attention to the want of a quorum; and
- (2) in the event of a division, the division shall be deferred and conducted after question time at the next sitting of the House.

I indicate to honourable members that this was foreshadowed when the House agreed to a change of the standing orders to provide for Fridays to be strictly limited to dealing with budget debate. There is a 20-minute budget debate for members of Parliament. This will enable greater facilitation of the Parliament, no matter what committees are sitting on Fridays. It will also enable Ministers who have to attend estimates committees on Fridays to do so without any interruption.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [3.38 p.m.]: I propose to move that the motion of the Leader of the House be amended by the addition of the words "and that there be a question time requiring that the Government answer questions." It is interesting that the Government is not even prepared to allow debate on a suspension of standing orders. The Minister is—

Mr THOMPSON (Rockdale) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That the honourable member for Gosford be not further heard.

The House divided.**Ayes, 47**

Ms Allan	Mrs Grusovin	Mr Orkopoulos
Mr Amery	Mr Hunter	Mr E. T. Page
Ms Andrews	Mr Iemma	Mr Price
Mr Ashton	Mr Knowles	Dr Refshauge
Mr Bartlett	Mrs Lo Po'	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Mr Lynch	Mr Scully
Mr Black	Mr McBride	Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Brown	Mr McManus	Mr Stewart
Miss Burton	Mr Markham	Mr Tripodi
Mr Campbell	Mr Martin	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Ms Megarrity	Mr Whelan
Mr Crittenden	Mr Mills	Mr Woods
Mr Debus	Mr Moss	Mr Yeadon
Mr Face	Mr Nagle	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
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Mr Debnam	Ms Moore	Mr Tink
Mr George	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Torbay
Mr Glachan	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Webb
Mr Hartcher	Mr D. L. Page	Mr Windsor
Mr Hazzard	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Richardson	Mr Fraser
Mr Humpherson	Mr Rozzoli	Mr R. H. L. Smith
Dr Kernohan	Ms Seaton	

Pairs

Mr Gaudry	Mrs Chikarovksi
Mr Hickey	Mr O'Doherty
Mr Knight	Mr J. H. Turner
Ms Meagher	Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.****The House divided.****Ayes, 47**

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

Noes, 34

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

Pairs

Mr Gaudry	Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Hickey	Mr O'Doherty
Mr Knight	Mr J. H. Turner
Ms Meagher	Mr R. W. Turner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS**Apple Growing Industry**

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [3.50 p.m.]: I ask the House to give precedence to my motion. A number of meetings around rural New South Wales in the last few days have highlighted the plight of apple producers and the actions of many supermarkets. I believe that motion should take precedence over the other motion of which notice was given earlier, the subject matter of which has been thoroughly debated in this House on a number of occasions.

CityRail Services

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.51 p.m.]: The reason my motion should proceed with urgency was confirmed again in question time. Last night 400,000 people were unable to get to their destinations because of a major failure in the CityRail system. Questions were asked in the House today of the Minister for Transport and ignored by him. The first reason that my motion should receive priority is that the 900,000 people who each day rely on CityRail services to get from home to places of employment, education and recreation and back again deserve to know from the Government and the Minister for Transport what long-term plans are in place to give them some certainty about their journeys.

The second reason this issue should receive urgency is that it is affecting people across the city. It is even affecting people in the electorate of the Minister for Transport. I was rung by Lee Watson of Canley Heights, a constituent of the Minister for Transport. On Monday night it took her more than an hour to get from Town Hall station to Fairfield Station. As a consequence her children remained at school unattended for 45 minutes. That is the human face of the failings the Minister is presiding over in relation to CityRail. This is no blackboard exercise. This is no statistical exercise. The 900,000 people a day who rely on the system deserve some certainty. The system is in crisis. The Minister must today urgently debate the issue and reassure people about the future of the system. Lee Watson said to me today that when she rang Mr Scully's office the staff were not interested. They "sounded bored". Shame on the Minister's staff! She said that she would pay double for fares if the Minister could guarantee that she would get to work.

Mr Martin: Point of order: The honourable member is speaking to the subject matter of the debate rather than why his motion should receive urgency. He is introducing argument.

Ms Moore: To the point of order: I oppose the point of order. I think it is time wasting and trivialising. It is preventing the Deputy Leader of the Opposition from putting arguments before the House as to why his very important motion should be treated as urgent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In essence what the honourable member for Bligh says is correct. However, I uphold the point of order.

Mr O'FARRELL: This matter is urgent because the issue is resulting in massive inconvenience to the people of this State, the people who elect us to this place, the people who pay taxes to ensure that they get some services in response. I was contacted today by a resident of Bardwell Park, which is four miles from the airport, who has taken more than an hour to get from Bardwell Park to North Sydney. This matter is urgent, as I have said before, because 900,000 people a day deserve some certainty about the rail service. Those people and the rest of the State's taxpayers want to know what is happening with CityRail. The on-time running figure for this week is in the seventies. The last time we had that sort of figure the Minister and the Premier called in the heads of CityRail and demanded action. They promised commuters a better deal. Almost three months later that deal has not materialised.

It is urgent today that either the Minister for Transport or the Premier explain why that has not occurred. It is urgent that the Minister explain what he does in these meetings with the heads of CityRail. Almost on a monthly basis he calls in high dudgeon, with great fanfare and terrific publicity, for the heads of CityRail to explain what is going wrong with the rail system. The Parliament needs to know and debate what exactly goes on in those meetings. Do they sit there with a Ouija board, a cup of coffee and a Bex? Nothing is being achieved. In response to the Minister for Agriculture, there is no point debating apple issues and the sale of apples at supermarkets if consumers throughout this State cannot even get to supermarkets because train services will not get them there.

Mr McManus: Point of order: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now debating why we should not be discussing the motion of the Minister for Agriculture. He must explain to the House why his motion should be considered urgent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition may discuss the other motion for urgent consideration.

Mr O'FARRELL: It should be patently obvious to everybody in this Chamber that there is a crisis in rail services across the city. Nothing seems to be being done by the Government to address it. It is causing massive inconvenience to the citizens of this State.

Question—That the motion for urgent consideration of the honourable member for Mount Druitt be proceeded with—agreed to.

APPLE GROWING INDUSTRY

Urgent Motion

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [3.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) supports the \$73.2 million New South Wales apple growing industry, which employs 5,000 people directly and indirectly in areas such as Orange, Batlow, Camden, Bilpin, New England, Bathurst and Forbes;
- (2) applauds the research and advisory work by New South Wales Agriculture to help apple growers increase productivity;
- (3) notes with alarm that apple growers are being offered as little as 32 cents a kilogram by the major supermarket chains, while it costs them as much as \$1 a kilo to grow;
- (4) further notes that the major supermarket chains are charging consumers up to \$4 a kilo for apples; and
- (5) calls on large supermarket chains to immediately end price discrimination against our apple growers.

This urgent motion is very important to regional and rural New South Wales. The apple industry, as the motion states, is worth around \$73.2 million to New South Wales. It is spread across 300 or so farms in the areas referred to in the motion. That number is down from about 450 producers only a short time ago. Together these

farms produce about 77,000 tonnes of apples each year. The apples produced by New South Wales growers are recognised as being of the highest standard. This result has been helped along by the work New South Wales Agriculture is doing, including a range of activities such as evaluating new varieties in various districts. It also implements growing systems to ensure that products meet the market. It conducts research and development into new methods of managing pests and diseases, including an early warning service for disease infections.

The department also develops integrated pest management systems which reduce pesticide input and reduce the cost of production. It provides on-farm advice on all aspects of production such as irrigation, soil management, pruning and tree pruning. We have a deciduous fruits research and development team at the Orange Agricultural Institute, which includes a pathologist, an entomologist, a plant physiologist and a district adviser. The team is supported by fungal bacteria and insect reference collections, standard disease diagnostic services and experimental tree plantings.

Despite all this work, our apple growers are fighting an uphill battle trying to get a fair price for their produce. Apple growers spend an average of \$1 per kilogram introducing their apples. The supermarkets are currently paying them only 32¢ a kilo for their produce. The supermarkets are creating more and more limitations on the standard of apples they accept. At the same time they are demanding lower and lower prices from the producers. Supermarkets are charging anything up to \$4 a kilogram for apples on their shelves—a massive mark-up of almost 1,200 per cent.

Meanwhile, growers are struggling to make a dollar and many are actually losing money in their production. Some are being forced out of the industry as a result. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the supermarkets account for about 70 per cent of total fresh food sales. There is therefore little choice for the growers in terms of other outlets for their produce. The major supermarket chains specify quality needs to growers in terms of colour, size, variety, blemish, cold temperature at delivery and other parameters. Different supermarket chains have different demands. I have heard that some supermarkets are turning down consignments of apples based on very minor issues. I refer honourable members to an article in the *Land* today.

An article in the *Land* today referred to a grower in Orange who had a consignment of apples rejected by a supermarket because the apples were a little off colour; it had nothing to do with the quality that is generally demanded of fresh food. The apple grower did not know where to sell his apples, because supermarkets have different quality guidelines. Supermarkets are pushing down prices, forcing growers out of production and generally treating the industry with contempt. Some growers have changed the variety of their apples in response to market demands, but many simply do not have the capital to replant with new varieties. It is a catch-22 situation. Apple prices in supermarkets are high so consumer demands go down, and supermarkets then claim that there is a surplus.

If a fairer approach were taken towards consumers and growers, supply and demand might be a little more balanced. Instead, major retailers are dictating the market, and distorting it in the process. This is not an isolated incident. Supermarkets make a fortune out of fresh produce. Some supermarkets have a 1,200 per cent mark-up and growers and consumers are the losers. Debate has taken place in this House about the dairy, milk and meat industries, which are classic examples of a David and Goliath situation. But in this case Goliath, the supermarkets, are succeeding in their buying power stranglehold. Primary producers are suffering as a result. I conclude by calling on major supermarkets to immediately end this price discrimination, particularly against apple growers in New South Wales.

I again refer to the article in the *Land*. It is important that producers work together so that they may have some power in the marketplace. I am sure the House will support the motion and send a message to our supermarket chains that apple growers and many other primary producers deserve a fair go from them. Without those suppliers the supermarkets could easily buy their produce interstate or overseas—a situation that should be carefully monitored. This motion deserves the support of the House.

Mr SLACK-SMITH (Barwon) [4.02 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the motion. I am somewhat disappointed that the Minister has only become aware of this problem by reading the *Land*. He obviously does not know his portfolio. If he did, he would realise that the motion should be far broader and should include other industries. However, I am pleased that he has read the *Land* and is now au fait with what is going on in agriculture in New South Wales. I was disappointed also that the Minister made only a passing reference to other aspects of agriculture, yet this problem is rampant in terms of virtually all produce sold in supermarket chains throughout New South Wales.

As the Minister rightly said, 77 per cent of all fresh fruit and vegetables is sold in major supermarkets. I have known for some time that buyers for major supermarkets go down the rows of fresh fruit and vegetables at the markets, choose certain pallets and tell the producers that they will return later to pick them up. The producers put the pallets aside, but often the buyers return later to say that they have found a better deal down the road. In one case of which I am aware a grower had to take about six tonnes of ripe rockmelons home from the markets because the supermarket played him for a sucker. That type of thing happens often, typically in the meat industry.

Over the past five or six years some of the major supermarket chains have asked smaller operators and feedlots to become accredited, which is quite expensive. The supermarkets have told the operators that they would purchase livestock at a certain price. However, after the operators have forked out money for accreditation the supermarkets have said that the livestock did not meet their changed criteria and should be taken elsewhere. Producers are totally committed to one niche market, hopefully at a premium price, but are often rejected by supermarket chains. They receive no compensation and many feedlots have had to close down. There is no competition because 77 percent of all fruit and vegetables in New South Wales is sold to supermarkets.

Previously many people shopped close to their homes at small corner stores which were run as family businesses. However, they now choose to go to larger supermarkets, where they can buy everything in one place. That is the dilemma facing many smaller operators today. Many have gone to the wall because they cannot compete with the big operators. It is a terrible shame. Producers are being fleeced so badly by supermarket chains that they are finding it very difficult to adapt to new markets, new varieties of produce and new farming techniques that come onto the market every year because they do not have the necessary income and capital. As a result New South Wales is being left behind in the export market. It is a serious problem.

Supermarkets should consider the long-term viability of those producers, who in most cases are very efficient by world standards. However, efficiency is not enough if one cannot receive a proper return for a quality article. Other countries have been able to support industries in such a way that producers are able to receive a good return for their produce and can therefore be more competitive by undertaking research and development. They are better able to beat New South Wales to many of the markets that are opening up throughout the world.

Today we are exporting oranges to California. I commend the Department of Agriculture and the producers for that because it is a tremendous boost to our exports. However, many producers in other industries are unable to do that. The apple industry is a very small part of the fresh fruit and vegetable industry throughout New South Wales, but \$73.2 million per year is not a bad effort, with 5,000 people taking home a pay cheque. It provides employment opportunities, either directly or indirectly. When one multiplies the \$73 million by four, a substantial amount of money is being generated through this industry alone.

This problem occurs in Orange, Camden, Batlow, Bilpin, New England, Bathurst and Forbes. It spreads across the State to towns that desperately need those industries to help their economies. Major supermarket chains pay 32¢ a kilogram but sell the produce for \$4.00 a kilogram. That is pretty rich. I understand that they have to compensate for losses, spoils and damage, but not to that extent, and if they do, they should examine their packing and freight structure because that type of mark-up is unacceptable. Old, bruised, spoiled and otherwise damaged produce will always have to be thrown away. However, I agree with the Minister and I support the Government in this matter. The Opposition believes that producers are getting the rough end of the deal, and it is giving both sides of the House the pip.

Mr MARTIN (Bathurst) [4.10 p.m.]: I support the urgent motion moved by the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation, and I welcome contributions from Coalition members. However, the honourable member for Barwon implied in his speech that the New South Wales Department of Agriculture was not supporting the industry adequately. The honourable member said that other areas receive research and development assistance and that perhaps the department could do more for the agriculture industry. I suggest that the New South Wales Department of Agriculture assists all agricultural industries, particularly the apple industry. It is time to focus on the apple industry and to consider all developments in that area. The same problems will occur in the dairy industry if the deregulation proposal proceeds. We have almost reached that point, and the retail chains will reap the benefits at the expense of the farmers.

It has been a good season, particularly in my area, and farmers are expected to make a good return. However, apples have already retailed at \$4 a kilogram, with the retail chains claiming that the drop in price is due to a surplus. Those chains have caused the drop in demand; there is no surplus. No more apples are

available this year than last year, despite the fact that it was a great season for quality produce in the Central West. The retail chains have driven down demand by selling at the ridiculous price of \$4 a kilogram, a price that most working producers cannot handle. That is the sort of underhanded tactic that the retailers use. Some 77 per cent of the industry is controlled by the major retail chains. The Federal Government recently tried to introduce legislation to break that domination, as has occurred in the United States of America and Japan. However, that is considered to be too hard to achieve in Australia, so we must cope with the present situation.

I talked today to Borry Gartrell, an apple grower from my area and a well-known figure in the Central West. He is a former councillor on Orange City Council and well known to the honourable member for Orange; it is unfortunate that the honourable member cannot be present for this debate. However, I take more than a passing interest in the Orange electorate and I receive many inquiries from its residents. Borry told me that this year he will produce 300 tonnes of apples and that he estimates a loss of about \$30,000. He is so frustrated by the attitude of the retail chains that he has resorted to loading up his truck and virtually selling door-to-door to small retailers. He supplies the Tuckerbin at Springwood and other small retail outlets around Sydney. That is difficult and time-consuming work, but such is his frustration.

Growers recently organised a major meeting in Orange in an effort to bring the matter to a head. At that meeting, the New South Wales Chairman of the Apple and Pear Growers Association gave the example of Pink Lady apples, a premium apple variety, which were sold recently for \$30 a case. The buyers representing the major chains—Woolworths, Coles, Franklins and so on—put growers on notice some weeks ago that they would receive about \$26 a case the next time they offered those apples for sale. The major retailers have already worked out their marketing strategy, which has nothing to do with the workings of the free market. If we analyse the process closely from the farm gate to the markets, we may see that some buyers and agents have something to answer for as there is anecdotal evidence to the effect that some are guilty of collusion at the expense of the growers.

It is important that the Parliament sends the message that something must be done to redress this situation and ensure that those at the bottom of the scale receive just recompense. The Opposition acknowledges that our rural industries are extremely efficient, and the apple industry is no exception. However, it is pointless for growers to improve their efficiency if they are then screwed by the big operators. That is basically what is happening at the moment, and we need to help growers wherever we can. I am delighted to support the Minister's motion. [*Time expired.*]

Mr PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [4.15 p.m.]: I agree with the terms of the Government's motion. What is happening to apple producers as a result of supermarket dominance—there is only a small number of retail players—is terrible. I draw the attention of the House to a similar example on my family's property. We grow 250 acres of onions a year, and at harvest time last summer we were forced to plough in about 30 acres of purple and white onions because the large supermarkets were importing them from the United States of America, presumably at a fixed price. We could not even harvest our onions because the costs were too great. The large retailers must have signed contracts with American suppliers, and that is absolutely disgusting. I do not know whether the Federal or the State governments can do something about it, but Australian producers are being left in an extremely vulnerable position. We would have been able to supply the produce at a much cheaper price than the American suppliers, yet we could not give our onions away. Some producers who had already harvested their onions had to dump bins of perfectly good produce.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! It being after 4.15 p.m., the question is: That private members' statements be noted.

Mr DEBUS: I seek leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

COMMENTS BY THE HONOURABLE C. J. S. LYNN

Personal Explanation

Mr DEBUS, by leave: I seek to make a personal explanation about remarks made in another place that reflect upon my character and personal integrity. On 23 May 2000, the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn made comments in another place that impugned my character in the grossest and most fanciful terms. The Hon. C. J. S. Lynn sought to depict me as a Machiavellian figure, conspiring behind the scenes to arrange for the sacking of the Chief Executive Officer—

Mr Brogden: Point of order: I seek your clarification as to whether the Minister has the right to refer to a matter dealt with in another place.

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

Mr DEBUS: Where else would I make my personal explanation? The Hon. C. J. S. Lynn sought to depict me as a Machiavellian figure, conspiring behind the scenes to arrange for the sacking of the Chief Executive Officer of the Wentworth Area Health Service, Dr Elizabeth Barrett. My motivation for such an action he leaves obscure. The idea that I would do such a thing offends and insults me. Dr Elizabeth Barrett and I have had a most cordial relationship and I wish her nothing but the best in her career. Since 1995, I have worked tirelessly to ensure that the Blue Mountains, my electorate, is provided with better health funding. I have sought to bring to the attention of successive health Ministers the needs of the Blue Mountains. I am happy to say that they have been most receptive and, in this respect, the facts speak for themselves. Every year since 1995, without exception, the Blue Mountains hospital has had a significant increase in its day-to-day recurrent and capital funding. This budget allocates \$3 million for a mental health acute inpatient unit—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is straying outside the leave of a personal explanation.

Mr DEBUS: Campaigning for funding is entirely different from seeking to interfere in the internal, personal decisions of another Minister's department. The suggestion that I would do such a thing is a quite outrageous slur. Even if I were silly enough to do that, it is a slur on the Director-General, Mick Reid, and the Minister for Health to think that they would be silly enough to do what I suggested. They would show me the door, and rightly so. I am a Minister with a busy portfolio.

Mr Brogden: Point of order: As you said the few moments ago, the Minister is straying outside the leave of a personal explanation. He has clearly refuted the claims as he sees them, and he is now setting out his own credentials on a policy issue in his electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is about to conclude his personal explanation.

Mr DEBUS: If the member representing the Lithgow area were to come to me and say, "I am not getting on with the governor of Lithgow gaol, could you sack him please"—

Mr Brogden: Point of order—

Mr DEBUS: I will not say anything further about that. Another personally offensive remark by the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn is the imputation that I do not keep promises I make to my electorate. The people of the Blue Mountains know that when I make promises about services in the Blue Mountains I work until those promises are delivered. In the 1995 election campaign I made several dozen very specific and clear promises and made sure that every one of them was delivered. The Hon. C. J. S. Lynn claimed specifically that I had promised a heliport for Katoomba hospital.

Mr R. H. L. Smith: Point of order: The Minister is required to explain how his reputation was impugned, not to go into great detail about promises he made in the election campaign and the like. He should not make a general statement. He is required to specifically explain how his character was impugned.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair normally allows a member who is making a personal explanation to give a short example of how he claims his character has been impugned. However, the member should not give numerous examples.

Mr DEBUS: There is but one example here. It is specific and central to the propositions put forward by the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn in the upper House. He said that I promised a heliport at Katoomba and that I had in some way failed because it had not been built. As any true local person from the Blue Mountains would know—

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: You have ruled on many occasions that a member is entitled to say how his character was impugned and leave it at that. The sort of indulgence being enjoyed by the Minister is not extended to any other member.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford is correct. I expect the Minister to comply with the standing orders and explain to the House how his character has been impugned.

Mr DEBUS: I repeat: I have proven that I have kept my undertakings over many years in the Blue Mountains.

Mr Brogden: Point of order—

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

Mr Brogden: Yes, there is.

Mr DEBUS: There is no point of order, do not be ridiculous.

Mr Brogden: You are not the Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may continue.

Mr DEBUS: I have proven that I have keep my undertakings and because I have lived and breathed in the Blue Mountains for over 20 years I was elected last year with a ringing increased majority.

Mr Brogden: Point of order: Standing Order 70 states:

A Member may, when there is no question before the Chair—

But there was a question before the Chair, which was: That private members' statements be noted.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I granted the Minister an indulgence in the same way as I granted the honourable member for Murrumbidgee an indulgence by allowing him to speak on the urgent motion after the time at which the sessional orders require that business be interrupted.

Mr Brogden: The standing order provides:

... with the leave of the Speaker, explain a matter of a personal nature. A personal explanation shall not be debated.

We have heard about seven minutes of intense debate on this matter, and that is way beyond the provisions of the standing order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Pittwater is perfectly correct. The Minister is not at liberty to debate the matter by giving examples ad infinitum. I ask the Minister to conclude his personal explanation.

Mr DEBUS: I conclude by saying that over the years I have endured many fables, rumours and taunts from members of the Liberal Party. This attack by the Hon. C. J. S. Lynn in the upper House is merely the latest round of misinformation in a mock Liberal campaign.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLSWORTHY LAND USE

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [4.23 p.m.]: For many years the Department of Defence has had a strong presence in the Holsworthy area, which is within my electorate of Menai. Military establishments have been installed in some parts of the area and the Defence Housing Authority has had a strong presence as the owner of homes for defence personnel and of other land that has no form of construction on it. Much of this land has been formally used as open space playing fields and other parts of the land has been used more informally as open space general community purposes. Recently it has become clear that the Commonwealth Government is intent on a grab for cash. It has attempted to sell every possible piece of land, regardless of community opinion or the impact on the community of the sale of the land.

The first instance I became aware of concerned the Yulong Playing Fields and included land on which the Moorebank Public School is situated. I have approached the Minister for Education and Training to seek relocation of the staff and students of that school into new facilities at Wattle Grove because—you guessed it—

the Commonwealth Government is literally selling the land from underneath them and they will lose the Yulong Playing Fields as well. Not too far away, near the Holsworthy railway station, there are playing fields and—you guessed it—the Commonwealth Government wants to sell off those fields which have suddenly been termed "underutilised". The Commonwealth Government wants to erect a massive housing development right near the railway station.

A third matter, and the matter that is causing the most angst in the community, is a development application for 70 housing lots on a 5.32 hectare site which fronts Heathcote Road, Huon Crescent and Gemas Street, Holsworthy. The Department of Defence sought consent to subdivide that land without any thought to the consequences on the local community. That open space land is used by residents and is located near the local council swimming pool, Holsworthy High School and Holsworthy Primary School. The school population in that area is still experiencing strong growth. The new Wattle Grove school will not substantially decrease the projected numbers especially because the students from Moorebank Public School will also be accommodated there. The department has not only disregarded the views of the community, it has recently sold the site to Mirvac Homes: a clear indication of its intention. A meeting of residents with Liverpool City Council considered the development application and the report of that meeting states:

LOSS OF COMMUNITY RESOURCE

The currently open space area is used by residents as a park and it has proven a useful resource for exercise, walking pets, safe area for children to play, ride bikes etc. lack of adequate alternative sites within the immediate area. Forces additional use of the Wattle Grove Shopping Centre to provide activity sites particularly for the youth population.

At Engadine, which is not too far from my electorate, there is a wonderful example of co-operation between a local council and the State Government. A similar piece of land was developed for valuable community use and offered a range of different passive activities. The Commonwealth Government could have done that for a community in which it has been a huge presence for so long. It could turn land over for community use, as have the State Government and the local council by way of compromise. The report on the development application meeting also stated:

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT

Concern for the established trees and the fauna which occupies the area at the present time. Erosion of space, privacy and open space areas. Noise pollution from increased traffic noise. Blocks are very small and there is concern that the new area will be out of keeping with the area.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Perception that the increased population will lead to an increase in vandalism and crime. People walking through the school grounds in lieu of the open space brings extra concern for school security.

Mr Brogden: Why don't your mates on Sutherland council refuse the rezoning?

Ms MEGARRITY: It has nothing to do with Sutherland council, it is not in that council's area. The honourable member must not have been paying attention.

Mr Brogden: Well, Wollongong council.

Ms MEGARRITY: It is not in that council's area either. We have clearly shown that the Federal Government has disregarded the views and concerns of people in the area who will be affected by the extra traffic, which will impact on a significant number of children. I have mentioned that the local pool and two schools are located nearby. It is time the Federal Government started listening to people and stopped taking them for granted.

WINNERERREMY BAY LAND USE

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [4.28 p.m.]: When I was elected to Parliament four years ago I introduced a private member's bill resulting from my attempts, along with those of the Pittwater community, to save land in Winnererremy Bay, Mona Vale, from sale by the Department of Public Works for what was likely to be medium-density housing. Sadly, the Carr Government had absolutely no regard for this important foreshore land. The only thing it was interested in was selling the land and receiving a financial return without considering the needs of the community or the environment. Because of the Government's control of private members' business the private member's bill was never debated.

However, I am pleased to say that Pittwater Council, under the leadership of Mayor Patricia Giles, put its money where its mouth is and moved to buy the land. In doing so, it was forced to sell its depot to raise the necessary funds. The site of the depot, which was further away and more appropriate for housing, is now in the process of being sold. The council expects that the sale of the land will raise between \$15 million and \$15.5 million, the majority of which will be used to buy and outfit a new depot. That could reasonably be expected to leave Pittwater Council with a profit of approximately \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

I congratulate Pittwater Council for saving this important piece of land, which is located on the foreshores of Pittwater. It is one of the few open public spaces left for the community to enjoy. In contrast to the callous indifference of the Carr Government, Pittwater Council has worked hard to ensure the preservation of the land. In recent years the council has also been active in public works. Those works include upgrading the northern end of the Wakehurst Parkway, which is one of the gateways to Pittwater. The council and local community organisations have built a clubhouse for the Narrabeen Sharks Rugby League Club. At present the council is working with the Department of Sport and Recreation, Manly-Warringah Basketball Association and Academy Netball to build a four-court indoor basketball and netball facility on the grounds of Narrabeen Sports High School. The council has also been for other substantial public works projects in the local community.

Today I call on Pittwater Council to consider using the profit it will gain from the housing developments at Winnererremy Bay to build an Olympic swimming pool in the Pittwater local government area. Unlike Warringah and Manly, Pittwater does not have such a facility. Some people might argue that with several coastal beaches, most of which have ocean pools, Pittwater does not need an Olympic swimming pool. I disagree. In this day and age there is a need in our community for an Olympic pool and, clearly, it should be an indoor heated pool. Such a facility is needed by individuals in the community, by athletes, who are presently forced to train at Warringah and Manly and beyond, and by our schools.

Mrs Lo Po': Why don't you tell the council?

Mr BROGDEN: That is what I am doing now. I am pleased the Minister is listening. The local schools desperately need a swimming pool facility. They do not have a local pool for swimming carnivals or for their future swimming stars. They do not have an opportunity to make use of an Olympic pool in their community. Not all children can swim successfully in the ocean; the ocean requires a different style of swimming. I urge Pittwater Council to use the \$1.5 million to \$2 million that will be left over from the sale and redevelopment of Winnererremy Bay to move forward on this matter. The far northern beaches are blessed with a beautiful coastline, but we are disadvantaged by poor public infrastructure. This is a great opportunity for Pittwater Council to set that right. I suggest that a good site for such a facility would be adjacent to Pittwater Rugby Park, the home of the Warringah Rats, which has parking and public transport nearby. Construction of a swimming pool in that area of Warriewood and Narrabeen will enhance what has become a sporting and entertainment facility for the people of Pittwater. In addition, visitors to the caravan park across the road would ensure ongoing high patronage.

JOY MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Ms SALIBA (Illawarra) [4.33 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a situation that I believe is detrimental to workers' rights and conditions and that impacts on the working-class people of my electorate. The Joy Manufacturing dispute, which began in September 1999, has escalated in recent weeks. On 13 April workers were locked out of their workplace. The dispute began when negotiations commenced in September 1999 to prepare a new enterprise bargaining agreement. However, in early February the company put forward four separate enterprise bargaining agreements for each section of the company. The workers, who felt this was detrimental to their bargaining power, disputed that action. Since the workers were locked out of their workplace, the company has started to transfer unfinished jobs from the site. Unfortunately, some of those jobs have landed in my electorate.

Last Thursday I joined a picket line at a factory. Other members of Parliament and I stood with the workers of Joy Manufacturing. Members of the community were also there to show their support for the workers and to protest against the deterioration of workers' rights and entitlements through the divide-and-conquer actions of industry. At some stage, a logical decision has to be made to protect these workers. Andrew Wylie, branch secretary of the Australian Workers Union, has been working very hard on this matter. However, the company has imposed an injunction on the union. If any union representatives front up on the picket line they will be arrested for trespassing. Unfortunately, that limits the union's input. However, the injunction does not prevent the community from getting out there and supporting workers.

As long as the Federal Government allows these kinds of bargaining agreements, workers' conditions and rights will continually decline. The stripping back of the Federal system ensures that awards will provide only a safety net of minimum wages and conditions, with the removal of basic protections and safeguards for the most vulnerable workers. This action by the company is not about looking after workers; it is about exploiting workers. The time must come when industry has to sit down with the unions and reach an appropriate agreement that will benefit both workers and companies. I will continue to support these workers in their plight. I will continue to stand on the picket line as long as necessary to ensure that their rights are protected and their conditions are not eroded.

COLO VALE AND HILL TOP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [4.37 p.m.]: Colo Vale and Hill Top communities have been betrayed in the latest budget. The local schools will continue to flood, and the students, in their current accommodation, will continue to freeze and fry. I take the House back three years to when representatives from Hill Top and Colo Vale parents and citizens associations joined in lobbying for desperately needed new and improved classroom facilities at both schools. The communities wanted to lobby in tandem because the villages are only a few kilometres apart and have much in common. They decided to progress their requirements for new school buildings together so that one would not succeed at the expense of the other. I commend them for that.

The communities conducted a professional lobbying campaign and worked hard to focus on merit. They did not want to get ahead of anyone else who had a greater need. However, the need for new and improved facilities at both schools was undeniable. With a growing population in both villages and in an area that has extreme climate conditions, the schools comprised a sea of demountables and sub-standard accommodation. We were pleased with the announcement three budgets ago that the master plan for construction at the Colo Vale and Hill Top schools had been approved. For reasons of convenience and, I suppose, logistical ease the construction at both schools was divided into stages one and two. At that time we heard some alarm bells and thought we had better make sure that at the completion of stage one—that is, the construction of public buildings: assembly halls, canteens, covered outdoor learning areas [COLAs], administration facilities and some toilet facilities—stage two was not forgotten.

We started a letter-writing campaign. We started to seek assurances from the Minister that stage two would be a natural follow-on. If any of those people in the school community had any inkling of what was in store they would have asked that the construction of the buildings be reordered. What they desperately need is new classrooms. The place where children spend most of the day, every day, is in the classrooms. The children are still in demountable classrooms. If the community had their preference they would have asked to have the classrooms before the public buildings, and for a reordering of stage two and stage one.

However, there was no consultation about that, which again led us to believe that there was no doubt that stage two would follow. Nevertheless, we continued to write. Around election time, funnily enough, various Ministers came to see us and made all sorts of promises. People began to feel that perhaps stage two would become a reality. What they did not know is how cynical the Minister for Education and Training is. I gave the Minister notice that I would speak about this matter this afternoon. I gave his office notice about this matter specifically. Yet neither the Minister nor the Parliamentary Secretary is here. I wrote again in February.

Mr Nagle: You know that the Minister is tied up. Come on!

Ms SEATON: I hear that the Minister is tied up. Let that be recorded in *Hansard*. The Minister does not believe that the needs of Hill Top and Colo Vale schools are important.

Mr Nagle: Point of order: I cannot see how the honourable member could take what I just said to mean that the Minister does not care. The fact is that he is tied up in a meeting. If he could be here, he would be here. The honourable member is misleading the House. She should be ashamed of herself.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Beamer): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Auburn should realise that if he interjects, the honourable member for Southern Highlands is likely to misconstrue his interjection.

Ms SEATON: It is important that every Minister take the opportunity to be in the House to respond to constituency issues raised by members in Parliament.

Mr Nagle: Just like when your Government was in. When the Premier was your member he didn't do anything about those schools. John Fahey was the member and he did not lift a finger for those schools. For seven years he was in control and in government and he did not do one thing. It took the Labor Government to help you out.

Ms SEATON: There is no reason why the Minister should not be here if I have given him notice. I draw the attention of the House to a very professional presentation made by the parents of Hill Top and Colo Vale schools, whose work is being subjected to disrespect by members on the other side of the Chamber at the moment. This presentation goes through the needs of those schools. It talks about the state of the buildings at the moment, which is underlined by a letter I received from six-year-old Claire Economus, which states:

To Ms P Seaton. Why aren't our classrooms being built? Every hot day I have to share my classroom with my sister's class. Because their brains are being fried in the hot demountables. From Claire 6 years old.

The parents involved in those school communities have put this professional presentation together, two copies of which have been given to the Minister and his office. The Minister's office has not had the courtesy to respond to the presentations. I am glad that the Minister has now arrived in the Chamber because he can now hear about it. These buildings are substandard. I draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that the permanent toilet building at Hill Top school, which was bulldozed as part of stage one on the expectation of the completion of stage two, has not been replaced. There is now no sign of stage two, and there is a substandard facility on the site instead. The children at Hill Top and Colo Vale schools are extremely disappointed that stage two of the capital works at both of those schools was not reflected in the budget. I seek the Minister's assurance that that will not be the case next year, and that next year we will see the completion of both stage one and stage two at both schools.

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training) [4.42 p.m.]: I was at a meeting. I did not quite hear everything the honourable member had to say, but my staff did tell me that she was on her feet. She had arranged for me to be down here, so I came down to this Chamber to reply. Yet when I walked in I faced a barrage of attack for apparently not fronting up. I have news for the honourable member: Ministers have lots of things to do. It seems to me that the honourable member's presentation this afternoon is symptomatic of most of her representations: she spends more time criticising, seeking glory for herself and big-noting herself than she does making representations on behalf of her constituents.

In relation to Hill Top and Colo Vale schools, let it be on the record that the former Premier, John Fahey, represented that area for seven years. For seven years while he was in Government those communities required school facilities. Yet it was this Government that proposed the building of those schools. I went out there and met with the communities. We built stage one for both Hill Top and Colo Vale. That is more than the Coalition, when in government, ever did for that area and that electorate. We have also constructed classrooms at Appin and Bargo public schools and a covered outdoor learning area—

Ms Seaton: Federal funding.

Mr AQUILINA: That is nonsense. It is the State Government that allocated the funding. The Federal Government does not allocate money to individual schools. I allocate the money to individual schools. It has nothing to do with the Federal Government. It is about time members opposite understood that.

Ms Seaton: Are you going to guarantee stage two?

Mr AQUILINA: She does not want to hear about Hill Top and Colo Vale. I was going to give her an answer, but she continues to interrupt me and I will run out of time.

Ms Seaton: Will you guarantee stage two?

Mr AQUILINA: Stage two is in the planning. They will get their money eventually. But she is not interested in that, she is interested in promoting herself. I am not interested in responding to the honourable member. I will respond to the constituents.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES PROGRAM

Mr NAGLE (Auburn) [4.44 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Education and Training. The West Auburn Primary School has 21 demountable classrooms and the Minister has now moved to assist that school to build new classrooms so that the brains of the students in them will not fry in summer. I thank the Minister for the great job he has done at West Auburn Primary School. I am glad that the Minister is here because I want to thank him for the funding assistance he has approved under the New South Wales Community Languages Program. I advise the House that the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. John Aquilina, has approved funding assistance under the New South Wales Community Languages Program to a number of schools.

The funds will assist to maintain and develop languages other than English in community-based schools operating outside regular school hours. The program is administered by the Minister through his Department of Education and Training. It is implemented through the State by community organisations such as those to which I will refer. I congratulate the schools and organisations on receiving this assistance. Honourable members may be aware that the seat of Auburn has 48 different nationalities and that 50 per cent of the population are from non-English speaking backgrounds— Irish, Scottish and Welsh. They have difficulties because the only chance in life they will get is to learn about life through the English language system.

An organisation called the Islamic Cultural Centre, incorporating the Alfaisal Islamic and Arabic schools in Australia under the chairmanship of Mr Shafiq Khan, has received \$30,485 as part of its per capita first payment. The second payment will be made in August 2000. This organisation is at the forefront of good education for non-English speaking members of the Muslim community and their children. That organisation does a great deal of work, as does the Association of Bhanin El-Minieh Australian Arabic Community Welfare Centre, which has received \$2,015. These organisations are opposite one another, and both of them fill a great void in the Arabic and Lebanese communities. They do fantastic work.

I have visited those organisations and I have seen the great work they do. They run education programs of all descriptions, but their English training programs are important to assist newcomers to this country to learn English so that they can get a start in life. The Auburn Arabic School, under the guidance of Mr Muhieddine, has received \$7,410 to conduct English courses. The Auburn Ataturk Primary School in Rawson Street, under the guidance of Mr Sengul, received \$6,207. The Islamic Science Culture and Art Association received \$1,430. The Korean Catholic Language School in Carnarvon Street, Silverwater, one of the up-and-coming schools in the electorate, received \$9,717. That school does magnificent work for the Korean community. Its students come from all over Sydney. The Lidcombe Russian School, under the guidance of Mr Minchenko, received a sum of \$455; its program is already up and running.

The Moslem Alawy Society Limited, under the chairmanship of Mr Saadat, received \$6,597. I congratulate also Mrs Ucel and the New South Wales Turkish Educational and Cultural Association, who do a great deal of fine work for the Turkish community. They received \$6,045. The Tamil Study Centre, Homebush, is a new community in the Auburn electorate, and I congratulate it on the great deal of work it is doing. That organisation received \$6,272. The Trustees of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Australia, under the chairmanship of Reverend Chorkawyj, received \$2665. I could refer to many other organisations.

The reason these facts are important is that these organisations appreciate and understand the important need for every penny they get. They spend long hours at fundraising functions, holding raffles and dinner parties and all sorts of things to raise money. When they get a bit of help from government, whether it be a Liberal-National government or a Labor government, they appreciate it because they know the worth of teaching the English language in those areas. I commend these organisations and the Minister for Education and Training.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.49 p.m.]: The contribution by the honourable member for Auburn was interesting. I recall when I was teaching that the children who attended community schools on Saturdays—in my area it was mainly Italian and Greek—usually excelled in English at school. The educational value of any subject is transferable. Communities that provide extra education to their children, whether in their own language or in another language, contribute to the transferable value of education. Parents see this value in other subjects also: when children learn music they excel at maths because the two subjects are linked. Once again this reinforces the point that educational principles are transferable across the board. I congratulate the honourable member for Auburn, who talks with great expertise about the communities within his electorate and those who lead them. He is a good member.

BATLOW APPLE PRICES

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [4.51 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an issue that covers both State and Federal parliamentary arenas, that is, the concern of Batlow apple growers in the Burrinjuck electorate, particularly in relation to the mark-up of apple prices in retail outlets. People may know that Batlow is a small community, but it is a vital one. It is situated in one of the more scenic sections of my electorate, in the mountains halfway between Tumut and Tumbarumba. Currently apple growers are selling their produce to retailers for between 40¢ and 60¢ a kilogram. I am sure everyone appreciates how concerned and disheartened they are when they see retailers selling apples to the public for up to \$3 and \$4 a kilogram.

Price mark-up for apples is a problem in itself, but so too are the sometimes dire ramifications of high retail prices. High prices mean turnover is slower and slow turnover means fruit remains in shops longer, thus compromising the quality of that fruit. Therefore, the consumer is compromised by having to pay top dollar for a substandard product. Batlow is renowned all over Australia not only for its beauty but also for the quality of the apples the region produces. I visit Batlow frequently and speak to many of the apple growers, and I can see how proud they are of their products. They are horrified that at times a retail outlet will be selling a product they sold to it a month earlier.

Mr Dick Sedgwick is President of the New South Wales Apple and Pear Growers Association. He has been growing apples in Batlow for more than 40 years. He and other apple growers in the Batlow region, such as the Vanzellas, Peter Wilkinson and others, have taken great pains to express their concerns to me and to other community members. Mr Sedgwick produces 1,500 tonnes of apples, or 80,000 boxes of apples, each year from his 50-acre orchard. Mr Sedgwick employs four permanent staff and around 30 additional people at harvest time. This year he anticipates selling around \$1 million worth of apples, but he will only just break even. The question remains: Why is this so?

Unfortunately, many reasons are stacked against our apple growers. They are inflicted with the cost of expensive licences and high workers compensation premiums—matters that are raised with me time and again—not to mention being susceptible to the whims of nature. For example, apple growers are concerned continually about fire blight outbreaks. Fire blight is a disease that affects New Zealand apple crops. Naturally, our apple growers are concerned about that disease reaching Australian farms and for that reason do not want those New Zealand crops imported into Australia. Quality assurance programs to ensure a high-quality marketable product come at a price. The value normally achieved in the profit margin is swallowed up by such processes.

Our apple growers are fighting hard also to compete with cheap imports and employee-related costs such as high payroll tax in New South Wales. These farmers certainly look forward to any reductions in payroll tax that might come their way. Mr Sedgwick rightly wonders whether other fruit and vegetable producing nations exporting their products to Australia are so highly taxed—to the hilt, as he put it. Major chain supermarkets in Australia are controlling fruit and vegetable markets by purchasing up to 80 per cent of produce through sheer bulk-buying power. In other industrialised countries, like the United States of America, laws are in place restricting the dominance of chain stores.

The Government must protect our producers not only from cheap imports but also from the crippling impact of bulk buyers being able to monopolise the markets. The New South Wales Parliament should note these concerns, aim to free up the taxes these primary producers face daily, and encourage these good Australian citizens to continue to produce so efficiently. They are trying to do the right thing by their country. New South Wales should try to do the right thing by them.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.56 p.m.]: Without intending a pun, apples certainly are the flavour of the day and the week. This House has heard four contributions this week about the apple industry. These private members' statements interrupted a debate on the apple industry. As someone who is not closely involved with the industry and who represents an electorate that buys apples and does not grow them, I am interested in this issue. I look forward to the contribution of the honourable member for Burrinjuck in the debate about the apple industry. As four members of Parliament this week have spoken about the same issue, the Parliament should certainly address it.

TRUSCOTT STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [4.57 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a wonderful school in my electorate, Truscott Street Public School, and the magnificent work it carries out in the delivery of public education in New South Wales. The school has within it a special unit comprising 24 students with special needs. It has also a dedicated, hardworking and professionally talented staff under the fine leadership of principal Greg Jones. Its parent body is supportive and always wants to do the best thing by the school. The parent body operates in a community that values Truscott Street Public School highly as an excellent example of public education and a place where parents are happy to have their children educated. It is truly one of the better schools.

I am lucky to have in my electorate a fine range of public education primary and high schools. Truscott Street Public School has displayed its excellence in many areas, including indigenous education. It has a thoughtful and sensitive indigenous education program in place. The school has always provided a safe and

violence-free environment. I have been especially pleased by the emphasis the principal gives to that policy. It must be said also that the school ensures that every opportunity is available for all students, including those in the special unit and others in the school with particular needs. It is wonderful to see mainstream education being provided as a matter of course in the normal school day with children from the special unit coming into every school class and being accepted as a natural and proper part of the classroom work, as indeed they should be.

The other aspect that really sets the school apart is the way in which it has embraced information technology. A huge amount of work has been done at the school. The school is strongly committed to utilising technology to achieve learning outcomes. It has embraced lifelong learning and learning together in partnership with students, staff and parents. The information technology work has been shown in four main areas. First, all students access information technology to enhance learning and teaching outcomes across key learning areas. Second, teachers, students, parents and administration are developing training in information technology. So it is not just classroom-based; it is right across the board. Third, the school is very actively establishing links with the local IT community. Fourth, computer-based technologies are in place to locate, evaluate, access, manipulate, create, explore, store and retrieve information across the key learning areas.

The whole school is involved in the IT project, which covers the whole curriculum. That provides focus, support and drive for the learning that occurs at the school. A fine example is the school's recent compact disc production, which will be used for future learning. I was especially pleased to host a visit by the Premier to the school just last week. He was very interested and fascinated by the level of learning taking place, in particular the level of ability the students from the very youngest to year 6 showed in IT. The school has a comprehensive approach to involving parents, students and the community in many issues. That has a positive impact on the public education delivered at the school.

The students are achieving wonderful progress. Even the youngest are independent and ahead of their time in using the latest technology. They are enthusiastically embracing the new IT future. It has been pleasing to witness the staff and community together developing a strategic direction for the school based on information technology. I know from my discussions with parents and the wider community the quality of the education provided at the school. The school is also involved in the Ryde technology task force, a collection of industry and higher education groups and the community. This is a fine example of public education. I am privileged that the school is part of my community. I wish the students, the parent community and teachers all the best and thank the teachers in particular for their fine work.

PROBLEM GAMBLING

Mr OAKESHOTT (Port Macquarie) [5.02 p.m.]: This evening I raise the issue of problem gambling. Many people in my electorate and throughout New South Wales have expressed concern about problem gambling. Today the issue of the greyhound racing industry was raised in the Parliament. There is concern about the ripple-on effects of people such as chief steward Rodney Potter being charged for alleged corrupt actions in relation to the Greyhound Racing Authority. He has also been recommended for charges by the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry currently under way. The ripple-on effect is substantial. Mr Potter obviously had some problems: he was spending all the money at Star City Casino. He obviously needed help with the problem. Because the problem was not addressed the greyhound racing industry has great concerns. Its public integrity is under threat.

Another example from the news of last week involves Mr Derek Wales, who was before the court for fraud involving writing 44 cheques to himself from the Sisters of Charity. He took almost \$300,000 from the Sisters of Charity and spent the money at Star City Casino. The ripple-on effect from one problem gambler on the Sisters of Charity—being out of pocket by \$300,000—is certainly significant. A section 31 investigation is currently being conducted by Peter McClellan in regard to the casino. He was appointed on Friday night. I have concerns that it is *Groundhog Day*. McClellan oversaw an inquiry three years ago. He made recommendations which were rejected by the Minister, in particular the recommendation to combine the casino surveillance division with the Casino Control Authority. We are three years down the track, we have the same problem, we have the same inquiry with the same person appointed to head it and we have potentially got the same recommendations. We have potentially got the same rejection from the Minister. And we have potentially still got the same problem.

It was extremely disappointing that we have not seen further action, particularly exclusion of some people from Star City Casino. An example is Mr Sunny Liu, who has been mentioned in several major daily newspapers in New South Wales. He has been involved in the sex industry by importing Asian prostitutes into

New South Wales. He has built an empire for himself in Sydney. I understand that he drives around town in a Ferrari. But the authorities are yet to ban him from using the high rollers room at Star City Casino. Have reports been done on Mr Liu by the casino surveillance division? If so, why have they not been acted on? If reports have not been done, that is of great concern because there is an obvious flaw in the process. The only legitimate business of Mr Liu is a takeaway food shop. Yet in one month he managed to put \$2 million through the casino. That is extraordinary.

Other names that have been mentioned over the past two weeks include Van Duong, who put through \$94 million; Tan Gia Quach, who put through \$20 million; and Quoc Thai Ly, who is currently under investigation and who has put through many millions. A Camperdown doctor is missing and we have a sex slave trader who is being given the red carpet royal treatment at Star City Casino. When are we going to start dealing with this issue seriously? When will we start to act? Have reports been done by the casino surveillance division? We cannot just flick this issue to a section 31 inquiry, which will report back on 15 December. These people are being given the red carpet royal treatment now by the New South Wales Government and by the Casino Control Authority. I would hope that from today in New South Wales we take the issue of problem gambling seriously.

BATES DRIVE SPECIAL SCHOOL

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [5.07 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak about the Bates Drive Special School at Kareela, a suburb in my electorate. Established in 1973, Bates Drive Special School now has 60 students ranging in age from four to 18 years, 90 per cent of whom have severe intellectual disabilities. In many cases the disabilities are accompanied by autism and a variety of challenging behaviours. Bates Drive Special School is special not just because of the students for whom it caters. The school is staffed by teachers and teachers aides, all of whom have special skills and talents. They all have those special qualities of patience and understanding required to meet the daily—and at times unpredictable—challenges which their pupils present. They are all prepared to go that special extra mile that can make so much difference to the future of the school and its pupils.

I have visited Bates Drive Special School on three occasions since my election, including a visit last week. As a former teacher I know that one can pick up the feeling of a school—the school tone, if you like—within minutes of arriving there. I knew as soon as I walked through the gate into Bates Drive Special School for the first time what a wonderfully caring educational environment I was entering. I am, and I continue to be, impressed with the commitment and dedication of the principal, Ms Ann Masters, and each of her staff who, together, make Bates Drive Special School a quality learning environment for each and every child who attends.

I recently asked the principal about the school motto. Ms Masters replied, "We love our kids." Those few words say it all. It shows on the faces of the teachers when they speak to their children, it shows on the faces of the children when they interact with their teachers and it shows on the faces of the parents, volunteers and community workers involved with the Bates Drive Special School. Ms Masters and her staff are a credit to the teaching profession. In them, and in their skills, their teamwork and their achievements, we find all the reasons why we, as a society, should value our teachers.

I am told that the cornerstone of the school's educational philosophy is education through collaboration, and Bates Drive Special School is one that clearly puts that philosophy into practice. As part of its interaction and socialisation program students from Bates Drive Special School attend one day a week at two other local schools, Kareela Public School and Kirrawee High School. I have no doubt that the students from all three schools benefit from this interactive initiative. Bates Drive Special School also has a very active parents and citizens association chaired by Mr Clint Bonney, and a very committed school council chaired by Mr Greg Huggett. There is also a large number of volunteers, carers, therapists and friends, each of whom make a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of the school. I thank each of them, and the parents and family members who give much of their time and effort to the school. This is a truly outstanding example of a school community partnership.

I should also like to congratulate the students of the school and acknowledge their achievements. In particular I congratulate Brett Gibbens on his recent election as school captain for the year 2000. Last year, on its annual presentation day, I was privileged to present School Certificates from the New South Wales Board of Studies to two graduates of the school, Dionne Walsh and Steven Thomas. Speaking as a teacher who attended school presentation days for 17 years and as a member who in his first year attended presentation days throughout my electorate, I have never been present at a better school presentation day than that of Bates Drive Special School. The school takes an interest in each and every one of its pupils. An example of this was the

video, which had the quality of a Channel 9 production, capturing the way the students work and interact with their teachers and the skills they are developing day to day at their special school. Suffice to say I am truly proud to have Bates Drive Special School in my electorate.

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Education and Training) [5.12 p.m.]: I was pleased to listen to the laudatory comments of the honourable member for Miranda about Bates Drive Special School. I take this opportunity to compliment the honourable member on wasting no time in representing the worthy needs of his electorate, particularly on school issues. I am aware of this outstanding government school. Bates Drive Special School opened in 1973 and caters for students from four years to 18 years of age with significant intellectual disabilities and high support needs. The school's programs are carefully structured, with each child having an individual education program designed to assist in priority areas of his or her development.

The school is a recognised centre of best practice teaching of augmentative communication. It is well known for its exceptional learning environment, emphasising education through collaboration with parents, education staff and Department of Community Services therapy team staff. The school provides a centre for learning activities across a number of schools and organisations. The school hosts visits from students involved in history and society in its environment studies relating to child development and children with special needs, Loftus TAFE students involved in early childhood studies, and University of Sydney student teachers involved in the study of disabilities.

I am also familiar with the matter raised by the honourable member. The proposal to provide a drop-off and pick-up zone will improve traffic safety at the front of the school site. I was pleased to approve funding to allow formal planning to commence. As a result, the department has commenced its preliminary planning. The cost of the project is estimated at \$220,000 and it has a priority consideration for inclusion in the 2000-01 minor capital works program. I have been advised that the Department of Education and Training has consulted with representatives of the school community to inform them of the status of planning and to review the proposed design. I look forward to the funding being made available in the next budget to assist students and teachers.

RURAL SUICIDE

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.14 p.m.]: I raise a subject that is often spoken about in hushed surroundings, that is, suicide in the rural areas of New South Wales and Australia and, in particular, the need for after-suicide support groups to help those who are left behind to come to terms with what has happened to them. I wish to highlight the good work of Sister Mary Walsh, a presentation sister who was previously based in Wagga Wagga but who is now in Sydney doing wonderful work co-ordinating a support group. Sister Mary Walsh was invited to Wagga Wagga a week ago by the grief and loss task force that assembled in Wagga Wagga to attack this serious problem in country areas.

In 1998 more than 50 people a week, or 2,683 people, died by their own hands in Australia. The latest figures show that such is the nature of the modern world that suicide now kills more Australians than car accidents. We have made our roads safer but for too many life has become a hazardous experience. However, suicide experts are keen to point out that suicide is not an epidemic. In fact, the overall rate has not changed much in 50 years. The rate of 14 suicides for every 100,000 people is much the same as it was in 1921. What has changed is the age of the victims and where they live. Where once suicide was the domain of the old, disturbed and sick, the young and healthy have become the casualties. Men commit suicide at four times the rate of women. Suicide rates for males aged between 15 and 24 years have trebled since the early 1960s while female rates have remained the same.

For rural Australia the figures remain grim. Country people are 30 per cent more likely to kill themselves than their city counterparts. Australians are taking their lives in the same numbers as were registered in 1921, but the latest government figures show that suicide deaths across the nation are now 55 per cent higher than road fatalities. Rural communities have rates of suicide up to 39 per cent higher than in cities, but unlike the road toll, suicide has largely remained the unspoken tragedy. Families and communities touched by it have suffered in silence because of the stigma. I wish to highlight the importance of Sister Mary's work because the statistics show that this is a serious problem. I raise the possibility of Sister Mary's work expanding, not only in Sydney but to Wagga Wagga, which is considering forming an after-suicide group. I inform all honourable members that Sister Mary's work should be acknowledged.

I will bring this matter to the attention of the Minister for Health because it is a mental health issue that deserves serious consideration. I did not inform the Minister that I was going to make this private member's

statement but I imagine his door will be open when the approach is made with regard to Sister Mary and her group. It is important that funding be made available to enable Sister Mary to continue with her work in forming after-suicide support groups in regional centres. I would be more than happy to meet with Sister Mary and honourable members representing major country centres to view first-hand the program she is offering. I attended the meeting in Wagga Wagga the other night. Some 90 professionals met in the afternoon, and 40-odd people represented families who have been affected by the tragedy of suicide. Their overall reaction was that this program is needed in all country towns and centres. I hope that the Minister will respond positively when I make my approach.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [5.19 p.m.]: There are many issues that unify us as a Parliament although all honourable members do not play on the same cricket team, and this is one of them. Everyone in this place is concerned about the number of suicides and what they do to families. I am sure all honourable members know families who have lost children to suicide. Families experience enormous feelings of guilt—"Why were we not there for them?"; "Why couldn't they come to us?"—that haunt them for the rest of their lives.

Large parts of the community are becoming concerned about the incidence of youth suicide. Nobody seems to have the solution to that problem as every case is different. I talked last evening with a group of people who had been affected by youth suicide and they told me stories about young people who had chosen to terminate their lives for a whole range of reasons. The reasons for youth suicide and circumstances in which it occurs differ, and nobody seems able to get through to the young people concerned. There is no difference between honourable members on this issue, which touches slightly on my portfolio. The Government will do all it can to provide some relief.

TWEED ELECTORATE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [5.21 p.m.]: I may be a little biased, but I believe the part of the coast that I have the honour to represent—the Tweed—is a one of the jewels in this State's coastal crown. Our coast is an incredibly precious resource that we must not lose. That is why I wish to raise several planning issues that affect my electorate—particularly those dealt with by the Tweed Shire Council. I have real concerns about the Tweed Shire Council's handling of some resort development proposals on the coast. It considered one proposal—the development at South Kingscliff—and I had reason to ask the Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing just a few weeks ago to intervene and revoke the council's planning powers with regard to this development on what is known as the Lennen land. The simple fact is that the council was not prepared to uphold government coastal policies or deal with the developers in a fair and open manner.

As a result, public open space would have been lost and access restricted. As a consequence, when the areas in the hinterland around South Kingscliff were developed, local residents would have been unable to enjoy the amenity that, in some ways, we take for granted. Through the intervention of the Minister and the good work of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, negotiations commenced directly with the developers as well as—as a matter of courtesy—with Tweed Shire Council and the local progress association. As a result of that intervention, a result was achieved quickly and approvals have been issued for South Kingscliff, or the Lennen land. The Minister recently made an announcement to that effect and the developers are delighted that the work was approved immediately. They are pressing ahead with their stage development.

The Minister has also had to intervene in another approval—as yet he has not revoked planning powers, but he has had to speak sternly to Tweed Shire Council. Just last night, the council agreed to defer the proposal regarding another development in almost the same area at Casuarina Beach because of concerns expressed by the department and the public. Earlier ongoing problems with the development had arisen essentially in Lot 500, which is Crown land, and involved the Dune management plan for that area. The Mayor, National Party councillors and their supporters on the council were quite vocal about pushing the development forward without a proper management plan, which is presently being developed.

No-one opposes the Casuarina Beach development—no-one ever has; neither Green nor those of any other colour. In fact, the community strongly supports the development, but it is concerned that the proper coastal policy should be followed. It wants to ensure that proper public access and community amenity is included in the development agreement. The council agreed last night to put the development on hold for a week to allow the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning to consider the proposal. That proves that, despite the attitude adopted by certain Tweed Shire councillors, it often falls to the Minister to ensure that the public good is achieved.

We have also asked for the planned expansion of Coolangatta airport to be put on hold. At the last minute, the council agreed last night to a motion moved by the former mayor, Max Boyd, calling on the council to ask the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, for an extension of time for public consultation. That was a surprise because the mayor and her six supporters had initially signalled support for the airport expansion and were not prepared to delay the development. Further information was submitted at the last minute on 8 May and the airport management plan was submitted without being seen by the public. I wrote to the Minister prior to Monday's meeting calling for an extension of time, and I am delighted that the council also decided to make that request.

NAMBUCCA SHIRE FUNDING

Mr STONER (Oxley) [5.26 p.m.]: I wish to raise a serious concern about the Nambucca Shire in my electorate. Last year I moved a motion for urgent consideration regarding Professor Vinson's report "Unequal in Life", which identified the Nambucca Shire as one of the most disadvantaged areas of New South Wales. The report established a link between that disadvantage and dysfunctional characteristics such as child abuse, crime and so on. The situation is no less urgent now: unemployment remains high, incomes are low and there is a predominance of pensioners and low-income groups, including Aboriginal people, in areas such as Bowraville. The shire's largest employer, Midco—an abattoir near Macksville—closed several years ago and shows no signs of reopening. Following the announcement about siting a gaol at Kempsey on the mid North Coast, I wrote to the Minister to thank the Cabinet for considering that area. However, I also raised my concerns about the Nambucca Shire.

Unfortunately, the budget that was handed down earlier this week offers minimal funding for capital works and other programs in the Nambucca Shire. Apart from sewage improvement at Nambucca Heads and a library conversion at the Eungai Public School, the shire has received minimal attention in the form of funding and services. The mayor of Nambucca Shire Council, George Hicks, and council General Manager Tom Port recently met the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads to discuss damage to the shire's roads caused by serious flooding in July last year. The damage bill amounted to several million dollars, and unfortunately only \$200,000 was allocated to the shire as a result of that meeting. The shire is left with a great shortfall in its budget and is seeking a significant rate increase to cope with that shortfall. However, the Nambucca shire is a low-income area and it has disadvantaged groups; therefore, a rate increase is not necessarily the way to go.

The council also applied for a regional sports facility in the Macksville area, which would have been a boost to the shire. Again, that was overlooked. I am very concerned about the impending dairy industry deregulation, because the shire could lose up to half of its dairy farmers. Dairy farming is one of the last remaining reasonable sources of income in the local economy. I am using this opportunity to express my concerns to various Ministers and to plead for a fair go for the Nambucca area. The shire needs funds for public works infrastructure and any job creation programs which may be available. The area does not need more welfare programs; it needs investment and jobs.

Tourism is a huge potential earner for Nambucca. Honourable members who have visited Scotts Head and Nambucca Heads would have to agree that, notwithstanding the comments by the honourable member for Tweed, they are some of the most beautiful parts of this State. I invite the Premier to visit this beautiful but severely depressed part of New South Wales. I seek the assistance of the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Regional Development; the Minister for Roads; the Minister for Tourism; and the Minister for Sport and Recreation to consider what assistance they can give to this shire which I believe remains one of the highest priority areas for the Government.

Mr AND Mrs HAMS FLOOD INSURANCE CLAIM

AUSTRALIAN INLAND BOTANIC GARDEN, BARONGA

Mr BLACK (Murray-Darling) [5.31 p.m.]: This evening I refer to two matters, one that was addressed by the Premier last Tuesday in response to a question without notice, and the second relating to the magnificent botanical gardens in Baronga, in the shire of Wentworth. Last Tuesday the House was informed of the circumstances surrounding Max and Judith Hams, who live close to Topar in the west of my electorate. I will not repeat the detail given by the Premier: suffice it to say that on 20 February various properties were inundated by heavy rain; some may say they were flooded. Some very hard-working grazing families lost stock and material possessions.

The plight of Max and Judith Hams was shown on television. Their house was inundated to its eaves, a plane in its hanger was under water, and a grader on a road adjacent to their property was under water. I flew over that devastating sight and went on to view others in the Paroo. A total of 20 grazing families were affected very badly. Last Tuesday the Premier referred to CGU Insurance-Elders Underwriting Agency, which informed the Hams family that it would not accept the insurance burden it had imposed on the company. The family has held insurance with that company for more than 30 years, during which time it has claimed only \$500.

The attitude of Elders is amazing. However, I inform the House that since the Premier raised this matter, Elders has agreed to a mediation meeting, which is a step forward. Its conduct thus far is that of Scrooge. Charles Dickens would have been proud to use Elders as a model for Scrooge in some of his writings. It is ironic that many years ago a grandson of Charles Dickens was the member for Wilcannia, which incorporated that area. Photographs showing the inundation to the Hams' house presented in this Chamber show clear water which must, by necessity, be derived locally. But Elders refutes that.

Last Tuesday the Premier referred to the Commonwealth Bank sending farm mediation statements to graziers who were suffering that devastation—bad timing. I am pleased to report that this afternoon I received a call from the bank, and I hope that the Commonwealth Bank will have a sense of decency, fairness and logic, and re-examine its decision to give the graziers a break. The graziers have been through seven years of drought, they have been flooded, they have lost miles of fencing, and their houses have to be replaced.

I refer now to the Australian Inland Botanic Garden, which is established at Baronga. I had the pleasure of attending its tenth anniversary last weekend and participated in the civic reception, attended talks on its 10-year history and inspected the gardens. It has the best rose garden I have ever seen. Sections of the garden are devoted to botanical specimens from South Africa, Asia, and America. It is a vision, and will remain for the next hundred years. It is an adjunct to our tourism industry. Part of this vision is the result of the Government's allocation of \$50,000 over three years, the first funding of that type. The botanic gardens have collected and established all 250 of Australia's great grevillea specimens.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.36 p.m.]: The comments of the honourable member for Murray-Darling indicate that insurance companies need to be exposed in this House before they go to the mediation table, and it appears the same applies to banks. The honourable member for Murray-Darling said that the Premier's comments in this House early this week triggered off that mediation. That response also could have been as a result of the expert prodding by the honourable member for Murray-Darling, who always goes into bat for his constituents.

SHOALHAVEN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr R. H. L. SMITH (Bega) [5.37 p.m.]: It troubles me deeply to report to the House that the people of the southern Shoalhaven must face yet another year of failing health services. This year the Ulladulla community waited anxiously to hear the outcome of the budget, only to have their hopes dashed and learn that no money was set aside for the local hospital. Unfortunately, Ulladulla residents were recently lulled into a false sense of security with the Government's announcement regarding an additional \$2 billion for the health budget. Many residents thought that at last money would be spent on rural health and that the Milton hospital would not be forgotten and neglected. What a sham that turned out to be.

Residents in the Shoalhaven have been waiting for almost six years for a major upgrade of the Milton hospital, approved by the Carr Government. Milton hospital is located outside my electorate and should be the responsibility of the honourable member for South Coast. However, the hospital services a significant proportion of my constituents from Ulladulla, Burrill Lake, Termeil, Bawley Point and surrounding areas. Hence my concern for this hospital. This small country hospital with dedicated and capable staff now caters for some 15,000 people in one of the fastest growing country areas of the State. Statistics indicate that the district growth rate is higher than the State average and higher than that of the Illawarra. But despite this obvious fact, constant community pressure and my representations, the Milton hospital has fewer beds now than it had 13 years ago.

The hospital does not have a dedicated maternity unit, which is one of the most basic and fundamental requirements of any local hospital. The operating theatre is outmoded and cannot cater adequately for day surgery procedures such as the treatment of skin cancers and minor vascular work. Despite an assurance from the Carr Government that the strategic health plan would provide health care to diabetics, the waiting list gets longer. Earlier this year the Diabetics Education Service was introduced for an eight-hour period per fortnight as an interim measure. Clearly, that service is insufficient.

Recently newly diagnosed Ulladulla diabetic patients were told that because of staff illness and leave they would have to wait for as long as four weeks for consultation and assistance. That is simply not good enough. It is disappointing, to say the least, that this Government does not follow through on its commitments to preventive health programs. Diabetes is a serious illness and successful management of the condition is essential to avoid complications such as coronary heart disease, blindness, kidney failure and soul-destroying amputations. Special educators, dieticians, counsellors and other ancillary services will in the long term lessen the burden on our hospital and health budgets.

However, a disturbing disparity remains between the services provided in the northern area of Shoalhaven and those in the Ulladulla region. Why? Obviously, the Carr Government fully intends to channel most of the health funding from the region directly to Nowra hospital and associated health services, forcing aged and infirmed Ulladulla residents to travel past their local hospital for all services, other than minor health matters. According to those associated with Country Labor in this Chamber—and that includes the honourable member for South Coast, whose electorate now centres on Nowra—they are working hard to get services to country areas. If so, why do they not address the urgent needs of the Ulladulla region? Again, no funds have been allocated from this budget to Milton-Ulladulla Hospital to tackle the glaring inefficiencies in health care in the region.

As I recently stated in this House, a large percentage of elderly retirees have moved into my electorate to enjoy a relaxed lifestyle by the coast in their latter years. In many cases, their move to this region has highlighted the load on health services in other metropolitan areas. But they are now faced with travelling from their homes and support groups to seek vital medical services miles away. This is disturbing and costly to our elderly citizens, who ask for nothing more than to be treated fairly. Similarly, our young families, mothers and babies, are disadvantaged and distressed without a designated maternity unit at their local hospital. I call on the Minister for Health to address this black hole in health services on the coast by giving the citizens of the Ulladulla region access to basic services which are readily available in metropolitan areas of this State.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.42 p.m.]: After spending five minutes criticising the Government the honourable member for Bega concluded his speech by calling on the Minister for Health to address the lack of health services to which he had referred. When I was a member of the Opposition and wanted to raise an issue on behalf of my constituents, I made it my business to ask the relevant Minister to come to the Chamber and listen to my speech. I would succeed when I put my argument to him in the House. The honourable member for Bega is muckraking. He mentioned on two occasions that the hospital is not in his electorate. The honourable member for South Coast will read his speech in *Hansard*. If anything the honourable member for Bega has said can be substantiated, which I doubt very much, I am sure that the honourable member for South Coast will personally take up the matter with the Minister for Health. That is what the honourable member for Bega should have done this evening, rather than sounding off in the House.

WESTERN SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDERSON (Londonderry) [5.43 p.m.]: Last Saturday celebrations were held for the third anniversary of the Western Sydney Academy of Sport. In 1997 the Premier announced the creation of the Western Sydney Academy of Sport and allocated a significant amount of money, \$160,000, for that purpose. Since that time, the academy has gone from strength to strength. I will put on record some of the achievements of the academy in the past three years. The academy embraces netball, rowing, softball, track and field athletics, baseball and hockey. At the present time the academy is negotiating to extend its coverage to include swimming and disabled swimming.

The academy is supported by the Department of Sport and Recreation, Blacktown City Council, Penrith City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, New South Wales Athletics Association, New South Wales Netball Association, Hockey New South Wales, New South Wales Softball Association, Great Western Baseball Federation, University of Western Sydney, Penrith Panthers and Rooty Hill RSL. In the past three years significant changes have taken place. The academy has provided the young people of the area with an opportunity to access top level coaches. We are now beginning to see the results. This year nine softball members of the academy made it to the State under-16 softball team. That is the highest number achieved by any academy throughout New South Wales.

Bronwyn Atkins and Eliza Treble have been selected from the academy netball team and invited to participate in the Australian under-17 netball squad. Luke Taylor and Glenn Harrison, two outstanding young athletes from the Hawkesbury, attended the World Schools Cross Country Championships in Morocco. They

represented Australia with distinction. They were the first non-African athletes across the line, finishing tenth and thirteenth. That is an outstanding achievement for two young people in their first international competition. We also take great pride in Kristy-Lee Watson-Jones, who is a member of the academy rowing squad. Three years ago Kristy-Lee, who had never indulged in any rowing activity, tried out for the academy rowing team. This year she was selected to attend the World Rowing Championships in Croatia. It is a phenomenal achievement for this young lady, who, in two short years, has come from nowhere in the sport to representing Australia.

A great deal of credit must go to the coaches, who are bringing out the best in these young people. I have great pleasure in acknowledging the tremendous achievements of the netball coaches Pate Cooper and Kerrie Blench. Only a few weeks ago the Western Sydney Academy of Sport played in a preliminary game before the Sydney Sandpipers and the Adelaide Ravens game. The young ladies in the academy netball team acquitted themselves with excellence. It was obvious that some of those young ladies who played in the academy team will take their place at the national level competition in the near future. They did not look out of place. As I said, the academy is fully supported by the Department of Sport and Recreation and I offer my thanks to the Minister for Sport and Recreation for his ongoing support.

INVERELL DIALYSIS SERVICES

Mr TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.48 p.m.]: Yesterday in question time I referred to the dialysis problem at Inverell. Elderly people in Inverell needing dialysis treatment have found themselves back in the dark ages. They suffer from kidney disease, but because they live in regional New South Wales they find it difficult to access appropriate services. I bring to the attention of the House the cases of 72-year-old Eileen Morris and 60-year-old Gloria Spalding, two of the patients from Inverell who take the 432 kilometre-round trip to Tamworth three times a week. The trip takes approximately six hours and the treatment takes approximately five hours. Both women have told the *Inverell Times*—I have the articles with me—that they do not know how much longer they can endure the strain.

Mrs Morris estimates that she has travelled 120,000 kilometres for treatment during the past two years. She says it is not the dialysis that takes the energy out of her but the very hot or cold days and the long trips. Mrs Spalding has appealed to the community for help to acquire better services, and perhaps have a dialysis machine set up at Inverell Hospital. The people of Inverell remain very concerned. They expect that, in a modern industrialised technological society, we should be able to deliver reasonable medical treatment to those in need. I congratulate the *Inverell Times* on taking the lead in the matter. It has raised community awareness, and a number of contributions have been forthcoming.

There has been a lot of discussion. There has been a call for the Minister to examine the cost of improving dialysis facilities as opposed to the cost of travel, which must be exorbitant at the moment. I place on record my thanks to the Minister for Health, the Hon. Craig Knowles, who responded yesterday to my question about the dialysis problem at Inverell. He stated that he is aware of the problem and that he would maintain dialogue with me. He said:

I am also advised that New England Area Health Service and its Renal Outreach Service has recently purchased a home dialysis machine for peritoneal dialysis, which has the capacity to be used in remote locations. It is currently being used in Moree. That machine can be made available to the individuals in Inverell.

I want to keep the pressure on the Minister on behalf of the Inverell community. However, I acknowledge that the Minister has made his position very clear. He will examine making that machine available to residents and concerned parties in Inverell. If every member of this House had a family member or friend suffering in this way they would be very concerned about the distance the people in Inverell have to travel to access treatment. They would also demand a solution. If the trial of the home dialysis machine is successful, and it can be monitored in another location under specialist supervision, I hope it will be made available to the residents of Inverell who are suffering enormously.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.53 p.m.]: The honourable member for Northern Tablelands has given a typical example of the hardship endured by people in country areas that are starved of health services normally available to people in metropolitan areas. Two of my constituents suffer from kidney complaints and have been to see me—but certainly not in relation to the lack of a dialysis machine. I feel for the people in Inverell. I am sure that the Minister will take the honourable member's comments seriously. He has already indicated that a new service has been introduced into the local area health service. I congratulate the honourable member for Northern Tablelands on raising this important issue.

EPPING TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Mr TINK (Epping) [5.54 p.m.]: I refer to the need for a right-hand turn traffic light signal at the intersection of Carlingford Road and Rawson Street, Epping. Some years ago Parramatta City Council, which is the relevant local government authority, commissioned and obtained a report entitled the "Epping Area Traffic Study Draft Final Report" from Sinclair Knight Merz, which said:

The northbound median lane in Rawson Street would be marked as being for right turning vehicles only, and the southbound kerbside lane in Ray Road would be marked as being for left turning vehicles only.

In subsequent years the matter has been taken up by the Epping Civic Trust. In its newsletter of 21 April 1998 the trust makes the point that residents living on the southern side of Carlingford Road continue to experience poor access, particularly when turning right from Rawson Street into Carlingford Road. At that time the trust indicated that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] had agreed to monitor the intersection to ascertain how the flow of traffic from Rawson Street would be improved. The model would include the effect of installing a right-turn signal for Rawson Street traffic into Carlingford Road, the phasing of the traffic signals at those intersections, and the effect of ingress and egress to a proposed commuter car park opposite Carlingford Road.

Work was then done and, as a result, there was some change to the phasing of the traffic lights, but nothing more was done about the right-hand turn signal. This matter continues to be significant. It is a growing problem. It was hoped that after the opening of the M2, with the increase in the capacity for traffic, a decision might have been taken to install a right-hand turn phasing light. It could have been argued that to do so previously would have impacted significantly on major volumes of traffic travelling on Carlingford Road. Much of that traffic is now on the M2, so that Carlingford Road has a greater capacity to take traffic from a right-hand turn signal from Ray Road into Carlingford Road.

My electorate office is in Rawson Street. I have noticed during the morning peak hour and the morning generally that the position in Rawson Street has deteriorated markedly. The southern end of Rawson Street intersects with Bridget Street, which in turn runs across the Epping railway bridge. Particularly in the evening peak hour the delay for traffic turning right out of Rawson Street into Carlingford Road now extends the full length of Rawson Street, through the roundabout at the intersection of Rawson and Bridge Streets, and it is starting to bank up onto Beecroft Road. If the problem of clearing Rawson Street more quickly is not solved soon, a major State road network will be clogged backwards across the Epping bridge as result of traffic banking up and trying to turn right in Rawson Street.

It is no longer only a local issue. It is an issue that involves congested traffic backing onto a State road. The problem is particularly acute for my constituents who live south of Carlingford Road. To access roads leading to the city they have to queue at the Rawson Street intersection with no priority or, alternatively, go all the way down to Eastwood, then track in along Victoria Road. The only alternative is to get onto Carlingford Road by backtracking to Midson Road, which is about a kilometre to the west. This access problem now affects many thousands of people who live in the central Epping area.

I am supported in my comments by Hornsby councillors, including the Deputy Mayor, Steven Pringle; Parramatta councillors, including Lorraine Wearne and Andrew Wilson; the President of the Epping Chamber of Commerce, and last, but by no means least, the Epping Civic Trust and its officers. It is interesting to note that the number of officially reported traffic accidents at the intersection between 1 January 1992 and 31 December 1998 showed 23 major accidents including 12 accidents for vehicles turning right from Rawson Street into Carlingford Road and seven accidents involving pedestrians. The remainder were rear end accidents. I am told that an accident occurred at the intersection yesterday morning. It is therefore appropriate to put this matter back on the agenda. I respectfully request that the Parliamentary Secretary at the table, the honourable member for Canterbury, take this request on board and ask the RTA on our behalf to have another look at the matter. It is time for this whole question of the right-hand turn phase lights at the intersection of Rawson Street and Carlingford Road to be reconsidered. It is timely for the Government to again look at this matter.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.59 p.m.]: I shall certainly take up the matter with the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads on behalf of the honourable member for Epping. I appreciate his claim that the issue has now become a State matter. That is often the case with traffic congestion: everything becomes consequent upon everything else and eventually the whole system is affected. I am well aware of problems with right-hand turn arrows as it is an issue I constantly fight for within my electorate. At times I become quite frustrated over the matter. When the new Canterbury Hospital was opened I argued for a right-hand turn arrow for traffic to turn off Canterbury Road into a side street to access the hospital car park and for the road to be widened at the same time to create an extra traffic lane.

However, the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] did not want to widen the road. It said the new hospital was the responsibility of the Department of Health; as it had built the hospital it had created the problem and should pay for the widening of the road. The Department of Health argued that it was responsible for looking after people in hospital, not those driving their vehicles on RTA roads, and so the argument continued. Calls for traffic management devices can often get caught up in bureaucratic circles where everybody wants to pass the buck and nobody wants to take responsibility. I sympathise with the honourable member for Epping. I am sure the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads will take his comments seriously.

Private members' statements noted.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) permit consideration forthwith of messages from the Legislative Council returning the Summary Offences Amendment Bill with an amendment, and forwarding the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Carers' Responsibilities) Bill for concurrence; and
- (2) adjourn the House at its rising this day until 10.00 am on Friday 26 May 2000.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT (CARERS' RESPONSIBILITIES) BILL

Bill received and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [6.04 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill was introduced in the other place on 3 May and the second reading speech appears at pages 5019 and 5020 of *Hansard*. The bill is in the same form as introduced in the other place. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Tink.

BILL RETURNED

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council with an amendment:

Summary Offences Amendment Bill

Consideration of amendment deferred.

House adjourned at 6.04 p.m.
