

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 1 June 2000

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

**Mr Speaker** offered the Prayer.

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**Mr SPEAKER:** I welcome to Parliament a delegation of learned judges from Indonesia who are here under the auspices of the Australian Legal Resources International Plan. It is a great pleasure to welcome them to the first and oldest Parliament in Australia.

## DAIRY INDUSTRY BILL

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### Second Reading

**Mr AMERY** (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with considerable reluctance that I introduce this bill. It effectively repeals legislation which has, for more than 68 years, in one form or another, had a significant impact on regulating the conduct of the New South Wales dairy industry. It repeals legislation which was introduced by a Labor Government back in 1932 under the premiership of John Thomas Lang. Since then, the dairy industry has evolved considerably. Years ago the quality of milk was so poor that milk delivered of a morning was unfit for consumption by evening. As a result, twice daily milk deliveries became common place. But supplies of fresh milk were also often a problem during these early years. In late 1939, due to severe drought conditions, milk in the major metropolitan markets had to be rationed. Then, in the autumn and early winter of each succeeding year up until 1949, the milk producing districts of the then milk zone were unable to meet consumer demand—and rationing of milk had to be imposed in varying degrees of severity.

By February 1943, the margin between supply and demand had increased to such an extent—enhanced by the needs of the armed forces—that a rationing plan had to be introduced that ensured preference to essential requirements and vulnerable groups within the community. Fortunately the dairy industry has come a long way since those times. It has now evolved into an industry which is frequently held up as an example of world's best practice. This is due in no small part to the various regulatory systems under which it has operated since those early days. But now we are at the end of an era. It is not by choice that I move to deregulate the dairy industry today. I have introduced this legislation because of market forces in Victoria and the pressure put on us by the Federal Government. Victoria is producing cheaper milk than New South Wales and has voted to deregulate. If the current system is left unchanged, New South Wales would not be able to compete with Victorian prices, and before long we would see cheap Victorian milk flooding north across the State border.

We have also been told by the Federal Government that the \$1.74 billion adjustment package will be made available only if all States deregulate their dairy industries by 1 July 2000. If farm gate prices are going to drop in New South Wales—and they will have to once Victoria deregulates—it is extremely important that dairy farmers in New South Wales have access to that \$1.74 billion industry adjustment package. I will explain further about that package in a while. Suffice it to say for now that the only way we can secure that package is by deregulating our dairy industry. So you see, we have no choice here in New South Wales. We have to deregulate our dairy industry whether we like it or not.

My concerns about dairy deregulation have been well documented on a number of occasions. Let us not forget where the forces of dairy deregulation in New South Wales were first unleashed. They came in the passage of the Dairy Industry (Amendment) Act 1993—which was introduced by the former Coalition Government and commenced on 17 December 1993. The amendments made by that Act had a significant

impact on the distribution sector of the New South Wales market milk industry. When they came into effect on 1 July 1998 the New South Wales Dairy Corporation—which is now the Dairy Division of Safe Food Production New South Wales—ceased to set prices for market milk from the point of packaging onwards. The changes also meant that milk vendors—distributors—in New South Wales were no longer issued with authorised trading areas, known as zones, which in turn meant that the State's milk processors also no longer had specified trading areas.

Marketplace deregulation has also enabled a number of the larger supermarket chains to enter into milk supply and pricing contracts direct with milk processors. Price margins also began to shift. New South Wales milk processors were forced to reduce their packaged milk price to the major supermarkets to fend off competition from at least one major Victorian processor. New South Wales dairy farmers were also forced to accept a 3.31¢ per litre reduction in the regulated farm gate price they received for their market milk. As I have said, these changes were set in train by the former Coalition Government. Compare its approach to that of the Carr Labor Government!

Let me remind the House of the following facts. A review of the New South Wales Dairy Industry Act 1979 was initiated in March 1997 in accordance with the Competition Principles Agreement, endorsed by all members of the Council of Australian Governments in April 1995. The national competition policy [NCP] review concentrated only on those sections of the Act which related to pricing at the farm gate—including supply management, health and safety issues, and industry services. It also included the role of Milk Marketing (New South Wales) Pty Ltd and its funding arrangements. The review did not incorporate arrangements beyond the farm gate because these had already been deregulated by the former Coalition Government.

The 1997 review featured extensive consultation with a large number of interested groups and individuals and it considered more than 450 separate submissions. And, after the review group presented its final report to me, Premier Bob Carr and I were pleased to announce in May 1998 that the New South Wales Government had agreed to extend the regulated milk supply management and farm gate pricing arrangements for a further five years, until 2003. That decision was subjected to two clauses, however, and enabled the State Government to revisit the regulations before 2003 if, first, the Federal Government withheld competition payments or, second, market factors had an adverse impact on the industry's stability prior to 2003.

These decisions were widely welcomed by the industry and dairy farmers were assured of their future for a little longer. But then everything changed when Victoria underwent a national competition policy review of its own. Unfortunately, this review resulted in the then Kennett Government announcing that it would totally deregulate the Victorian dairy industry from 1 July 2000. Many people had feared for some time that the Victorian dairy industry had a strong preference for total deregulation. With the additional knowledge that the Domestic Market Support Scheme would cease on 30 June this year, many industry leaders in New South Wales believed that market forces in Victoria would make it near impossible to maintain any form of regulated system in New South Wales after 1 July 2000.

The Domestic Market Support Scheme is a Federal scheme administered by the Australian Dairy Corporation. The current arrangements are derived from the Kerin and Crean plans, which were introduced in 1986 and 1992 respectively. The scheme involves two levies on industry. One is paid by farmers—until the end of this month—on all milk consumed domestically as drinking milk. The other is paid by dairy product manufacturers on all milk used in the production of finished products for domestic sale. Milk utilised to produce product for export is exempt from the levies. The money raised from these two industry levies is placed in the Domestic Market Support Fund, which is administered by the Australian Dairy Corporation. This money, in turn, is used to make domestic market support payments to farmers who supply milk for the manufacture of dairy products.

Because of the much larger volumes of milk produced in Victoria for the manufacture of dairy products, Victorian farmers are net beneficiaries of the scheme, whereas New South Wales farmers contribute more to the scheme than they receive in return. The scheme is legislated to end on 30 June 2000. So at around the time of the Kennett decision, and realising the flow-on effects this would have on the other States, the Australian Dairy Industry Council began discussions with the Federal Government. The aim of those discussions was to obtain some form of support which would enable the Australian dairy industry to adjust to the effects of deregulation nationally.

These discussions culminated in an announcement by the Federal Government on 28 September 1999 that it supported a national dairy deregulation adjustment—so long as all States and Territories agreed to

deregulate their farm gate pricing arrangements from 1 July 2000. The package which has been developed is valued at around \$1.74 billion. It is the largest agricultural adjustment package in Australia's history. It is to be funded by a retail levy on all drinking milk of 11¢ per litre over the next eight years. New South Wales dairy farmers will be entitled to \$337 million of that package—an average of \$192,000 per farmer. The average consumer in New South Wales—noting that the money is officially coming from the retail levy on fresh milk—will be funding \$506 million of the total package.

This package was a significant achievement by the Australian Dairy Industry Council and it is now seen as an important package for dairy farmers in New South Wales. It now also has been added to, thanks to lobbying by the Queensland and New South Wales governments at the last meeting in March this year of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand [ARMCANZ]. The additional package amounts to \$45 million across the nation and is for regional assistance, although I have yet to receive full details of how that regional package will be distributed or utilised. But soon after that there were other developments on the political scene.

Soon after the Australian Dairy Council negotiated the \$1.74 billion adjustment package, minus the regional package at that stage, there were political changes afoot in Victoria. Soon after the Kennett Government announced it would support dairy deregulation in Victoria the Coalition in that State was defeated at the polls. The newly elected Bracks Labor Government then honoured a pre-election commitment and conducted a plebiscite of all Victorian dairy farmers to determine their attitude to deregulation. Out of this plebiscite came the following result: 89 per cent of farmers in Victoria who voted in favour of a move to deregulate their industry and receive their share of the adjustment package.

The new Victorian Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Keith Hamilton, then informed other agriculture Ministers around Australia at an ARMCANZ meeting on 3 March 2000 that he expected the Victorian dairy industry to push for deregulation with or without the \$1.74 billion adjustment package. Following on from that, the Dairy Farmers Association [DFA] of New South Wales conducted a series of meetings across this State to determine the views of our own dairy farmers. Of those dairy farmers who attended and voted, and in light of the situation in Victoria, 65 per cent voted in favour of accepting deregulation and the industry adjustment package.

Many industry leaders accept that total deregulation in Victoria would seriously undermine any attempts by New South Wales to continue operating within a regulated system. Accordingly, the Dairy Farmers Association of New South Wales determined that it was preferable that the process be managed, rather than attempting to pick up the pieces after deregulation had occurred. The Dairy Farmers Association has been very open about its intentions in relation to deregulation. Winston Watts, the Executive Director of the DFA, spoke to ABC radio's *Country Hour* program on 1 May 2000. He said:

We have made it very clear we have asked the State Government to deregulate against its wishes, but if we wanted to get that other big scheme [that is, the adjustment package] we had to ask them to deregulate.

There is no State secret here. The DFA asked the State Government to deregulate so that it could secure the \$1.74 billion adjustment package for its dairy farmers. The adjustment package will hopefully allow some reprieve for farmers wishing to remain in the industry. It may help them make the necessary adjustments to enable them to remain viable. It should also enable those wishing to leave the industry to do so. The DFA has estimated that 500 to 600 of the 1,800 dairy farmers in New South Wales would leave the industry in the event of deregulation—the majority of them in the coastal areas of the State.

This estimate was made in the DFA's submission to the NCP review back in 1997. This projection was made at a time when no consideration had been given any form of adjustment package to assist farmers in moving to a deregulated environment. With the \$1.74 billion adjustment package, it is possible that even more dairy farmers will leave the industry rather than stay to restructure their business. And they will leave, taking their share of the adjustment package with them. But there is no doubt that along with dairy farmers go dairy-related jobs. In this case, the DFA has estimated the loss of about 6,000 jobs resulting from a loss in dairy farm income.

Any reduction in milk production will clearly impact on the companies currently processing and manufacturing this milk. Lower through-put will increase the unit cost of manufacturing milk and will place considerable pressure on the viability of some of the State's manufacturing plants. However a reduction in milk production will not occur automatically. Total dairy farm numbers are certainly expected to decrease following deregulation but those farmers remaining in the industry are likely to significantly increase herd numbers in an attempt to maintain farm profitability. They will subsequently produce larger volumes of milk, but only as long as some form of price premium is maintained for market milk supplies.

The current regulated price for market milk, as set by the New South Wales Government, is about 53¢ a litre. If the price of market milk falls to the equivalent of current manufacturing milk prices—and recent reports indicate that some processors are offering farmers just 27¢ a litre for their market milk—it is highly likely that total farm production will also decline. This sort of pricing squeeze from the processing companies will force many, many dairy farmers out of business. Dairy farmers in New South Wales simply cannot sustain their operations with such low farm gate margins.

Country Labor has had some direct representations on this matter, and approached me two weeks ago with the idea of a floor price for market milk. I believe a floor price is a very valid and possible way forward, but it must be implemented nationwide if it is to have any effect. Therefore, I wrote to the Federal agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, two weeks ago asking him to give urgent consideration to a floor price for Australian dairy farmers, and to ensure that such a floor price would not jeopardise the dairy farmers' access to the adjustment package. I have yet to hear back from the Minister on this issue.

Meanwhile, the New South Wales Opposition does not support a floor price for dairy farmers. In an urgency debate in this House only yesterday National and Liberal members voted against the idea en masse. The urgent motion called on the Federal Government to implement a national floor price for market milk to enable dairy farmers to remain viable. The Federal Government has the legislative power to implement such a floor price. However, the Opposition, for some unfathomable reason, did not see fit to support the motion. In fact, Opposition members have done little to help the dairy industry during this whole process in the lead-up to deregulation. Their Federal counterparts in Canberra have forced all States to deregulate, saying that they would otherwise lose the adjustment package.

Where were Opposition members on this issue? Certainly, I have seen no evidence of them lobbying their Federal colleagues to change this onerous condition of the package. And now they even oppose a floor price for dairy farmers. Their only contribution so far has been to suggest a \$80 million package, funded by New South Wales taxpayers, on top of the \$1.74 billion adjustment package. The \$80 million might sound like a nice, healthy round number, but in reality the total breaks down to about \$40,000 per farmer for our 1,800 dairy farmers in New South Wales. An average dairy farmer will lose twice that amount in the first year of deregulation.

Let me quote some figures that have been provided to me by the dairy division of Safe Food. The average dairy farmer in New South Wales has about 118 cows on a 175-hectare property and produces about 708,000 litres of milk a year. The average percentage of his or her market milk production is 45.3 per cent, and the average percentage of manufacturing milk production is 54.7 per cent. His or her gross income is \$267,337, from which he or she must cover overheads and other business costs. If these processors squeeze down the price of market milk from the current 53¢ a litre, farmers will face massive losses. For example, if the market milk price drops to 40¢ a litre the farmer will lose \$43,779 a year from his income. If the price drops to 35¢ a litre the dairy farmer will lose \$59,815 a year. If the price drops to 30¢ a litre the farmer will lose \$75,851 a year. And if the price drops to 27¢ a litre, as some processors are currently offering, dairy farmers will lose a massive \$85,473 a year.

So the National Party proposal really has no weight in this situation. It wants taxpayers to provide a short-term handout, but it will not support a more practical, long-term solution such as a floor price. I also remind the House that the Dairy Farmers Association has maintained that it will not be asking for an additional compensation package from the State Government. I quote again from the ABC *Country Hour* program on 1 May 2000, when Winston Watts said:

The DFA has made it very clear it is not going to the State Government and asking for a double-dip on the compensation issue.

Mr Reg Smith, President of the New South Wales Dairy Farmers Association, tells me that he wants to put a proposal to me which may provide some form of structural adjustment assistance to dairy farmers in New South Wales. I am keen to hear what he says in this regard; I have invited him to come over to me and discuss the issue, and I have given him an undertaking that I will see what I can do to help dairy farmers in this regard. As most honourable members know, I have also established a Farm Gate Deregulation Fund. This has been set up in conjunction with the dairy industry and is being financed from the regulated milk price structure. By 30 June 2000 the fund will have raised about \$1.7 million, which will be used primarily to pay for the services of rural counsellors. These counsellors will assist dairy farmers and their families who may experience social or financial problems as a result of deregulation. I believe this is a valuable addition to the monetary assistance which the adjustment package is providing. It will ensure that dairy farming families receive practical, on-the-ground advice during the upcoming time of change and uncertainty.

It is important to point out that dairy farming has already begun to move from the traditional coastal areas to more inland areas where land is generally less expensive. This trend is likely to accelerate with total deregulation of the industry. Alternatives to dairying in those coastal areas are generally not regarded as suitable for income-generating operations which are comparable to dairying. For example, beef production requires much larger areas of land, and the cost of acquiring this additional land generally rules out beef production as a dairying alternative. Horticulture, grain growing, and other crops require specific types of soils and climate that are not often found in dairying areas. So again these are not suitable industries for our dairy farmers to move into. Also, patterns will change, such as fodder needs for larger dairy herds and water needs for dairy farmers moving into other industries.

So our dairy farmers will face many changes over the next few months. I would like to be able to say that the New South Wales Government can prevent those changes, but reality tells us that we cannot. The Australian Constitution tells us that we cannot. Victorian milk could flood over the New South Wales border from 1 July, regardless of whether or not we retain regulations in this State. However, that has not stopped us from exploring all legal avenues which may have enabled us to prevent that influx. Only last week we received legal advice on behalf of the Australian Milk Producers Association. This legal advice suggested that we could alter the current quota system which would open up New South Wales quotas to other States while still protecting the New South Wales market.

Unfortunately, our own legal advice, from Bob Ellicott, QC, tells us that this would be unconstitutional. Our advice stated that the proposal put forward by the Australian Milk Producers Association breached section 92 of the Constitution, which guarantees free trade between States. Therefore, we cannot depend on this proposal, courageous and encouraging as it sounded at the time. The contents of this bill have been debated at length over many months with all sectors of the New South Wales dairy industry. Many in the industry reluctantly support the bill because of its inextricable link with the \$1.74-billion adjustment package. I turn now to the very important area of food safety within the dairy industry. The maintenance of high standards of food safety is essential in all industries, and in the case of the dairy industry it played an important role in the National Competition Policy review, in which it was found to pass the so-called net public benefit test.

Under the provisions of the Food Production (Safety) Act 1998, the dairy division of Safe Food has the ongoing responsibility of regulating the handling of milk and dairy products in New South Wales in order to ensure their safety for human consumption. Now, however, a key issue arising from dairy deregulation is the removal of current price setting provisions and how the dairy division of Safe Food will fund its ongoing activities in this area. Amendments contained in this bill relating to the Food Production (Safety) Act 1998 require Safe Food to fund its future activities through the collection of licence and audit fees from all sectors of the industry. However, the Dairy Industry Bill also enables the Governor, by way of proclamation, to give effect to the former vesting provisions of the Dairy Industry Act 1979. However, this provision of vesting will be available only until 31 December 2000. After that date the provision will automatically be repealed.

This will ensure that the dairy division of Safe Food has sufficient funding available to it in the short term, before alternative funding sources can be secured. The Food Production (Safety) Act 1998 also requires Safe Food to consult with the relevant industry, or sector of industry, in relation to the operation of any food safety scheme. In the case of the dairy division of Safe Food, the relevant industry consultative body is the New South Wales Dairy Industry Conference, a body currently constituted under the Dairy Industry Act 1979. Under the provisions of this bill the New South Wales Dairy Industry Conference will remain as the forum through which the industry can provide its views to the Government on dairy issues within Safe Food. The industry can also consult with Safe Food on food safety schemes relating to the dairy industry.

This bill also makes further consequential amendments to the Food Production (Safety) Act 1998, including amendments relating to the composition of the Food Production Advisory Committee and other matters, such as the formation or participation by Safe Food of private subsidiary corporations. In conclusion, it is with considerable reluctance that I present the Dairy Industry Bill. However, the passage of this bill will at least ensure that all New South Wales dairy farmers can access the \$1.74 billion industry adjustment package. This package will return approximately \$192,000 to the average New South Wales dairy farmer. Some dairy farmers will receive more, and many will receive less. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Souris.**

## VETERINARY SURGEONS AMENDMENT BILL

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### **Second Reading**

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Bill 2000 has two main objectives. The first is to assist the Board of Veterinary Surgeons in relocating its administration from Orange to Sydney. In doing so, it will complete the process of gaining its independence from the New South Wales Government that was begun in 1995 with the commencement of the Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Act 1995. The second objective is to tighten the disciplinary measures in the Act. It will ensure that action can be taken promptly when allegations of serious professional misconduct are made against a registered veterinary surgeon.

By way of background information, let me provide the following historical context. The Board of Veterinary Surgeons was first established in 1923 under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1923. In 1995, I introduced the Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Bill, which commenced the process of making the Veterinary Surgeons Board independent of the New South Wales Government. At that time the board was fully funded through the New South Wales Government, with registration fees of veterinary surgeons being paid to offset the costs of administration of the Veterinary Surgeons Act.

Since that time, the board has operated on a self-funding basis, however, a number of aspects of its administration remain within government control. Although self-funding, the Act requires that there be a Veterinary Surgeons Fund. This fund is held by New South Wales Agriculture. The Act also requires that the staff of the board must be employed under the Public Sector Management Act 1988. Staff are currently employed by New South Wales Agriculture and their services provided under contract to the Veterinary Surgeons Board.

In order to improve the regulation of the veterinary profession the Veterinary Surgeons Board resolved in 1999 to move to independent premises in Sydney. The majority of the 2,300 veterinary surgeons registered under the Veterinary Surgeons Act are situated within the greater metropolitan area of Sydney. The Veterinary Surgeons Board itself consists of six registered veterinary surgeons, who are either selected or nominated for membership of the board by me, as the Minister for Agriculture, to represent the profession. The board performs a variety of functions, including the registration of veterinary surgeons. The board is also responsible for the licensing of veterinary hospitals and clinics. The board has the responsibility of maintaining acceptable and contemporary professional standards. It also makes recommendations to me as the Minister with regard to the Veterinary Surgeon's Code of Professional Conduct that is contained within the veterinary surgeons regulation.

The Veterinary Surgeons Amendment Bill contains a number of provisions to facilitate the process of making the board independent of government. The bill removes the Veterinary Surgeons Fund and replaces it with a requirement that the board must maintain an account at a bank, building society, credit union or other financial institution approved by the Treasurer. The bill also removes the provisions which presently require that, first, the nominal complainant for a disciplinary matter must be a public servant and, second, that one of the members of the Veterinary Surgeons Investigating Committee be an officer of the Department of Agriculture.

To assist with cost recovery and ensure that the board is self-funding, the regulations will be able to prescribe fees for services provided by the board. Changes of an administrative nature include a power for the board to transact business outside of meetings and for the investigating committee and board to delegate their investigative functions to an investigating officer. The board will now have all the usual powers of a statutory corporation, including the power to lease its own premises and employ its own staff. The board's relocation to Sydney will better enable it to carry out its business. The body charged with the responsibility of enforcing professional standards under the Veterinary Surgeons Act is the Veterinary Surgeons Investigating Committee.

The primary function of the investigating committee is to investigate complaints made by members of the public against veterinary surgeons. Depending on the severity of the complaint the investigating committee has the option of either carrying out minor disciplinary procedures itself or it may refer the matter to the

Administrative Decisions Tribunal. If the committee is satisfied that a complaint is valid it can caution or reprimand the veterinary surgeon involved. It also has the power to impose temporary conditions on the registration of the veterinary surgeon. These conditions may relate to continuing education, the acquisition of skills or professional supervision. Should the matter be referred to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal that tribunal has stronger powers to discipline veterinary surgeons including removal of their names from the register of veterinary surgeons.

The bill responds to the need to tighten these disciplinary procedures. This need arises out of a concern with the time currently taken to complete the disciplinary process. Some complaints are not resolved until all appeal procedures have been exhausted. This could involve a number of years and meanwhile, the veterinary surgeon concerned is able to continue to practise. While this is appropriate in the majority of matters there are situations where certain behaviour of veterinary surgeons, if permitted to continue, may have very serious consequences for the public. In particular, concern has been expressed as to whether some veterinary surgeons allow addictive or performance-enhancing veterinary drugs to find their way into the hands of others, who then use them for other than veterinary purposes.

Where such conduct is uncovered it is important that there be appropriate power to stop the conduct immediately. Where a complaint involves an allegation of serious misconduct in a professional respect, there should be a process whereby the veterinary surgeon concerned can be suspended from practice or have conditions placed on their right to practise until the allegation has been thoroughly investigated. A matter of serious misconduct would involve a threat to the health or safety of any person; the health of any animal; or the international reputation of Australia in relation to animal exports, animal welfare, animal produce or sporting events. To that end, this bill will enable the investigating committee, where a complaint which involves an allegation of serious professional misconduct has been made, to direct the board to suspend the veterinary surgeon concerned from practice for a period of up to 60 days.

The investigating committee may also direct the board to impose temporary conditions on the registration of a veterinary surgeon. I acknowledge the strength of these powers, however, they will only be available where serious professional misconduct has been alleged and where the investigating committee or the tribunal considers it appropriate in a particular case. I believe that the potential harm that may result to public health, the professional standing of the veterinary profession, or the reputation of New South Wales and Australia justifies the power. The power will be used in only the most serious cases. In addition, the use of the power will be subject to certain safeguards, which are set out in the bill.

Before the investigating committee can give a direction to the board it must give the veterinary surgeon concerned a minimum of five days in which to make submissions to it about the complaint. In addition, the veterinary surgeon may appeal to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal against a suspension order or an order placing conditions on registration. Instead of directing the board to suspend during an investigation, the investigating committee may apply to the tribunal for a suspension order, thus ensuring that an impartial view is brought to the matter. The committee may also apply to the tribunal for an order extending a suspension beyond the normal 60-day maximum.

The power to suspend or impose conditions on registration is not unique. This type of provision exists in respect of registered medical practitioners under section 66 of the Medical Practice Act 1982. The bill also contains other measures to improve the resolution of complaints made against veterinary surgeons. These include clarifying the power of the investigating committee to delegate its function of collecting evidence. It is intended that the investigating committee will now employ a full-time investigator to assist with a swifter processing of complaints. It will also be an act of professional misconduct for a veterinary surgeon, without reasonable cause, to fail to comply with a summons of the investigating committee.

In addition, the investigating committee will be empowered to require a registered veterinary surgeon or other witness to provide information on a statutory declaration. This will help to expedite the investigation of complaints. Failing to comply with a requirement to provide evidence without reasonable cause will be an offence punishable by a maximum fine of 20 penalty units. The number of complaints of professional misconduct against veterinary surgeons has varied over recent years, with some years experiencing a dramatic increase. For example, in 1995 there were 38 while in 1998 the number increased to 59. Fifteen new complaints have been received so far this year. Unlike other professional registration bodies such as the Law Society of New South Wales, the Board of Veterinary Surgeons cannot at present place conditions on the registration of a veterinary surgeon at the time the veterinary surgeon applies for registration.

This means that in circumstances where, for example, a veterinary surgeon applies for registration after many years of not practising, there is no way that the board can restrict the areas of veterinary science in which

that person may practice, or require that the veterinary surgeon attend relevant refresher courses. This could be a problem for example in the area of surgery where the person has no prior experience or has not kept their skills current. Under the Legal Profession Act, for example, a person with a law degree who has no experience is only entitled to a restricted practising certificate.

The bill gives the Board of Veterinary Surgeons the power to impose conditions on the registration of a veterinary surgeon if the board is satisfied that they are warranted having regard to certain criteria. A veterinary surgeon on whose registration a condition has been imposed by the board may appeal to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal if he or she is dissatisfied. This power is also relevant in relation to the Mutual Recognition Act and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act, both of which provide that a professional registration board is entitled to impose some conditions consistent with mutual recognition principles.

However, the ability of a board to impose these conditions is dependent on the relevant Act under which a person is registered. That Act must include a power to impose conditions on registration. There has been considerable interest on the part of veterinary surgeons seeking registration in New South Wales under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1986 using mutual recognition legislation. The board is concerned that it cannot at present impose any conditions where such conditions are warranted and are consistent with mutual recognition principles. This bill puts the veterinary profession on a new footing. It will now be independent but far more accountable. With the new disciplinary powers proposed it will be better able to protect the public, animal welfare and it will bring other significant benefits to New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Slack-Smith.**

#### **APPROPRIATION BILL**

##### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL**

##### **APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL**

##### **APPROPRIATION (FURTHER BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL**

##### **STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

##### **UNCLAIMED MONEY AMENDMENT BILL**

#### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 31 May.**

**Mr McGRANE** (Dubbo) [10.43 p.m.]: I thank the House for allowing me the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills. The electorate of Dubbo has fared well from the budget handed down last Tuesday by the Treasurer, however many items still need government funding and support. Positive aspects of the budget for the Dubbo electorate relate to the portfolio areas of health and education, and to the building industry. During the next financial year a total of \$39 million will be spent on capital works projects in the Dubbo electorate. In the portfolio area of health a total of \$5,413,000 will be spent in the Dubbo electorate. Of that amount, \$3.578 million will be spent implementing stage three of the Dubbo Base Hospital redevelopment program. Stage three will include an upgrade of the surgical ward and allied health, pathology, pharmacy, and other facilities which will complement the already improved facilities. Stage two of the hospital redevelopment program included the construction of a new emergency and imaging department, as well as medical and surgical in-patient units.

It is important to note that Dubbo Base Hospital serves a large area of western New South Wales, including Bourke and beyond. The hospital staff worked under a lot of stress and pressure during stage one of the hospital upgrade, funding for which totalled \$18 million. That upgrade was completed last year and opened by the Minister. The staff of Dubbo Base Hospital are to be congratulated on working through these difficult times when renovations have taken place. Of course, when a hospital is renovated its much-needed services still need to be provided. It has been a challenging situation for the medical staff at Dubbo Base Hospital, and they are all to be congratulated.

I acknowledge the Government's move to inject more funds into the Macquarie Health Service. As I have said before in this House, there are many financial strains on medical health services in regional New



South Wales, and the Macquarie Health Service is no exception. It is unfortunate that the Macquarie Health Service, together with other health services, has had to implement a policy that in a sense has been brought about because the service could not do anything else with regard to deficit funding. Whilst there has been an injection of new funding, the problem is ever increasing with regard to the payment of sundry debtors. At present sundry debtors with regard to the Macquarie Health Service date back to November, which is an alarming fact. This year the budget for the Macquarie Health Service has been boosted by 5 per cent in recurrent funding, which is about \$4.3 million.

It is also good news to hear that the Government is addressing the growing incidence of mental illness, with an extra \$1.5 million to be spent in the Macquarie and mid-west health areas. The building of a \$1.87 million acute psychiatric in-patient unit also has a number of benefits for the people who live in the Dubbo electorate and beyond. People who suffer from mental illness in the Dubbo and western regions face a long journey to Orange for treatment. This takes them away from their families and support networks, which are very necessary in helping them during their trying periods of illness. Families will now not have to face the added cost of travelling to Orange to help their loved ones to recover. Police resources, which are needed to transport patients to Orange, will also be freed up, to focus on policing issues in their respective commands.

With regard to the portfolio of Education, the Dubbo electorate will receive a total of \$19,743,000 in capital works spending. Dubbo's secondary multi-campus school is the big-ticket item, with \$17,166,000 set aside for its construction. The multi-campus school when completed will be a \$19 million to \$20 million school. The existing secondary education faculties, which will be incorporated into the multi-campus school when operational, have also received \$1,277,000 in funding to upgrade their facilities. With regard to TAFE education, educational facilities have been increased, with \$1,248,000 set aside for building additions to the Rural Skills Centre. The centre is at the forefront in ensuring young people from rural areas are able to forge a career on the land, and in improving practices to ensure their work continues to be productive and efficient.

The final capital works for Dubbo South Primary School will also be completed, with \$52,000 set aside for the improvement of facilities. With the Charles Sturt University and the future multi-campus school, Dubbo is fast becoming one of the educational hubs in regional New South Wales. Education is one of the big issues for parents living in the Dubbo electorate and beyond. The facilities that will exist in Dubbo will rival any centres in New South Wales and the people of western New South Wales will now have an assurance that their children will have access to facilities that already exist in other areas. Dubbo is fortunate in that many skilled people have devoted their time to education in the area. However, facilities are not as good as they could be. The Charles Sturt University and the new multi-campus complex in Dubbo will combine to offer unique further education opportunities into the new millennium.

There is more good news for Dubbo on the capital works front. Government initiatives include the establishment of State Water, which is to operate from that city. Some \$4 million has been set aside for the location of that new entity's headquarters in Dubbo city. The money will be used to extend the existing Department of Land and Water Conservation site. I congratulate the Minister on this major reform priority. It will create 20 jobs in Dubbo, bringing the number of departmental employees to 154. The Government should be commended for its foresight in locating the headquarters of State Water to Dubbo. The Macquarie Valley is at the forefront of efficient water use. We all know that water is one of the scarcest commodities on the Australian continent and consumers and government must use and manage it wisely.

The irrigation industry in the Macquarie Valley is one of the principal employers in the region and is essential to the further development of smaller communities, such as Narromine, in my electorate. The cotton industry in the Macquarie is the second largest in New South Wales and contributes much to the economy, not only of my electorate and that of Barwon but also of the city of Dubbo. It would be a poorer place without the cotton industry. The Department of Land and Water Conservation has also committed \$1.149 million to ongoing work on Burrendong dam, which will be money well spent.

Emergency services in the electorate have also received a funding boost. We are fortunate that \$1 million has been set aside for Wellington's new police station and that \$800,000 is earmarked for the construction of a new fire station at Dubbo. Tenders have already been let on the fire station contract and I hope that the \$800,000 will be spent in the first part of the financial year. The new Wellington police station has been on the agenda for a long time. The idea was first mooted four years before Labor came to office—some nine years ago. Although the project has been foreshadowed for a long time and money was provided in last year's budget, I am a little dismayed that the police properties branch and Wellington Council have not yet agreed on the location of the new station. That is an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs: the money is allocated in the budget but the parties involved cannot come to an arrangement. I hope that a decision will be made in the near future.

The project should have been planned in advance and the council and the Police Service Properties Branch should have designated a site for the new station before the money was allocated. I have not been informed as to the site of the new police station. I hope that the Minister has listened to my comments this morning and will take up this matter. The mayor of Wellington visited me last night and I impressed upon him the importance of reaching a satisfactory agreement quickly about the site of this important new building. Working conditions at the existing police station in Wellington are probably among the worst in the State.

Tourism plays a vital role in the Dubbo electorate. Tourism is worth about \$90 million per annum to Dubbo city. The hub of the tourist industry in western New South Wales is the Western Plains Zoo, which was established 23 years ago and has been developed ever since. The Western Plains Zoo will receive \$250,000 this year for the construction of a new education centre, which will add to the zoo's diverse operations. More money needs to be spent at the zoo as some facilities are past their use-by date. Little money has been spent on maintenance and buildings at Western Plains Zoo since its construction. Major plans are afoot to re-site the zoo's entrance, but additional funding is required if the zoo is to remain the hub of tourist activities in regional New South Wales. If the number of visitors to the zoo decreases, it will have an unfortunate flow-on effect for other tourist attractions throughout my electorate and for other areas that rely on the zoo for spin-off tourist dollars.

This year's tourism budget for New South Wales is \$49.7 million, which should boost rural tourism. I hope that we can all share in the Olympic tourist boom. That has not happened yet, and I hope that more people will visit regional New South Wales after the Olympics. A most successful tourism promotion in my area is the Newell Highway promotion—the Minister visited Dubbo two weeks ago to launch the promotion's seventeenth brochure. I commend the organisers of that promotion, which has spin-offs for all areas associated with the Newell Highway.

The reduction in stamp duty on real estate and insurance transactions is welcome, but I believe that it does not go far enough in encouraging regional investment. The first home buyers market in my electorate has been dormant for the past five years for many reasons, including job insecurity. The cuts in stamp duty and the government incentives offered to first home buyers will help to reactivate this important segment of the economy in regional New South Wales. Recent figures released by the Real Estate Institute reveal a fall in home sales in regional New South Wales, which points to a lack of investment in regional areas.

The key to future investment in areas such as the Dubbo electorate is incentives for first home buyers that allow them to re-enter the housing market, confident that their investments will increase in value. That confidence must be created, and I congratulate the Government on its first home buyers scheme. The housing industry in New South Wales requires a whole-of-government approach. Fragmented government housing services should be combined and the Government should work more closely with representatives of regional New South Wales to develop a strategy that will promote confidence in the building industry.

The cut in stamp duty on insurance premiums is also welcome, but again does not go far enough in addressing the present inequitable situation whereby the Government is taxing a tax. A fire services levy is applied to insurance premiums to which government stamp duty is then added. The situation will be even worse after 1 July when GST applies to the premium, plus the fire services levy plus the stamp duty. That will make insurance prohibitive—as was proven by the hailstorm in Sydney, which revealed that up to 43 per cent of home owners had not insured their properties. This trend will have a major impact on the Government's bottom line as the funds for our emergency service will diminish due to the smaller pool of insurance premiums. Emergency services personnel attend fires and other disasters regardless of insurance considerations. However, those who take out insurance are paying for those who do not. The Government must investigate fairer methods of collecting funds for the emergency services.

The Government's farm safety plan initiative will address the welfare of many people in my electorate. The initiative is the result of co-operation among the unions, farming organisations and Government departments and shows that good results can be achieved when everybody works together in a constructive manner. For far too long, death and injury have resulted from farm accidents. Roll protection equipment being fitted to tractors will go a long way to address farm safety issues. I congratulate the Government on allocating \$2.2 million in the budget to address this problem.

Payroll tax continues to be a major inhibiting factor to regional development. Although I welcome a reduction in payroll tax from 6.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent provided in the budget, payroll tax in New South Wales is still far higher than it is in Queensland and Victoria. The biggest burden for major businesses in my electorate when considering further investment in their industries is payroll tax. The payroll tax issue is also a major hurdle

in enticing businesses from other States to the Dubbo electorate. If regional New South Wales is to develop, payroll tax must be decreased further to bring it into line with our neighbouring States of Queensland and Victoria.

To address the problem of salinity, which is a major worry, the budget contains an allocation of \$5 million. Salinity is really the sleeping giant in conservation issues affecting New South Wales. While I appreciate what has been said by the Minister for Agriculture in relation to the allocation of \$5 million, the amount is a pittance compared to the financial resources that are needed to address the problem. Salinity is a problem not only for people who live on the land but for all those who live in regional New South Wales. The problem must be addressed. There is a need for the Minister to provide supplementary funding to address this critical issue. Salinity has crept up on us.

For too long, very little was done to address the problem. In the last five to 10 years salinity has come to the fore as a major problem. Earlier this year the Salinity Summit, which was held in Dubbo, seemed to whet the appetite of the whole community for widespread recognition of the salinity problem that exists in regional New South Wales and rural areas in other parts of Australia. This is not a problem that can be solved by farmers only. A whole-of-community approach must be taken to resolving the problem because it is a problem that either directly or indirectly affects the whole community.

Increased funding for West 2000 is a plus for the Government in addressing the problems confronting sheep and wool producers, but the most disappointing aspect of the budget was the omission of major funding to address the appalling state of roads in my electorate. Main Road 354 between Tullamore and Narromine and the Renshaw-McGirr Way between Parkes and Wellington are roads that should have the second highest funding priority in my electorate. Those major roads are in an abominable state of disrepair and works to bring them up to an acceptable standard will require funding in addition to the funding already provided by the two local councils in the electorate.

Roads are the lifeblood of any community, and that is particularly the case in the electorate of Dubbo. For maximum economic and social development of communities, better roads are needed to transport goods produced in the local area and to enable people who live in the area to move around. The Government has also allocated \$27 million for the upgrading of wooden bridges and I congratulate the Government on this initiative. However, the allocation is a small amount when compared to the \$700 million being asked for by the Local Government and Shires Associations. When all matters are considered, the electorate of Dubbo has fared reasonably well in this budget but there is still a need for extra funding for the electorate of Dubbo.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH** (Barwon) [11.03 a.m.]: In examining the State budget on behalf of the people who live in my electorate of Barwon and western New South Wales as it relates to agriculture and veterinary services, I point out that a State budget really should provide services and infrastructure not only for people who live in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong but also for people in other areas in New South Wales. As well as providing health and police services, amongst others, addressed by the State budget, the Government must also provide infrastructure so that people are able to conduct their businesses, communicate and lead a normal life.

As far as western New South Wales is concerned, I was very disappointed that the allocation for West 2000 has been decreased from \$3 million last year to \$1.8 million this year. I congratulate the Federal Government on more than matching the State Government's \$1.8 million, which will bring the total level of funding in the program to a standard which, although still a long way from where it should be, at least provides some financial assistance. Agriculture accounts for 2 per cent of the State budget and is the largest employment provider in regional and rural New South Wales. Once again this Government has proved that, as far as it is concerned, the people who live in rural and regional New South Wales are not considered. I say that because in this year's State budget, funding for agriculture has been cut by \$6.7 million and 35 jobs will be lost from the Department of Agriculture.

The department operated a quality assurance program which this year received an allocation of \$9 million less than the amount that was allocated last year. In addition, the department will lose six staff members from that branch. The quality assurance program is designed to ensure that producers and processors of food and fibre meet the best quality standards for plants and animals not only as those standards apply in New South Wales markets but also in relation to overseas markets. In this highly competitive world, New South Wales producers do not need to have their produce sent to overseas markets without quality being assured, thereby making it susceptible to rejection.

**Mr Windsor:** Speak to the gallery.

**Mr SLACK-SMITH:** I am speaking to the gallery. Without quality assurance, it would take only one incident to jeopardise trading arrangements for New South Wales producers. If that occurred, the whole agricultural industry would suffer. I believe that financial and staff cutbacks affecting the quality assurance program are a retrograde step. The budget allocations for agriculture prove that what has been said by Country Labor is nothing but rhetoric. It is obvious that Country Labor has no say in budgetary allocations. The budget indicates that there will be no change in Environmental Protection Authority [EPA] charges, no change in WorkCover, and only a minimal reduction in payroll tax. New South Wales employers pay the highest WorkCover premiums, EPA charges and payroll tax of any State in Australia. As recently as this morning I was talking to the owners of the abattoir at Coonamble, who, after four years of being constantly barraged by Government charges, are closing their doors.

Many businesses are relocating to other States. Barter, in the Riverina district, which is one of the biggest poultry producers in Australia, has moved its operations to Victoria because huge amounts of money will be saved on State charges. In my own home town of Wee Waa the headquarters of the world's largest single cotton producer has moved to Goondiwindi, which is situated just inside the Queensland-New South Wales border, to escape New South Wales charges. All businesses operating in New South Wales, especially agricultural businesses, have been severely hit by Government charges.

I was also very disappointed to note that the budget does not provide an allocation to re-establish the stock squad in New South Wales. The Queensland stock squad comprises 30 members and has a success rate of 40 per cent in apprehending stock thieves, whereas in New South Wales the apprehension rate is nil. One New South Wales police officer was to be appointed as a stock squad member and a stock squad was to be established. That police officer has now been moved sideways in the police force and now performs general duties. The Carr Government's proposal for establishment of a stock squad was total rhetoric. New South Wales has a multimillion-dollar stock theft industry. Thieves are not being caught because police officers have not been trained to track livestock movements or to identify livestock; nor have they been trained in animal husbandry, which would assist them to recognise and speedily identify different breeds and ages of stock. In Coonabarabran, the theft of almost 100 head of cattle was reported to the police. The owner described the stock as Angus cattle. One of the police asked him what colour they were. The budget does not refer to embracing radio frequency identification tags, the national identification program.

The Rural Fire Service is lagging well behind in many areas. The small brigade in my home town, of which I used to be captain, had two trucks two years ago; it now has one second-hand truck and one trailer to service quite a substantial area. The equipment of many fire brigades throughout rural and regional New South Wales is an absolute disgrace. Funding to help buy second-hand fire tankers has been cut by \$200,000 in this budget, and subsidies to local government for brigade stations, training and equipment is at the lowest level since 1997-98. The Rural Fire Service will be provided with 146 new tankers this year. That sounds good, but it is 11 less than last year.

The Carr Labor Government is totally city-centric; it is totally focused on Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong—another reason why regional and rural New South Wales feels left out in the cold. Those feelings are endorsed by Mr John Cobb, President of New South Wales Farmers, who issued a press release headed, "NSW budget fails to deliver any long term vision." We must start to look at the long term. We must start to repair infrastructure—our bridges, roads and railways. The only way wheat can be shifted from the world's largest wheat stack at Walgett is by two trains per night. Trains cannot run in the daytime because the line buckles.

The maximum load on that train line is 2,000 tonnes, whereas most lines would probably take 4,000 or 5,000 tonnes. As a consequence, with a good season coming up—it looks as if it will be a very successful year in the far north-west and central-west of the State—the grain will not be able to be shipped. That is a clear indication of where the Carr Labor Government is heading. The grain is being produced but the infrastructure is not available to send it to export markets, on which we rely.

I welcome the farm safety plan, and in particular the \$2.4 million rebate scheme. Agriculture is the most dangerous occupation in Australia today as far as permanent injury and deaths are concerned. I requested this funding from the Minister quite a long time before the budget was announced and I am pleased that he has responded. The honourable member for Dubbo also referred to infrastructure such as roads and bridges, especially in the Macquarie Valley. The Macquarie Valley communications for commerce have been an absolute disgrace. Of the four bridges in the Macquarie Valley one had a weight limit of two tonnes and the others had a limit of 12 tonnes. Now the two-tonnes weight limit has been lifted to eight tonnes.

It used to be illegal for the school bus to travel on that road. That road is a very important line of communication, not only for trade and commerce but also for children travelling to and from school, and the school bus surely weighs over two tonnes. Many bridges in the Macquarie Valley prevent people getting their cotton seed to the gin for processing and the cotton out for the export markets. The recent rains have provided good sub-soil moisture, but people cannot get the wheat seed into their farms to sow the wheat crop. That is a typical case of commerce and the wealth of New South Wales being completely retarded by this Government's attitude towards rural and regional New South Wales.

I was disappointed that there was no provision in the budget for refurbishment or renewal of Narrabri hospital. I was born in that hospital, not too many years ago, and it was quite old then. The hospital is deteriorating. It could be a National Heritage building! Narrabri needs a new hospital. I welcome the provision of multipurpose services at Boggabri, Gilgandra, Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri. Most of the funding for those services will come from the Federal Government, but I do not care where the money comes from. The hospitals in those four towns need replacing urgently. There are fire hazards, they are dangerous, and the hard-working staff find it very difficult to carry out the work at those hospitals. I welcome also the allocation of \$758,000 for Moree TAFE. It is disappointing that in the last two years we have lost 1,500 TAFE teachers throughout New South Wales. It is rather ironic that money is going to TAFE but the teachers are leaving. That also proves that this Government does not care about regional and rural New South Wales.

I welcome the allocation of \$2.5 million for the re-regulation weir at Warren, which sends the water through to Nyngan and Cobar. That money should have been provided last year because the weir has been in disrepair for about four or five years. The Lightning Ridge Central School will receive \$980,000, which will make it a wonderful school. Lightning Ridge is special to me. When I was quite a bit younger I used to play football—before the tourists arrived. The population has increased dramatically during the past 20 years. I am also disappointed that despite a lot of hard work by councils, especially in the Narrabri area, the Narrabri-Gunnedah Road, which was projected two years ago to be upgraded to B-double standard, has not been yet been completed.

I am also very disappointed that the regional road between Wee Waa and Coonamble, a vital link for not only education but also for commerce, was not allocated any additional funding. I was most disappointed that funding for the road from Narrabri to Bingara, which is really a continuation of the east-west road to Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett, Wee Waa, Narrabri and through to Inverell via Bingara was not included in the budget.

The budget fails to increase police numbers. Police centres in all of regional and rural New South Wales will be understaffed during the Olympics and beyond. I can see that happening for at least 12 months, until the police get back up to speed. But the biggest problem is that, because of the duties that will be assigned to police during the Olympics, by the time they catch up on their courses, overtime and leave, it will be at least 12 months before many rural and regional police will be back on the beat. We do not have enough police now. The idea that such and such a station is up to speed because it has its full complement is a total fallacy. A police sergeant has not been sent to Mungindi for six months, and that is a place that needs police.

Overall, the budget proves that the Carr Labor Government is still totally focused on Sydney and the Olympics, and it continues to pour money into ALP-held electorates, deliberately leaving Liberal- and National-held electorates out in the cold. I was hoping that this budget would change the focus of the Carr Government. Sydney has had a fair go from past budgets, so it was very disappointing that this budget has much the same focus. Rural and regional New South Wales need a fair go; they are not getting it. The electorate of Barwon did get funding for some infrastructure, which I worked very hard to obtain, but, like every other rural and regional electorate in New South Wales, it missed out on some important funding as well.

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.22 a.m.]: Any budget that reduces debt and lowers taxes whilst increasing expenditure in a number of areas by a margin exceeding the consumer price index, provides for job opportunities and prepays the bill for the staging of the Olympic Games only goes to prove that the Carr Government is the best financial manager that this State has had in decades. Once again it has produced a budget that is fair to all. The budget, although it has something for everybody, does tend to concentrate on providing for the most needy in our community. That is why the Treasurer said in his Budget Speech that this budget is every inch a Labor budget.

I instance the first-home buyers scheme. The maximum saving in stamp duty under that scheme is \$6,071. That saving is for people purchasing their first home to the value of \$250,000 in metropolitan areas.

That announcement has not come without its knockers. Some posed the question, "Where in Sydney can you buy a home for \$250,000?" My response to them is that people can buy a house under that price in the Canterbury electorate, and this electorate is only a 20-minute drive to the centre of the city of Sydney—not far out at all. In fact, part of the Canterbury electorate these days could almost be regarded as inner city.

Others say, "But you can't get much for \$250,000." But if you are a first-home buyer anxious to get that kick-start into your own home, rather than get into the rut of say starting a married life paying rent, you will jump at the opportunity to buy a home for \$250,000 when that means a stamp duty tax saving of \$6,071. Another of my responses to the knockers of the scheme is that the scheme extends in metropolitan Sydney to a figure of \$300,000. Up to that figure there are stamp duty savings to be made. The stamp duty savings enabled by this particular budget are a great initiative.

I now refer to a matter which, as far as I am aware, has not yet been covered in any speeches delivered on the budget: that is, the increased funding for Carnivale. This is a matter that interests me because of the multicultural nature of the Canterbury electorate. The Government this year has increased funding for Carnivale by \$300,000, and will be spending a record \$1.5 million on that project alone. That is pleasing indeed, because it was a Labor government that reintroduced Carnivale, which was absolutely annihilated by the Greiner and Fahey governments. It is noteworthy that both of those Premiers were the sons of immigrants, yet they had no regard for Carnivale. The Carr Government has restored Carnivale to its rightful status.

Other initiatives in this budget for the multicultural community—part of the total funding of \$3 million—includes the establishment of a transcultural mental health centre and a migration heritage centre. The Ethnic Affairs Commission's community grants development program also continues to flourish, with an allocation of \$1.5 million this year. More importantly, this Government is allocating \$330,000 aimed at improving the working conditions of migrant women in the textile industry. This is an important initiative because those women really are amongst the most exploited workers in our community. This allocation demonstrates the Government's determination to stamp out such slave labour practices, which still exist in the clothing trade in this State.

Of course, the budget concentrates on the big-ticket items—that is, areas that the Government not only wants to concentrate on but is obliged to concentrate on. I refer to areas such as health, education, community services and police. Health expenditure, for instance, is up this year by \$479 million, in addition to which the Government is spending \$472 million on capital works for new hospitals. I know a bit about this Government's excellent track record in public health expenditure, particularly expenditure on the building of new hospitals, because for three years under Labor budgets the electorate of Canterbury was the recipient of a little more than \$80 million directed towards the new inner west hospital in Canterbury. Under this budget, the program of building and maintenance of hospitals continues. That is good news.

In education, the Government is spending a total of \$7 billion, an increase of \$312 million this year. I want to point to one particular area in the Canterbury electorate that has benefited from the Government's education budget. Ashbury Public School has received approximately \$20,000 to refurbish its canteen. The school decided that it would go ahead with refurbishment of its canteen before it received this government funding. The parents and citizens association spent \$20,000 on that job alone. They were hopeful of receiving dollar-for-dollar funding from the Government. Lo and behold, they received the full amount of that funding. That is another example of the Carr Government's concern for education. Community services funding has increased by \$162 million for services such as disability services, family support, home and community care, and the maintenance of group homes.

On budget day I met with representatives from Family Advocacy and Leadership Development Inc., an organisation that provides support services for families caring for individuals who suffer from mental and physical disabilities. That organisation expressed gratitude to the Government for its budgetary provision to assist in the deinstitutionalisation of the disabled. Indeed, the organisation went so far as to say that the budget was the Government's best effort to date in its aim to deinstitutionalise disabled persons. Those people can now enjoy a better level of independence and a much better quality of life.

The police budget has increased and police numbers have also increased. I have first-hand experience of the Government's excellent work in that regard. A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new Ashfield police station. That station is responsible for administering the Ashfield area command, which is responsible for more than half of the Canterbury electorate. It was regarded as one of the two worst police stations in metropolitan Sydney. There is now a new state-of-the-art \$4 million station at Ashfield. I

know that the new station will contribute to a reduction of crime in the area. Obviously, if police have better resources and facilities, their operations will become more efficient. The new police station will go a long way towards ensuring proper policing and it will contribute to reduce crime in the Canterbury electorate.

The Canterbury electorate benefited from a sizeable budget allocation for public housing. This financial year more than \$1.3 million is to be spent in my electorate to complete another 27 units of accommodation. I am always amazed at what can be achieved. This accommodation is essential because Canterbury electorate has one of the highest waiting lists for public housing in New South Wales. However, that area is built out. There is no green space in Canterbury and no large tracts of land on which public housing can be built. So the building of public housing is difficult. However, the Government has ensured that yet another 27 Department of Housing dwellings will be completed this financial year.

I am particularly delighted with some of the minor items in the budget. There is a budgetary allocation of \$21,000 for new equipment for local State emergency service units, which includes computer equipment; an additional \$186,000 will be spent on road safety initiatives in my area, and that includes things such as roundabouts and other street calming devices; and \$280,000 will be ploughed into upgrading works along Bexley Road, not to mention the money that is being spent on rebuilding the road bridge over the railway line at Bexley Road. This road funding is in addition to the funding provided for main roads and the grants provided to the four local government bodies within the Canterbury electorate.

While I am on the subject of roads, this year the Government will spend \$12 million on the M5 East, which is largely a tunnel. Incidentally, the M5 East is the largest project ever undertaken by the Roads and Traffic Authority—it is even bigger than the Sydney Harbour Tunnel or Anzac Bridge projects. Thanks to that funding boost of \$12 million this year, the project is progressing on time. An amount of \$37,000 has been allocated in this year's budget for the provision of school crossing supervisors, which I imagine are lollipop people. That allocation will be well received by local schools.

There has been tremendous support for the 2000-01 budget. Apart from the meagre coverage of how the budget was received by the Opposition, I am yet to see or hear a media report that is critical of this budget. From day one the budget was received with accolades from families, first home buyers, the elderly, the disabled, commuters, educators, the rural sector, health and welfare workers, law enforcement agencies and environmentalists. The list goes on. Even after day one the groups to whom I just referred—they have now had a chance to digest the budget—are still making complimentary comments, and so they should. After all, this budget, which is big on expenditure, is also big on saving. One newspaper put it adequately by stating that the Government is putting aside \$830 million in a rainy day fund. Yet again the budget will achieve a cash surplus. At the time that these things were achieved the Government increased expenditure in all the critical areas of government. For that reason the budget bills deserve the full support of the House.

**Mr WEBB** (Monaro) [11.37 a.m.]: While listening to the Treasurer's Budget Speech I noticed that many of the initiatives he announced for rural and New South Wales were recycled announcements, such as the Eden Gateway tourism initiative, which was announced last year. I will refer to that matter later. The Government's cynical smoke and mirrors trick is designed simply to deceive the people of New South Wales and to cover up its massive infrastructure expenditure in the Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong areas. The Government is apparently pandering to its newest subfaction, but it is unable to deliver infrastructure development that is vital to regional and rural New South Wales. The Government specialises in recycled rhetoric, inadequate consultation and building up the hopes of country New South Wales people before abandoning them.

That charade is best demonstrated by the reductions in the budget allocation for agriculture. Although the Government stands to gain from its deregulation of the dairy industry, its so-called Country Labor subfaction has not supported the need to urgently debate the plight of the State's dairymen and their impending crisis. That neglect was demonstrated again yesterday when the deregulation initiatives were debated in this House. There is no allocation for a State-based support scheme for the industry during the forthcoming structural change, but I am not surprised.

This Government has treated primary industry groups and communities with disdain. That was evident in its complete mismanagement and bungling of the structural reform of the forestry industry in the south-east of the State. The Government has made promises at various dog and pony shows. It has been lavish in its rhetoric but it has not subsequently been committed to the proper development of structural change in rural areas. No mention has been made in the budget of the vital infrastructure works necessary for the construction of the

softwood mill at Bombala, although a commitment has been made by this State. There is a budget allocation of \$300,000 for forestry road upgrades, which are vital to that infrastructure but which are not necessarily linked to the project because of the ambiguity of the Government's statements. Where are the other funds? Why has the Government not announced them? Why is it keeping people in Bombala dangling on a string of hope?

The Carr Government has set a precedent in helping industries to restructure. It provided \$80 million to the hardwood sector of the timber industry, but little of that was seen in Bombala. The softwood industry, like the dairy industry, demands assistance and support. It is no wonder the dairy industry peak body, like the forest industry, has taken the Government to task for perpetuating what amounts to nothing more than a cruel hoax. The recent regional forestry agreement announcement amounted to a declaration of more than 100 new national parks. That is a massive reduction in forest reserves of 324,000 hectares which further decimates the industry. The stance taken by the Government, on the one hand, to deregulate the dairy industry of New South Wales and, on the other hand, to call for reregulation by the Federal Government, is unbelievable. The Carr Government, the Minister for Agriculture and their Country Labor subfaction have continued to white ant these important industries by their hypocritically impossible stance.

With massive water reform on our doorstep there is no mention in the budget of compensation to affected landowners or, indeed, proper funding for the changes. This is like the paltry increase for dealing with the major problem of salinity. The Premier spoke about the problem in Dubbo, and it was thought there may have been a major allocation towards helping landowners, managers and local government to come to terms with it. But no, like other country issues, it was not thought to be important enough. It did not even rate 10 per cent of the funding lavished on Sydney public transport. In the words of the National Party leader, "Behind the glossy budget books we find a litany of cuts that do nothing but damage a section of our society that has worn the cost of the Olympic spending spree during the past six years."

That insult, coupled with further cost overruns for the Olympics, which has blown out by \$100 million during the past 12 months, are other examples of the fiscal mismanagement of the Carr Government. I suspect there is more to come. These insults should not be inflicted on country people. They accept change. They accept the basic cost of the Olympics. Now, in this time of record growth, they deserve a fair share of the available funds. They demand to be taken seriously by the Government, which continues to display remarkable ignorance and an immature understanding of the needs of country people, who are struggling to adapt and cope with change.

I was looking for a commitment in the budget papers to fund a new ambulance station to replace the poor and inadequate temporary station in Queanbeyan. I could not find one. Within the \$472 million capital works health budget I would have thought there would have been room for the relocation and construction of this facility, which serves the city of Queanbeyan and the greater part of south-east New South Wales. For the past six years country people have put up with declining services and deteriorating infrastructure to pay for the \$2 billion plus Sydney Olympics capital works bonanza. The Government is not even willing to conduct an audit of infrastructure in regional New South Wales, despite such a proposal being put before New South Wales Cabinet earlier this year. Clearly there is no genuine commitment to the provision of infrastructure in country areas.

I am pleased to see a commitment in the budget papers to stage one of the Jerrabomberra primary school—\$681,000 of a total \$2.83 million. This funding has been nine years in coming. I am pleased to see also the final allocations for the nearly completed Bungendore school. I am alarmed that there is no funding for the Cooma North school hall or the Queanbeyan West school hall. Both of those facilities are grossly inadequate. In the cold winter those schools have to be split as they are unable to cater for the total needs of the students. This is a disappointing result. The education of our primary schoolchildren is the most important thing we can do for them, their parents, ourselves and our future.

Although the "spin and speak" looks like a real commitment to regional and rural New South Wales, the facts do not stack up. In health, education, law and order, transport and most other portfolio areas massive expenditure is earmarked for Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Again, in this time of prosperity and growth, those living in rural, regional, remote and isolated areas of our State are crying out for attention and demanding a fair go. The Treasurer and the Premier have squandered the opportunity in the first Olympics-free budget to repay rural and regional New South Wales, despite a surplus and the goods and services tax [GST] windfall that is on the way.

The Treasurer says that more than 60 per cent of the budget for new road construction and road maintenance will be spent in regional and rural New South Wales. We welcome the restoration of the Coalition's



60:40 ratio. I am pleased the electorate of Monaro will receive some of that funding. I note the planned expenditure on the Alpine Way, with \$11 million having been allocated to remediation works. But full funding is needed for other projects, not only planning, study and initial funding. Funding of \$200,000 has been allocated for the Pambula Bridge, but substantially more is needed to complete it. I am pleased to see that \$2 million has been allocated to the Eden wharf commercial infrastructure. A further \$3 million is to follow. In the health and education portfolios rural New South Wales received less than a quarter of the respective overall capital works allocations. Despite one-third of the population living in country New South Wales with its real tyranny of distance and isolation, there is an ongoing deficit in rural funding in those areas.

Country people can only stand by and watch in amazement as the Government lavishes \$646 million on metropolitan projects such as the upgrade of the Sydney to Newcastle railway line. Nothing, not even a cent, even on a no-net-cost-to-government basis, has been made available for Speedrail. That project, which is largely privately funded, is vital for the south-east of the State. It will involve something like 18,000 jobs in the construction phase and 2,500 jobs during operation. Importantly, it will put off the need for an airport at Badgerys Creek for at least 25 years, but it is apparent that the Government just does not care. Another \$410 million has been allocated for other transport infrastructure projects in the Sydney region. And to slap country people in the face, the total roads program is being cut by \$111 million, resulting in the loss of 158 Roads and Transport Authority jobs across New South Wales. Obviously, many of those will be in country areas.

The Government estimates that only \$9 million will be spent by tourists in regional New South Wales in September and October. That is only part of the estimated 18 per cent of the international tourist dollar that manages to escape the magnet of Sydney. It is another indication of the Carr Government's lack of forward planning and initiative when it comes to the Olympics and tourism in regional and rural New South Wales. There has been a re-announcement of \$129,000 for the Eden Gateway, yet the New South Wales Snowy Mountains ski season has just started. This morning I have been at the Australian Tourism Exchange at Darling Harbour for the annual international promotion of what New South Wales has to offer. There is snow from Perisher, snowmen and a map of Australia. The New South Wales ski season brings \$500 million into the State, and the New South Wales Government should commit more to the promotion of tourism. After all, that is one of its stated aims.

The Government's announcement of cuts to payroll tax, a tax that restrains job growth in rural and regional areas, is an example of another breach by the Government of earlier promises. The heavy reliance of the Government on taxation shows the complete lack of understanding by the ignorant and arrogant Carr ministry of trying to compete for new businesses for our State against the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and other States. Many opportunities have been lost in the Monaro electorate, with businesses relocating to other States. The Coalition's proposed Cross Border Commission would examine such anomalies and recommend a rapid move towards the payroll tax rates of our competitors.

Each person in New South Wales is now taxed at the rate of \$2,157 per person per year, the highest rate in Australia. How can we compete? But there's more! While the Government moans about the Federal Government's GST, it is adding stamp duty after the GST, even though it is the recipient of all of the proceeds of the tax. The Government intends to increase a range of licence fees and charges so that it can continue its extravagant expenditure in the Sydney area and continue to legislate against productive segments of our society and impose further regulations on local government without providing proper funding for the implementation of those initiatives.

Demands on regional communities will simply make them unviable, one such demand being State environmental planning policy 58, which provides for the protection of future Sydney water in the Tallaganda shire, more than 300 kilometres away, where the pristine Shoalhaven River rises and flows, giving productivity, life and growth to that area. The council has now been told, "No more development, no more rural residential subdivision, no more growth". We hear empty rhetorical statements about potential major problems confronting the whole State, such as salinity, the decline in native vegetation, environmental degradation and global warming. We already know of these problems and some of the solutions. However, the Government has not allocated sufficient funds from the right areas for us even to begin to combat the problems. There has been only a \$5 million increase in funding to deal with the problem of salinity. That is not enough. A total of 35 jobs from the Department of Agriculture and 35 jobs from the Department of Land and Water Conservation will be cut, hypocritically, by this so-called green and country-focused Government. It simply has no idea.

So much for the Premier's claim that the Salinity Summit in Dubbo was about saving Australia and the agricultural future of Australia! Talk is indeed cheap, as I have learnt from the Premier's performances in the

House, the Treasurer's broken promises, and the Premier's evident lack of willingness to accept responsibility for his actions. There is no funding for the regional drought initiatives and no support for Monaro farmers who have held on, trying to rebuild herds and flocks and put up with wingless grasshoppers. Those natural disasters get little acknowledgment and no funding. Farmers are supposed to cope, insure and just battle on. Yet when a hail storm or bushfire hits Sydney, it is a natural disaster. And guess who volunteers to come and help? The poor farmers with the backside out of their trousers and their country friends, the city's poor lost cousins—that's who! There is no extra funding to support the wild dog control programs which have just been initiated. There is no support for sheep farmers whose properties adjoin the ever-increasing area of national parks and who continue to suffer severe losses as a result of attacks by feral animals on their stock.

There is no scope within the budget to fund subsidies to enable farmers and land managers to obtain reasonably priced supplies of the replacement chemical containing fluoropropanate, the old Frenock, which is vital to combat the problem of serrated tussock which is currently threatening more than 800,000 hectares of our State. Tens of millions of dollars are needed to combat this weed and other weeds of major concern, such as African lovegrass, fireweed, blackberry, Scotch broom and the many thistles throughout Monaro and across the State. However, this budget allocates only \$6.7 million for that purpose, and many urban councils have their fingers in that pot.

The budget is anti-farmer and reveals the hypocrisy of Labor's newest sub-faction, Country Labor. Hospital waiting lists are blowing out, beds and theatres are closing and there is a morale crisis among many medical professionals. However, the Government consistently fails adequately to fund our health system. There is a commitment \$605 million for Aboriginal housing in Monaro; there is another commitment of \$935 million for land and housing in Queanbeyan and Eden—\$562 million of that in Eden—and a roads allocation of \$21 million across the electorate. School halls, good country roads, viable small businesses and adequate town water and sewage services are essential to regional and rural communities, which do not have the public transport options or the same facilities as their city cousins.

City-based Labor governments, no matter what factions they may contain, are hopelessly ignorant and simply cannot deliver. This year's budget is similar to last year's budget. Although there is more than \$152 million of allocated expenditure to Monaro and it is anticipated that jobs in the electorate will increase by 2,000, much of regional and rural New South Wales is desperate for more. A greater commitment to country New South Wales would take the weight off Sydney and provide a more sustainable future for us all. The budget did not provide real incentives for young farmers who are building their careers in rural Australia. What happened to the Premier's regional consultative committee's recommendation to decentralise government departments and subagencies to country towns and regional areas? The Carr Government lacks the vision needed to reinvigorate rural New South Wales, it lacks any real knowledge of regional and rural issues, and it lacks a commitment to country New South Wales. It has delivered a new millennium budget containing only lost opportunities.

**Mr WINDSOR** (Tamworth) [11.54 a.m.]: As well as commenting on the affect of the budget on my electorate, I intend to spend some time analysing the figures in the budget papers and reflecting on my concern about the way the budget documents are presented not only to members of Parliament but also to the broader community. One would have to say that in overall economic terms the budget, which delivers a surplus, is a responsible one. Some aspects of the budget deserve closer scrutiny, and the way the budget papers are put together needs to be scrutinised in the future. Honourable members may remember that recently I asked the Premier a question about capital works funding. I can understand the sensitivity in relation to that issue, but it highlights the need to revisit the way the budget documents are presented to the public.

Some areas in the budget documents are not as transparent as they should be. The figures are available; they must be available to deliver the totals contained in the budget, and the Auditor General would be aware of the process. I am not alleging that there has been any sort of misappropriation in any sense, but the way the budget papers are put together should be improved. First, I shall reflect on some of the outcomes for the Tamworth electorate and the budget papers themselves. As I said in a private member's statement recently, I was absolutely delighted to see that the budget provided funding of \$3.7 million for rebuilding the accident and emergency facility at Tamworth Base Hospital.

I am delighted about that for a number of reasons. I congratulate the Minister for Health on the way he has conducted himself, particularly in my electorate but also in other parts of the State. He has taken a serious look at the needs of the Tamworth electorate not only in relation to the accident and emergency facility. He played a major role in delivering the Westpac rescue helicopter service to the Northern Tablelands area and

north-west New South Wales. I am sure my fellow independent, the honourable member for Northern Tablelands, and the honourable member for Barwon will congratulate the Minister for Health on his role in facilitating the delivery of an aeromedical retrieval service to that part of the State. I commend the Minister for his role in relation to the accident and emergency department at Tamworth Base Hospital.

Honourable members would be aware that Tamworth Base Hospital is the largest base hospital in regional New South Wales. The hospital's accident and emergency department has been overworked. An enormous number of people go through that facility; its throughput is similar to that of some major metropolitan hospitals. Conditions in the accident and emergency department are cramped. I publicly congratulate the staff at Tamworth Base Hospital on the way they have conducted themselves during the years in that cramped facility. I also congratulate the staff and the board—and I have been critical of the board from the time to time in the past—on the way they demonstrated to the Minister the need for this funding. This issue has not been fought on the front pages of newspapers; in fact, many people were not aware that a process was in train to deliver funding for the construction of these buildings. It was done on a needs basis, it was done quietly behind the scenes, and I congratulate all those who were involved in that process.

The Tamworth Base Hospital and Health Service has also received funding for mental health—which, I am sure honourable members will agree, is a critical area—for a 10-bed accommodation facility at the Banksia health unit. An amount of \$1.6 million is to be spent on the project, which is much needed. The Banksia unit is a regional unit that services the north and north-west of the State. Funding has been allocated for the continuation of work at both Chaffey Dam and Keepit Dam, Keepit Dam being a very large storage dam for the irrigation area. Funding has also been allocated for Aboriginal housing at Kootingal, the New South Wales Police Service, the Tamworth Radio Communications Centre, State Forests, and the State Emergency Service. The Tamworth electorate has also been allocated the general roads funding that most electorates receive. In terms of the money being spent in the electorate, funding has been delivered for the most important project in my view—that is, the rebuilding of the accident and emergency facility at Tamworth base hospital.

I turn now to the budget papers. I refer in particular to the State Asset Acquisition program, which is dealt with in Budget Paper No. 4. As members would be aware, Country Independent Alliance have prepared an analysis to provide an overview of the way in which the figures for capital works funding have been put together. We have analysed the budgets back to 1991. I can provide a copy of the graph to those honourable members who are interested. Irrespective of political persuasion, the government of the day invariably spins the line that its budget is a great budget. The Coalition said that when it was in government, and now that Labor is in office it is saying the same thing.

**Mr Moss:** We mean it.

**Mr WINDSOR:** The honourable member for Canterbury, the Parliamentary Secretary who is at the table, interjects. He and I have a coalition of interests in terms of our high regard for the Bulldogs. I am sure that they received some funding in the budget.

**Mr Moss:** Well, they won last weekend.

**Mr WINDSOR:** Yes, and they have obviously been paid. The reason that the Country Independent Alliance is embarking on this process to provide an overview of the budgetary process is that, as I have said, irrespective of who is in government it is always a good budget for that particular government. Some years ago we developed a formula that looked as objectively as any formula can at capital works expenditure for identifiable projects. We define country electorates as non-Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong electorates. That is by no means a slur on those areas. We have simply tried to produce an objective assessment of where the funding is going. This year's figures show that there has been a marked increase in capital works expenditure in country electorates, coming from a fairly low base. In fact, country electorates have received 15.9 percent of the capital works expenditure referred to in the government sector portion of Budget Paper No. 4.

The Premier, the Treasurer and others would be aware that country New South Wales comprises about 30 per cent of the population of this State and that it occupies about 90 per cent of the land mass. Therefore one would believe that country electorates would receive, on average, around 30 per cent of the capital works funding in any particular year. As I have said, this year country electorates have received 15.9 percent of capital works funding. I make it clear that that is the government sector portion, the taxpayer-funded portion, of the budget. Honourable members who have perused the budget papers would be aware that the State Asset Acquisition program is divided into two areas, one being the general government sector, the taxpayer-funded section of the document, and the other the public trading enterprise sector, which is essentially funded by fees and charges imposed in respect of bodies such as Sydney Water.

The capital works funding process has been criticised in the past because it does not allow for the inclusion of roads funding. I recall that last year the honourable member for Port Macquarie and the honourable member for Coffs Harbour were critical of the fact that the process did not include roads funding. In order to include roads funding, obviously it is necessary to remove the Federal re-spend that occurs through the State process. A lot of the moneys allocated for roads are in fact Federal moneys that are reannounced in the State budget papers. As I have said, this year country electorates received 15.9 per cent of capital works funding, excluding roads funding. When one includes roads funding in the process, the figure increases to 17.4 per cent. Obviously that is not equitable, given that country electorates make up 30 per cent of the State's population.

The other day the Premier missed an opportunity to capitalise on the question I raised in this House. I do not think he fully comprehends the analysis that we have put in place. Last year 13.2 per cent of the State's total capital works funding went to country electorates. This year that funding has been increased to 15.9 per cent, and it has come from a base of 8 per cent in 1996 when an enormous amount of money was taken out of the process to pay for Olympics infrastructure. In other words, since 1996 capital works expenditure in country electorates has increased from 8 per cent to 15.9 per cent. We have further analysed those figures to see where the money is going in terms of country electorates.

At some future date we will put together an analysis to reveal the extent of the pork-barrelling that is going on. Of that funding, 54 per cent is being spent on what we call coastal country, the country areas east of the Great Dividing Range, and 46 per cent is being spent west of the Great Dividing Range. I will repeat the figures with regard to capital works expenditure for previous years so that honourable members will have an idea of the type of largesse that has been extended to country electorates over the last decade. On our analysis, this budget is the second-best budget of the decade in terms of allocation of capital works funding to country electorates. In 1991-92, 17 per cent of the total capital works expenditure—that is, the government sector portion, the taxpayer-funded portion—was spent in country electorates.

In 1992-93 that figure fell to 14 per cent. These are the years when the Coalition was in office. In 1993-94 the figure fell to 12 per cent. In 1994-95 it came down to 10 per cent. That was the end of the Coalition's Government's term in office. I know that Coalition members would say that it is a dreadful Labor Party we have in government, that it will never do anything for country electorates. However, when one analyses what former Coalition governments did for country electorates when in office, one sees that it was not terribly brilliant. In fact, if one removes the Olympics expenditure from the process, there is very little difference between the percentage spending levels of the Labor Party and those of the Coalition. I suggest that those who argue that one political party services country people better than the other are quite wrong.

In 1991-92, 17 per cent of the total capital works expenditure was allocated to country electorates. In 1992-93 the figure fell to 14 per cent, in 1993-94 it fell to 12 per cent, and in 1994-95 it fell to 10 per cent. In 1995-96 with the change of government the figure increased to 11 per cent, and in 1996-97, when \$600 million was spent on the Olympics, it went down to 8 per cent. In 1997-98, the allocation was increased to 9 per cent; in 1998-99, to 11 per cent; last year to 13 per cent, and this year to just under 16 per cent. As I said earlier, those percentages exclude allocations for roads. If roads are included, the percentages would be increased by approximately 2 per cent.

I noted with interest the Premier's recent comments in response to a question on the proportion of the budget allocated to country New South Wales. I am pleased to note that the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs is present in the Chamber because he might be able to convey my remarks to the Premier and the Treasurer. The State budget documents that are made available to non-Government members and to the general public contain a column showing an allocation to "*Variation*" of \$340 million. In the Country Independent Alliance's financial analysis, "*Variation*" has been removed from the total. The alliance began its calculations with an allocation of \$2.7 billion for the Government sector, removed the road funding component of \$989 million and the "*Variation*" category, and then calculated the percentage.

The black hole in the process is that the alliance was unable to discover what expenditure in the "*Variation*" category related to. The allocation is a large sum—about 20 per cent of the total budget—so I encourage the Premier and the Treasurer to make those details and figures available. I am not suggesting that a massive document ought to be circulated, but the point I make is that those figures must be readily accessible from computer databases. When the Treasurer delivered his Budget Speech, it was the first time that anyone had said that country New South Wales represents 27 per cent of the population and receives the 35 per cent of the Treasury cake, so to speak.

If the Treasurer was in a position to make a public statement containing the statistics he mentioned, he must have ready access to detailed statistical information. The Premier has stated that what I have been saying about the 15.9 per cent allocation for country New South Wales is wrong. He has probably made very similar comments about me over a number of years, but I challenge him for the good of the Government to prove that I am wrong. Obviously, the Premier would have access to departmental computerised information. I would be particularly interested in the Premier clarifying whether the allocations shown as "*Variation*" account for a higher percentage of expenditure in country areas than has been suggested by the Country Independent Alliance.

The statistical analysis conducted by the alliance was based on identifiable projects that appear in the budget papers and the alliance believes that the figure it has cited is correct. However, if the Premier examines statistical information held by Government departments, I would be interested to know whether expenditure appearing in the column titled "*Variation*" applies predominantly to regional areas, and I very much doubt that it does. If the Premier is able to demonstrate that that is indeed the case, he may very well have truth on his side. I encourage the Treasurer in relation to next year's State budget to make statistical information as transparent as is possible so that people are able to draw their own conclusions about allocation trends.

The big issue for this year's state budget is one that I am sure will be referred to by many honourable members during the course of debate, namely, the salinity problem. The honourable member for Dubbo referred to it earlier in his contribution. I attended the Salinity Summit in Dubbo and I thought it was an excellent meeting of minds on a very important issue. I am informed that the Premier intends to make an announcement in relation to salinity, and I hope that the announcement will include additional funding which will enable the Government to come to grips with this vital issue. Obviously, a strong partnership must be forged between the Federal and State Governments and the catchment groups to address the problem adequately.

In future budgets when expenditure associated with the Olympic Games is no longer a factor, salinity should feature as a major budget item. It is certainly the case that there will be an enormous return on funds invested in the resolution of the problem, and I believe that the community generally would have no objection to major funding resources being allocated for that purpose. Another issue that should be investigated is the cash-flow position of various hospital and regional health boards throughout New South Wales. As the honourable member for Dubbo stated earlier during this debate, in his electorate those bodies are six months behind. I am not certain of the figures relating to the Tamworth electorate, I know that those bodies are struggling against a drastic shortage of cash.

**Mr TINK** (Epping) [12.14 p.m.]: During my speech on the budget bills that are before the House, I will focus on the allocation for the Police Service. The Government has claimed a record police budget which, on closer scrutiny, is more problematic than has been suggested by the Minister and the Government. Comparing the increases in this year's budget with the allocations made in last year's budget, a number of matters need to be taken into account. A deficit of \$11.9 million has been brought forward. Ongoing pay increases for police amount to \$33.9 million. Inflation based on Treasury estimates must also be factored in at \$9.5 million. Olympic security costs amount to \$83.1 million. In addition, the appointment of 500 additional police officers and 136 additional civilian personnel, which is required to match the Government's election commitment—will amount to almost \$40 million. The Graffiti Wipe-out program will cost \$300,000. Matters referred to in the Appropriation (Further Budget Variations) Bill which was recently passed by this Parliament relate to expenditure incurred last year amounting to \$23.4 million.

Expenditure on those items totals \$179 million and immediately reduces the increase in this year's budget allocation for police. Frankly, after factoring in those matters, the real increase in the Police Service budget allocation is small change as New South Wales faces its greatest challenge from a police and security point of view; that is the challenge presented by the Olympic Games which will take place in a few weeks time. Against that general background, a number of specific matters will be addressed during my speech. The first is the ongoing Police staffing crisis which is now fairly starkly identified in Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, at page 16-22.

At the end of the financial year on 30 June, the Minister of Police will be responsible for 17,008 people comprising sworn police officers and civilian personnel. That compares with 17,360 staff in the same category when the most recent State election was held, according to the police strength statement of 31 March 1999. The Government's promise of an increase in police officers and civilian personnel to free police officers from paper work and allow them to return to the front line, so to speak, means that there is no way that this State can afford a decrease in the numbers of sworn police officers or civilian personnel. During these weeks immediately preceding the Olympic Games, the number of police personnel is 300 less than it was at the time of the most recent State election last year, and that is very troubling.

As the Olympic Games draw closer, the people of New South Wales are witnessing the most extraordinary steps being taken to downgrade police staffing levels throughout this State to make up for the shortfall in police strength during the Olympic Games. This shortage should have been anticipated by the Government. If it had been anticipated, the shortfall could have been addressed but the Government has not taken any steps to make sure that the Police Service is at full strength during the Olympic Games. Regrettably it is now too late to recruit police for the Olympics but for the life of me I cannot understand why even at this late hour a comprehensive attempt is not made to get retired police officers involved in Olympic Games security. In my view, the budget impact of such a proposal does not outweigh the possible problems that might arise in the Olympic precincts or, indeed in other places throughout the State because of the current shortage of police.

In relation to it being an industrial problem, it would be easy to draw an industrial fence, so to speak, around the use of retired police during the Games so that there is no long-term industrial risk to police jobs beyond the Olympics. I believe it is in the interests of police to have these people available. The Retired Police Officers Association has indicated its willingness to make these people available to alleviate the enormous strain and potential risk to police in the Olympic precincts and elsewhere in the State if the numbers remain the way they are. Other government departments are making use of retired personnel. Recently, the State Rail Authority advertised in a major Sydney newspaper for retired train drivers to come back and drive trains during the Olympic Games. If the State Rail Authority can do it, for the life of me I cannot see why the Police Service is not able to do so.

I am extremely concerned about the issue of police numbers foreshadowed in the budget estimates. No reference was made to the special allocation and program outlined for assistance to be provided by retired police officers. It is interesting to note that the Minister for Police is always talking about record police numbers but the truth was revealed on 15 May at the Police Association Biennial Conference in Wollongong. I indicated at the conference that police numbers would not be as high for the Olympics as they were during the election. On radio 2BL the following day, Philip Clark interviewed the Commissioner of Police who expressly conceded that that was the position and, to his credit, acknowledged the police numbers problem. I believe that the safety of the community, and the Government's responsibility to ensure it, is bound up in the number of police available for duty and the number budgeted for by the Government. The Government has failed to do what it promised during the election campaign, and has failed to honour the significant undertakings it has given to the people of Sydney, the people of Australia and the visitors who will come here—that is, a guarantee of and public safety. That is a matter of great concern.

Another matter to which I specifically refer is the ongoing police station capital works program. Once again, 92 per cent of the police station capital works budget will be spent in Government seats and the remainder in one Independent seat. No money will be spent in Coalition seats which nevertheless represent a significant proportion of the people of New South Wales. Whatever explanation the Minister gives, the fact remains that Narellan police station was recognised, not only by the Coalition when in government but by the current Government, as a station requiring urgent priority. As the Minister well knows, the Government recognised early in its term of office that rebuilding Camden police station which I visited with the honourable member for Camden, at Narellan has to be an urgent priority. The budget estimates have now removed all reference to Narellan, for solely political reasons. That ought to be a priority; it was a priority for this Government but that is no longer the case because it is in a Coalition-held seat.

The honourable member for Wagga Wagga has gone to extraordinary lengths to highlight the importance of a new police station at Wagga Wagga which has been repeatedly recognised by the Government during the past few years. However, again because it is a Coalition seat, notwithstanding problems relating to occupational health and safety of front line police in Wagga Wagga which is of great concern to the Police Association, nothing is happening. Similarly, the rebuilding of Chatswood police station has been recognised by all and sundry as requiring top priority. It is absurd that cars being held in a police compound at Chatswood as a result of having been involved in collisions, ram-raids and armed hold-ups were getting knocked off because the compound was old and not secured.

It is extraordinary that major crime scene evidence is being stolen from a police station compound. That is clear recognition that there is a need for Chatswood police station to be upgraded, as the honourable member for Willoughby and the Leader of the Opposition have repeatedly emphasised to honourable members and as the Minister has repeatedly acknowledged. It is therefore fair to conclude that the allocation of resources for police station capital works is politically motivated. At the end of the day that is a disgraceful approach to the safety of front-line police in Wagga Wagga, Chatswood or the Camden-Narellan area, who deserve the same consideration as police working in the electorate of the Minister for Police. If nothing else counts, that ought to.

A number of other issues of concern were raised in the narrative section of the budget papers relating to police. Significant reference was made to the police assistance line. My concern about the police assistance line is that it is simply becoming a way in which the Police Service, which does not have sufficient numbers of staff, can redefine itself out of more and more front line police work. The Government is redefining more and more work to be handled by telephone operators in Tuggerah or Lithgow as not being front line police work. Generally speaking the public wants more interaction with their local police with what they regard as serious crimes relating to property theft, malicious damage, motor vehicle theft, stealing and other significant crimes.

In practical terms to be confronted effectively with a 1800 number to speak to a public servant hundreds of kilometres away who logs calls, which I understand are significantly backlogged for verification and checking by experienced investigators, is a crummy system. They deal with what the average person believes are front-line crimes that the police should deal with directly on a one-to-one basis but they are increasingly redefined into a telephone answering system. The police assistance lines provides a mechanism for this Government to deal with the police resource crisis that it has created, rather than delivering effective and efficient police services to the public in respect of crimes that the public what the police to investigate.

I note that reference is made in the budget papers to the constable education program. I place on record my concern that the latest figures published by the Police Association in the March edition of *Police News* shows that probationary constables accounted for 20 per cent of resignations and constables accounted for a further 30 per cent of resignations. To put it another way 50 per cent of Police Service resignations for March were officers who had been in the job less than two years. There is something drastically wrong with the way in which junior police who have been in the Academy are being led on the street. I believe that the police leaders on the streets are incredibly overstretched which is evidenced, amongst other things, by the reduction in the number of Sergeant positions in the service—of the order of 471 front-line leader positions. It is obvious, from the number of resignations by young police, that they are crying out for front-line leadership. In the face of this problem, the Government cannot reduce the number of sergeant positions by almost 500.

It concerns me that a number of people who sign up for the constable education program and are given scholarships by the Government obviously have no intention at all of becoming police. As I understand, the selection of police officers does not occur until they have been through the Charles Sturt University course. A significant number of positions in that course are being taken up by people who have no intention of becoming police, who may be using the course as part of a credit towards a psychology degree or an arts degree. We must look closely at the applications for entry to the Police Service and in some way vet people who express a desire to be involved in these police programs before they spend a year taking up places at the university, on a scholarship paid for out of the police budget. There is something wrong with the way in which that system is currently structured.

There are a number of other issues that I wish to touch on briefly in the time available to me. I note that the budget makes more money available for the police radio network. Whilst that funding is welcome, it must be said that the money allocated last year and the previous year for the police radio network has been basically squandered through the appalling approach to the letting of the police radio contract to Motorola over Plessey, breaking just about every rule in the book, involving, it seems, many senior police in the service whose duty it is to manage police resources effectively and efficiently. I sincerely hope that the money allocated in this year's budget will be more effectively allocated and spent by the Government and by senior police than were the last two allocations.

The fact remains that, notwithstanding very significant allocations approved by this Parliament for the police radio budget, front-line police everywhere in relatively recent times have been working alone. One police officer working on highway patrol duties in the south-west was bashed, and ended up having to shoot the person who allegedly was bashing him. That officer could not get his radio to work. This Parliament has put a lot of money into getting a decent police radio system. The shambles, the scandalous mess that so far has been evident despite funding for the police radio network, has to be investigated. A decent, independent inquiry into the role of senior police must be carried out.

Finally, I refer to crime statistics. I cannot let this opportunity pass without recording that there seems to be an ever-widening gulf between crime statistics put out by the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research—statistics that are extensively referred to in the budget—and the victim survey results that have been put out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, of course, relies on statistics provided by police; the Australian Bureau of Statistics does not rely on police statistics but actually talks to the victims. The comparison of figures is interesting.

For example, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research figures show that the incidence of assaults decreased between 1998 and 1999, while victims studies by the Australian bureau, in a report recently released, show that the number of assaults actually increased by 16 per cent. Similarly, in the critically important area of armed hold-ups, although on the one hand the New South Wales bureau, using statistics provided by the Police Service, showed the robbery rate as being stable, on the other hand the Australian bureau crime victims survey showed a very significant increase in the robbery rate of 33 per cent.

There is a very interesting, but worrying, disparity between the crime statistics produced by the New South Wales bureau, based on police statistics, and the statistics based on what victims are telling the Australian bureau. This is perhaps best demonstrated by what happened recently in Avonlea Street, Canley Heights, in the Cabramatta area, where the public are just about fed up to the back teeth with the Government's approach to law and order and policing. The police had a record of eight break and enters for Avonlea Street, Canley Heights. The local community in Avonlea Street, incredulous at that figure, got together and worked out how many break-ins they had suffered over the same period. The answer was 85. So the victim-reported rate is 10 times the official police rate. These matters, unless addressed, will bring the official police crime statistics into disrepute. *[Time expired.]*

**Mr ASHTON** (East Hills) [12.34 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in support of the Carr Labor Government's sixth successive budget presented to this Parliament. Clearly, it will not be the last budget of this Government. It is a budget with a real surplus, not a sham budget built on selling television and radio licences, as is the recent Federal Coalition budget. The Carr budget has been universally positively received by all elements of our New South Wales electorate. This budget is a financial win for our cities and our regional and remote areas.

The budget once again delivers record expenditure in the fields of education, health, policing and public safety, roads and transport and community services. From the major metropolitan newspapers to the smallest country town local papers, this budget has been welcomed. In the two weeks since its delivery no-one has landed a blow on this budget's financial credibility and economic planning for the future. On Tuesday the Premier was able to sneak some copies of newspapers in as props. What really upset the Opposition was not that the props were used, but that they all contained stories of good news about the Government's budget.

**Mr Woods:** And true.

**Mr ASHTON:** And true. Most journalists' articles are, but I will have more to say about that later. This budget did not have the share market sell down our dollar while it was being announced, and it did not lead to the collapse of our triple-A economic rating before it had even been completed. That must be kept in mind when we consider the effort that Peter Costello put up in the Federal Parliament some weeks ago. It is not a budget deliberately designed to win seats in the bush, with the Prime Minister wearing his funny hat around country electorates. He will probably drop in to the electorate of my mate the honourable member for Wagga Wagga.

**Mr Maguire:** He will be most welcome. He is a very good Prime Minister.

**Mr ASHTON:** Especially if he wears that funny hat! Another highlight of the 2000-01 State budget that I am pleased to reiterate is in the allocations for roads: \$14.1 million towards the \$47 million Woronora Bridge project, in the Sutherland shire; \$6.3 million to complete the \$8.8 million widening of Linden Street, Woronora; and \$1 million for planning work on the proposed Bangor bypass. I welcome these expenditures because, when completed, the works will have a roll-on advantage for residents living in the electorate of East Hills, who at present experience traffic delays and bottlenecks trying to cross the Woronora Bridge both ways. I congratulate the honourable member for Menai, the honourable member for Miranda and the honourable member for Heathcote, who are working very hard in their electorates to bring these schemes to fruition.

The \$6 million allocated to continue the conversion of the East Hills line to four tracks is most welcome. The present scheme is to use that money to undertake that work from Turrella to Kingsgrove. I am pleased to acknowledge that \$1,070,000 will be spent on Henry Lawson Drive pavement rehabilitation in the East Hills electorate, and that \$160,000 will be spent on Canterbury Road pavement rehabilitation. The Bankstown council area will also receive \$16,800 for a road safety program, and \$99,000 will be spent on bridge screening on the M5 at the Gibson Avenue overpass and the Fairford Road overpass.

This bridge screening results from the need to avert tragedies caused by people who can only be described as lunatics throwing rocks or logs at passing traffic. It is a great tragedy that any government should



have to spend money on bridge screening to avoid such behaviour. In this instance there is a fifty-fifty benefit with interlink roads, helping to defray some of the cost to the public. Of course, we can never overcome the tragedy of the experiences of families whose loved ones are killed and seriously injured in these incidents, which are virtually attempted murders.

**Mr Maguire:** Criminal acts.

**Mr ASHTON:** I agree; they are criminal acts. An amount of \$100,000 will be spent on Canterbury Road and Claribel Street, Bankstown, installing traffic light control signals. Other road safety programs costing \$59,000 will be welcomed in my electorate. An amount of \$89,320 will be spent on regional road block grants in Bankstown and \$55,000 will be spent on school crossing supervisors. More lollipop ladies and gentlemen are welcome in any electorate. The Government has allocated an amount of \$41,600 to be spent on relocating the right-turn bay from Stacey Street to Fairford Road, and \$405,000 to be spent on traffic management programs, which will enhance roads and safety for East Hills constituents. The total allocation for regional roads in the Bankstown Council area is \$6.875 million.

The Treasurer referred in his Budget Speech to the success of the construction of Olympic Games venues. Sydney has already won a gold medal by completing all the permanent sporting venues for the Olympic and Paralympic Games earlier than any other host city. These venues will provide world-class facilities and jobs in the hospitality and service areas in the future. I pay tribute to the Olympic Co-ordination Authority, the workers and their unions, the constructions companies, the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the Minister for the Olympics for their success.

I am proud of the world-class Dunc Gray velodrome that has been built in my electorate ahead of time. Several test events have already been successfully staged at that venue. Bankstown City Council originally played a role in relation to that land on which the velodrome has been built. I place on record the appreciation of Bankstown Sports Club, which will take over the running of that venue after the Olympics. I am pleased to acknowledge that the New South Wales Labor Government continues to deliver on its promise to provide quality education and training in New South Wales. This Parliament must acknowledge that the Carr Government has increased recurrent expenditure on education by \$1.481 billion—a 27 per cent increase since 1994-95.

This increase comes at a time when the mean-spirited and ideologically driven Federal Government continues to slash funding to public schools across Australia and promote a call to private schools by throwing money at elite private schools. Given these vicious cuts by the Federal Government, this Labor Government's increase in funding to public schools is not only remarkable but also proof of its commitment to public education. Some elite private schools are now bleating about the need to introduce a Kemp levy to make up a minor shortfall, which impacts on their plans to buy another swimming pool or polo ground. That is not the fault of this State Government. The blame should be pinned where it belongs—on Dr Kemp in Canberra.

The Carr Government is increasing funding to a record \$7.23 billion in the 2000-01 budget. The honourable member for Epping, when contributing to debate on the budget, had a fair bit to say about policing, most of which was whingeing and carping. I have some better news. Police Service expenses will increase by \$188 million over last year's budget, which was a record budget. Any increases on last year's budget will again put us in a record budget situation. A budgetary allocation of \$1.2 million will be used to enhance the computer operated police system [COPS]. Most honourable members would know that that system is working well. Any additional money spent on that program will be invaluable in apprehending criminals. The maintenance of such information on a database can be used in smarter policing—to anticipate crime, to stop it before it happens, or to catch people after they have committed a crime.

Half a million dollars has been allocated to establish a computerised criminal suspects identification system that will enable police anywhere in New South Wales to view photographic images of suspects on computer. This year's budget allocates a record \$1.6 billion to the New South Wales police force. The budget and police force strategy targets improvements in information gathering, management and effective staffing. The budget delivers 200 additional police in line with the Government's commitment to have 2,100 additional police available at the front line by the end of 2003.

Other budgetary highlights are as follows: The budget for the New South Wales Crime Commission has been increased by 8 per cent, or \$10.7 million. This organisation concentrates on eradicating organised crime and drug trafficking. In the area of police and public safety I am pleased to acknowledge that the New

South Wales police force is closely involved in the Government's action plan on youth and community issues. Bankstown local area command has youth liaison officers and community safety officers. Canterbury and Bankstown initiatives include Operation Pericos, an ongoing policing strategy, targeting break and enter, drug dealing and antisocial behaviour. An ethnic employment strategy for the Police Service has been developed to ensure that it reflects the ethnic composition of the communities in which it works. I acknowledge that the Attorney General's Department has allocated to Bankstown and Canterbury councils \$120,000 under the Safer Towns and Cities grants for the development of local crime prevention plans.

I am proud that, once again, this Carr Government budget recognises the special needs of the western Sydney region. The health of the New South Wales economy is based, in large part, on the vitality of the western Sydney economy. Seventy-two thousand businesses operate in the western Sydney region and the region is home to 1.7 million people. The western Sydney industry awards will continue to recognise State Government and business collaboration. These awards focus on innovation, information technology and export performance. The East Hills electorate contains most of Bankstown's industrial area. For decades it has been the second largest industrial area outside the inner Sydney region.

Recently the Premier visited Lincoln Electric Co. (Australia) Pty Ltd in Padstow. That company, which operates from America, established its south-east Asian regional headquarters in Padstow. It exports its specialist equipment. I and the honourable member for Menai presented some awards to the R. J. Walsh company in Padstow, which produces gigs. With the use of information technology that company promotes its product on the web and is selling gigs for harness racing all around the world, in particular in America. One would not have believed that a small company in Padstow would have been able to break into that market. That company has been operating for 40 years. These awards focus on innovation and, as I said earlier, innovation enhances Australia's export performance.

An amount of \$9 million will be spent on school building maintenance in western Sydney. I welcome the funds allocated to develop and refurbish TAFE facilities at Bankstown, which serve many of my East Hills constituents. In April the Minister for Health announced that, for the first time, mental health services will have a guaranteed three-year budget. I am pleased that the South Western Sydney Area Health Service, which covers the Bankstown-Lidcombe hospital will receive a guaranteed 48 per cent increase in funds. Dental services in the south-western area will also increase by 8.2 per cent. Honourable members would remember that one of the first tasks of the Federal Government in 1996 was to eliminate the dental health service program. The State Government picked up that program.

As a former history teacher I am pleased to note that, under the New South Wales Heritage 2001 program, \$50,000 will be made available to Bankstown council for conservation work in the main street of Bankstown. My constituents in East Hills have also been looked after in the industrial relations area. An amount of \$1.98 million will be made available to provide assistance to individual western Sydney employers and employees with workplace difficulties. The south-west Sydney contact centre operates out of Bankstown. The Legal Aid Commission will continue to operate an office in Bankstown. This budget again reduces payroll tax thus assisting, in particular, small businesses.

The next instalment of payroll tax deductions will be brought forward by six months, with payroll tax cut to 6.2 per cent from 1 January 2001, with a cost to the revenues of \$52 million. From 1 October 2000 stamp duty on general insurance, including household and certain types of commercial insurance, will be cut from 11.5 per cent to 10 per cent, with the cost to the revenue of \$23 million in 2001 and a full-year cost of \$36 million. The New South Wales Government will add to this assistance by abolishing our existing first home purchasing scheme, which provides limited concessions for stamp duty on contracts and conveyances, and replacing it with a new scheme.

One of the budget's most welcome initiatives is the First Home Plus scheme, which replaces the existing 50 per cent discount with a full exemption; substantially increases the maximum property values eligible for exemption; introduces for the first time a tapered concession above the maximum values eligible for the full concession; removes income as an eligibility assessment; provides a full exemption for Sydney homes valued at up to \$200,000, phasing out between \$200,000 and \$300,000; and provides full exemption for country homes valued at up to \$175,000, phasing out between \$175,000 and \$200,000.

This is great news for those living outside Sydney, where house prices are low. People living outside Sydney are doing it tough because of what is happening in country areas, and because of their limited ability to export. This Parliament had to embrace change today because of the dairy industry deregulation forced on us by the Howard Government, which means that people in the country are doing it tough. But because house prices are low in country areas these people will be able to maximise this stamp duty write-off.

**Mr Woods:** He is a miserable man.

**Mr ASHTON:** He does not give much credit to anyone. The Treasurer, the Hon. M. R. Egan, always announces in his Budget Speech something that no-one has heard about. This was great news. Obviously it upset Opposition members because they like to argue that stamp duty is going up. Stamp duty did go up in the seven years that they were in government. However, this Government is bringing it down. Any reading of ancient economic and political textbooks will show that Labor governments were not supposed to do that.

Liberal governments are supposed to have low taxes and Labor governments are supposed to have high taxes. We do not believe in that. We are turning things on their head a little bit. There will be full exemption for vacant land in the Sydney metropolitan area up to \$95,000, phasing out at \$140,000, and in country areas up to \$80,000, phasing out at \$110,000. I know country areas. I have discussed this with the honourable member for Bega—a lot of good land can be brought in that area for that money. This measure will be appreciated. First Home Plus will help first-time home buyers get to first base. For eligible first home buyers the combined assistance of these two new measures is more than \$13,000 on a \$200,000 home in the metropolitan area, and more than \$12,000 on a \$175,000 home elsewhere in New South Wales.

This budget provides the sixth consecutive substantial increase to the health budget, totalling \$7.4 billion—\$479 million more than last year's budget allocation. A further \$472 million is provided for capital works for new hospitals, including those recommended in the Sinclair report. We thank the Hon. Ian Sinclair for his efforts and for the report. These funds will continue the major building programs commenced in previous years. Spending on health has increased by \$2.1 billion since 1994-95. These are big numbers. As my colleague the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads might say: a big tick. The budget fulfils the first instalment of the three-year guaranteed health budget with a \$414 million recurrent cash payment.

Other highlights of the budget include an increase to area health services to meet growth in demand, especially in south-western Sydney. This covers Bankstown and Lidcombe hospitals, which are out of my electorate but at times are occupied by people from East Hills. An extra \$36 million is provided for improving mental health services, rising to an extra \$107 million per annum in 2002-03. Without being personal, the recent news out of Canberra about the problems that all sorts of people in our community face may finally make people talk about mental health needs and spend money on them. The sum of \$4 million will be spent over three years to relieve pressure on intensive care units and emergency departments, and \$45 million will be spent over three years to co-ordinate care for people with heart disease, respiratory illness and cancer.

The Government is maintaining its commitment to protect our environment. It will increase and improve the national park estate, improve air and water quality, and redress the problem of dry land salinity. Key budget initiatives include a record allocation of \$233 million to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, representing a 135 per cent increase since the 1994-95 budget; an extra \$23 million in new funding for the Environment Protection Authority's work on scientific research, air quality monitoring, waste management and radiation control; and \$13.6 million for the acquisition of land in regional New South Wales for new national parks and reserves and additions to existing parks and reserves.

There is a one billion dollar plan to revitalise public transport. In this budget, \$75 million has been allocated for commencement of work on the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link, and \$28 million has been allocated for the Liverpool to Parramatta transitway. Another \$25 million is being allocated in 2000-01 towards the purchase of 81 new millennium train carriages, which will begin to come on line next year. They will be very much appreciated on the East Hills to airport line.

Our second-largest financial commitment in 2000-01 is to education and training—\$6,930 million, an increase of \$312 million over last year's figures, and an increase of \$1,482 million since we came to office. An additional \$90 million has been provided for the full-year school maintenance program, making a total program of \$550 million, with \$145 million available this year. Almost \$450 million is allocated over four years for the further expansion of the State literacy and numeracy plan, with more than \$106 million to be spent in 2000-01—I hope, with proper testing now, as the dispute between the department and the union has been solved. There is a 68 per cent increase in community service and disability services funding. The sum of \$110 million is provided for child protection, an 18 per cent increase.

To conclude, I want to comment on another aspect of the budget that was gratuitously sneered about in one of last week's Sunday papers—I think it was the *Sunday Telegraph*. It said that the operation of the Legislature cost more than \$81 million, and the implication of the article was that this was an exorbitant

largesse. I take the opportunity to remind those scribes of the fourth estate that the democratic process is necessarily expensive. Citizens in the city, regional and rural areas have never been more aware of their rights to express their grievances and their ability to access members of Parliament and their staff to help with problems. Tabloid writers and shock-jock radio announcers should see that the cost of running the New South Wales Parliament is very small indeed compared to the overall billions of dollars spent in this year's budget. It is money well spent. Churchill once said:

Democracy is the worst political system, except all others.

Would we prefer George Speight to take hostage our parliamentarians—and with the exception of the member for Coffs Harbour that would be a tragedy—and have military or media magnate government in New South Wales? Immediately this State would be a pariah in the rest of Australia and in the Western democratic world. I urge journalists not to seek the cheap article by rote about the cost to citizens of our Parliament without consideration of what these articles do to the credibility of their profession.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr R. H. L. Smith.**

*[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 12.54 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Albury-Wodonga Development Repeal Bill  
Penalty Notices Validation Bill  
Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Littering) Bill  
First Home Owner Grant Bill  
New South Wales Lotteries Corporatisation Amendment Bill

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**Mr SPEAKER:** I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Martha Jabour and Howard Brown, executive directors of the Homicide Victims Support Group and Victims of Crime Assistance League [VOCAL]. Also present is Amanda Adrian, the newly appointed Health Care Complaints Commissioner.

### 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**.

#### **McDonald's Moore Park Restaurant**

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

#### **Surry Hills Policing**

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

#### **Bondi Pavilion Olympic Stadium Proposal**

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

#### **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**.

### **TAFE Funding**

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

### **Disorderly Houses Act**

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

### **Cardiff Railway Station Disabled Access**

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

### **Windsor Road Upgrading**

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

### **Oxford Street Pedestrian Crossing**

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

### **Moore Park Passive Recreation**

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

### **Moore Park Light Rail**

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

### **Eastern Distributor Tunnel Ventilation**

Petition praying that air purification systems be installed on the Eastern Distributor and cross-city tunnel, received from **Ms Moore**.

### **Old-growth Forests Protection**

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

### **Dairy Farmers Assistance**

Petitions praying that the House will seek the provision of a State-based assistance package to New South Wales dairy farmers, received from **Mr Fraser**, **Mr Oakeshott** and **Mr Stoner**.

### **Animal Experimentation**

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

### **Animal Vivisection**

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

### **Balloon Ban**

Petition expressing concern for the protection of the environment and marine life, and praying that the House will consider the introduction of legislation banning the release of balloons at public and private functions, received from **Mr McBride**.

### **Septic Tank Inspection Fees**

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

### **White City Site Rezoning Proposal**

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

## **COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**

### **Report**

**Mr Hunter**, as Chairman, tabled the report entitled "Study of International Jurisdictions (Japan, Germany, England and the United States of America) 24 September-16 October 1990."

**Ordered to be printed.**

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

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### **INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY SITE ACCESS**

**Mrs CHIKAROVSKI:** My question is directed to the Premier. In view of similar, serious offences in Treasury and the Police Service, will he confirm whether a confidential random audit of just five computers in his own department found that two were used to access pornographic sites on the Internet—sometimes for hours at a time—and that one of the officers involved, who spent five entire days in just over two weeks visiting such sites, was merely let off with a warning?

**Mr CARR:** I cannot confirm the last part of the Leader of the Opposition's question. I am advised that monitoring of Internet access by the Premier's Department detected some inappropriate use of Internet sites. Spot checks of Internet access in November-December 1999 revealed two personal computers through which inappropriate access had occurred. Both cases were investigated. One was very brief—perhaps accidental—and could not be attributed to any one person. All staff in the area were warned about inappropriate use. The other involved an officer who admitted the behaviour and was warned that any subsequent breach would incur serious disciplinary action.

### **EMERGENCY POSITION INDICATING RADIO BEACONS**

**Mr HUNTER:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police. How is the Carr Labor Government improving the safety of skiers and bushwalkers in national parks?

**Mr WHELAN:** Honourable members will recall the mammoth search and rescue efforts undertaken last month to find four young teenagers who were lost and overdue to return from a bush walk in Morton National Park. Thankfully, they were safely rescued but not without days of angst for worried relatives and friends and a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Government wants to do everything it can to increase the safety of the thousands of bushwalkers and skiers who each year are drawn to the natural beauty and wilderness of this State's national parks. To that end, today with my colleague the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Emergency Services I am very pleased to announce a trial which I believe will help to achieve that aim.

The New South Wales ski season begins officially next week. This year, overnight cross-country skiers in the Kosciuszko National Park will be able to hire at a cost of \$10 a hand-held emergency device which is more commonly known as an emergency position indicating radio beacon [EPIRB]. EPIRBs emit a satellite

signal to the national emergency centre in Canberra from the location of a person in distress. Being no bigger than a chocolate bar, EPIRBs fit easily in a backpack. From this month, the first 100 will be available seven days a week from the park's visitor centres at Jindabyne, Khancobon and Tumut. Police, search and rescue experts and National Parks and Wildlife Service staff all agree that these simple devices are invaluable. During the trial, overnight cross-country skiers will be able to hire an EPIRB, together with instructions for its use and the safety brochure, when they register their trip.

This trial is an important issue of public safety. It has the full support of my colleague the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Emergency Services and the backing of the New South Wales Police Service. EPIRBs will not only offer a lifeline to overnight skiers and snowboarders but will assist the thousands of dedicated search and rescue personnel who spring into action whenever and wherever they are needed and whenever things go wrong. All honourable members are familiar with the huge material cost and enormous emotional strain that is involved in rescue work, especially when undertaken in dangerous, remote or rugged locations. The cost is never questioned because nothing is more precious than human life. But if something can be done to reduce the danger for walkers, cross-country skiers or rescuers, this Government will act.

The trial is involuntary, but I strongly encourage all cross-country campers travelling to the Kosciuszko National Park to take advantage of the scheme. The first 100 EPIRBs will be available by mid June. An additional 300 are on order and are expected to be available by the peak ski season in July and August. I sound a note of caution. While we expect the use of EPIRBs in remote areas to be vital in helping emergency staff to track down lost bushwalkers or cross-country skiers, technology is not the whole answer.

As my colleague the Minister for Emergency Services said earlier today, nothing can replace good preparation. People should know where they are going; they should take a good map and compass and make sure they have appropriate clothing and food. It is best not to travel alone and people should never head off into a remote area in bad weather. They should remember to tell a relative or friend where they are going and when they expect to get back. They should not rely on this device to go into an area in which they would not normally walk or ski. My colleague the Minister for Emergency Services and I hope that collecting an EPIRB will be as routine as taking a chocolate bar in a backpack. We will do that by making them cheaply and readily available for everyone. This trial will be evaluated at the end of the winter ski season. I advise honourable members that it is envisaged it will extend to the Morton National Park in spring.

### DAIRY INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

**Mr SOURIS:** I direct my question to the Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. Given that the State Government is prepared to pay \$40 million and to buy out some private hire car plates, why has the Minister offered nothing to this State's 1,800 desperate dairy farmers, and instead, cynically called for a national price for milk when the Minister knows very well that all States have to agree for that to occur?

**Mr Carr:** Point of order: The Leader of the National Party asserted that the Government had allocated \$40 million to buy out private hire car plates. That is a complete untruth.

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

**Mr AMERY:** Now for the second part of the answer! Apparently some information has been given to the House that the first part of the question may be incorrect.

**Mr Scully:** It is.

**Mr AMERY:** The Minister for Transport has confirmed that the information is totally incorrect, as the Premier has said. We can rule out the first part of the question. From time to time I have used trains, buses and taxis, but that does not necessarily make me responsible for the transport portfolio and any other portfolio which may have responsibility for transport matter. I will defer any reference to the budget for those matters, although the Premier has already clearly answered that part of the question. The second part of the question related to a comparison between some non-amount of money being paid to an industry now and what is really being paid to the dairy industry. I have answered that at length on a couple of occasions.

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

**Mr AMERY:** I want to highlight one matter and it is this. Yesterday the farmers sent in a deputation and they said they do not want handouts; they want a fair price for the milk. That is because the 27¢ offers being made by some processors is not a fair price. On 1 July I will have no authority whatsoever as a State Minister to in any way dictate the terms of what processors will pay Victorian farmers in Victoria.

**Mr Carr:** It all depends on the government that is in charge.

**Mr AMERY:** That is a good interjection from the Premier.

**Mr Tink:** Take another point of order!

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

**Mr AMERY:** On 1 July a new regulated dairy system will start in Australia. It will continue for eight years and it will be regulated by a Federal Act of Parliament. We have not called for that, but that is what will happen. The argument that we have deregulated the State so it cannot be regulated at the Federal level is not only wrong, it is not a statement of fact. On 1 July there will be a regulated dairy industry at a national level. The 11¢ per litre, which will be provided for in the legislation, will apply equally to all States. Country Labor and the New South Wales Government have said that if there is to be a regulated system for eight years at the Federal level with an income support scheme, the best that farmers can get is a floor price or a reasonable price for their milk. It would be easy for the Federal Government during that period to have a step-down floor price leading to full deregulation of the dairy industry in eight years time. If the Leader of the National Party wants to be relevant in this debate the first thing he should do is be with the dairy farmers. Second, if he is proposing some alternative package he should make sure it is legally, politically and constitutionally sound. The proposal by Country Labor of a floor price is legally, politically and constitutionally sound. That is the proposition.

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

**Mr AMERY:** This morning the office of the Federal Minister for Agriculture ruled out that proposition, and ruled out an extension of time to debate this issue any further.

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

**Mr AMERY:** If the Opposition wants a fair price for dairy farmers in New South Wales it has got to be done nationally by the National Party in Canberra. Unfortunately it does not want to do it—and the first part of the question is wrong.

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

### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr ASHTON:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the next stage in the Government's program to protect consumers from unscrupulous traders?

**Mr WATKINS:** Yesterday I advised the House about two new real estate enforcement programs being run by the Department of Fair Trading. They are part of an ongoing attack on unfair and illegal practices which, if left unchecked, cause massive disadvantage to New South Wales families. Despite the vicious attack on me earlier today, I will explain that we are working with professional organisations to ensure that their industries are cleaned up and that those people who should not be working within them are excluded. I will discuss that later with the honourable member for Lismore.

It is part of the Government's plan to make sure Fair Trading is working harder to protect consumers in New South Wales. Over the past few months I have taken the opportunity to talk with Fair Trading investigators across the State. I have asked them to tell me what they need so that they can protect consumers better from the shonks that we all know are operating in the marketplace in New South Wales. Who better to advise me than the investigators who are working in the marketplace day in and day out? I have asked them what powers they need to react quickly and decisively to save countless consumers from the grief caused by shonky traders.

The investigators told me that at times they feel they simply cannot act quickly enough to stop those traders operating in the marketplace. Sometimes, especially in transactions involving hundreds of thousands of



dollars, whether involving the purchase or sale of land or a building matter, they cannot move quickly to stop a rogue trader operating. That is why I am pleased to be able to advise of the next stage of the Government's plan to weed out these unscrupulous operators. It is clear that tough new powers are needed so that my department can immediately take dodgy traders out of the game. If I asked members from both sides of the House—and I have asked a number of them—what their concerns are, many would tell me the same thing: Why is it that a trader in the building trade, in real estate or in motor dealing who has a history is able to keep working in the industry and cause further grief?

Today I can announce that a new power will be inserted in the Fair Trading Act to give the Director-General power to immediately suspend any trader's licence for up to 60 days. This will apply where a trader has wilfully flouted the law, is continuing to behave in an unacceptable fashion and poses a significant risk to consumers. In conjunction with this power, Fair Trading investigators will be able to seize documents in relation to any breach of the Fair Trading Act. The new power will apply to all traders licensed by the Department of Fair Trading. That covers real estate agents, builders, conveyancers, motor dealers, travel agents and pawnbrokers. The need for these powers has arisen because some traders are just not getting the message. They continue to flout the law even after Fair Trading tracks them down. Of course, Fair Trading takes, and will continue to take, disciplinary action using the legislation in place.

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

**Mr WATKINS:** But the powers available to my investigators vary considerably under existing law, and sometimes it just cannot be exercised quickly enough.

**Mr Hazzard:** Point of order: I am sure you are aware that standing orders preclude a Minister from making a ministerial statement under the guise of an answer. The Minister clearly is making a ministerial statement; he started his answer by saying that he was announcing amendments to the fair trading legislation. Nothing could be clearer: this is a ministerial statement on future policy. I ask you to rule the answer out of order.

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

**Mr WATKINS:** Justice rolls on, but sometimes it rolls far too slowly. That can leave many consumers greatly disadvantaged. It is distressing to me, as the responsible Minister, to read the letters sent to me by consumers and members from both sides of this House. I have had discussions with members who have brought to my attention terrible stories about consumers who have been caught and have not received the justice that they deserve. In particular, the honourable member for East Hills raised a longstanding building matter that caused real grief to the party involved. The honourable member for Newcastle has spoken to me about a strata dispute. I will welcome any member who wishes to come and speak to me about such matters.

The new power that I speak of today will mean that shonks in every industry will be subject to the same fate: the risk of immediate licence suspension, with cancellation to follow. It will mean that any consumer who rings Fair Trading to check on the licence of the trader will be told whether the trader's licence is suspended and whether any action is being taken against the licence holder. I will give the House a couple of recent examples to illustrate the need for this legislative measure. A real estate agent with a \$170,000 trust account deficiency was able to elude Fair Trading over a period of 12 months, despite the fact that he admitted pocketing the money. With this new power, Fair Trading could have suspended the licence immediately and closed the business down. Another example is of a home builder who is well known to some members of the Opposition who have raised this matter with me. He is facing 17 complaints before the Fair Trading Tribunal. Fair Trading is forcing him to show cause why his licence should not be suspended. But, until an order is made, he can continue to be out there trading in the marketplace and signing up new contracts.

These tough new laws include some important safeguards. The power will be able to be exercised only by the Director-General of the Department of Fair Trading. It will be used only in situations where the use of other investigative tools would not provide the level of protection that consumers deserve. And a trader will be able to appeal the Director-General's decision to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal. These new laws back up recent changes that I have made in the Fair Trading enforcement area. It is part of the Government's commitment to put more resources into stopping the rip-off merchants. Twelve additional staff are being appointed to the enforcement areas: two new lawyers and 10 extra investigators. A new group known as the rapid response unit is being established within the department so that major unfair traders can be targeted immediately by experienced investigators. Traders who play by the rules have nothing to fear from these laws. Those who are already doing the right thing will be pleased to have the crooks removed as quickly as possible. I look forward to working with the major industry associations to finalise the details of the bill.

### GLENBROOK RAIL ACCIDENT INQUIRY REPORT

**Mr O'FARRELL:** I direct a question to the Minister for Transport. Given the Minister's continuing refusal to inform commuters when they can expect trains to run on time, when will he release the Glenbrook inquiry report, which reveals that passenger safety has been compromised by funding cuts to maintenance and to driver training and the fact that inexperienced staff have been promoted to senior positions?

**Mr SCULLY:** I was unaware that Justice McInerney had released his report to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr SCULLY:** I certainly have not yet received a copy. If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would like to know what the budget is for the railways, he ought to come along to estimates hearings and ensure that some of his questions are conveyed to me, and they will be answered.

### GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE SITE REDEVELOPMENT

**Mrs GRUSOVIN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. What is the latest information on the use of the Government Printing Office building?

**Mr Debnam:** Tell us all about it, Andrew.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** An interjection from the honourable member for Vacluse! As the House would remember, about six months ago the honourable member for Vacluse was saying we should sell off the Government Printing Office. Here he is again saying, "Sell it off." I must admit that was at a time when the Opposition was seeking a leader, and a number of members were competing for the leadership. There was quite an unusual event in the Opposition: the honourable member for Vacluse wanted to try to muscle in on that competition, and he came out with quite a strange idea—he produced a policy!

It was as if he were saying, "Look, I'm here." But he did produce a policy, and it was to sell off the Government Printing Office. He wanted to sell it off for \$5 million, get rid of it: it is an absolute waste of time, get rid of it! It was wrong then, and it is wrong now. It is interesting how the competition has settled down—those ideas of trying to resurrect the party and the survival of the fittest. There is now a somnolence in the party. Members should cast their minds back to November last year: the Coalition was on a high; its popularity was at 35.5 per cent. In five months they fell 6 per cent. At that rate, there will be no Conservative on that side voted in at the next election. Nobody will be voting Conservative at the next election.

**Mr Carr:** Lazy shadow ministers!

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** They are lazy. I have conferred with the Minister for the Environment about listing the New South Wales Liberals as an endangered species, to list them as vulnerable. For the first time the Menzies baby is to be listed as a vulnerable species with the little whip snake, the Hall's babbler and the masked booby.

**Mr O'Doherty:** Point of order: Reluctant as I am to take a point of order, we have now had two minutes and 90 seconds of preliminary remarks from the Minister. The question was about the Government Printing Office. I ask you to draw him back to the leave of the question.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure the Deputy Premier is about to give the House important information.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The honourable member for Hornsby, who just took a point of order, is never content. The honourable member for Vacluse, who suggested that the Government should sell the Government Printing Office, had a policy, but it was a stupid policy.

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

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** But Opposition members have no policy at all.

**Mr Debnam:** Point of order. I point out to the Minister that he wanted to sell Darling Harbour. Instead of electricity, this Minister wanted to sell everything in Darling Harbour.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the third time.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Government did not flog off the Government Printing Office. Our approach was more sophisticated than that. If we had flogged it off we might have made a couple of million dollars, but we knew we could do better than that. We developed a business plan for that site that sought an adaptive reuse for the building which aimed to attract jobs and investment into the precinct. It is with pleasure that I inform the House that our plan has paid off in spades. Last night, officers of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority successfully negotiated a heads of agreement with a major international information technology company, Global Switch, to redevelop the site as a telehouse and Internet data centre.

Telehouses are the latest innovation for the information superhighway and an essential piece of infrastructure for the new economy. No, George, it is not that superhighway! The Liberals may be gullible, but the Nationals are endangered. We might start to list the Nationals as well, along with the painted snipe, the five-clawed worm skink and the plains wanderer. We will have to include members of the National Party on that endangered list. There is some contention about whether there is enough of them left to be able to survive. I have asked the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and some of the other scientists working on the human genome program to find out whether we can start cloning some of them. But it is difficult to choose one of them to clone.

**Mr Knowles:** I just gave the Garvan Institute more money for the program.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** The Minister for Health has just given the Garvan Institute of Medical Research more money for the human genome program. The Government's plan for the Government Printing Office has certainly paid off. That redevelopment, which represents a commitment of over \$160 million in post-Olympic investment, will create some 400 construction jobs. The deal, while still commercial in confidence, will provide a massive return to New South Wales taxpayers from a long-term lease. However, the biggest benefit for New South Wales is the long-term employment of over 150 permanent high-tech high-value information technology jobs—jobs for our young people and jobs for the future. The real significance of this deal is bigger than the jobs. It is a vote of confidence in Sydney as a global city and a financial centre.

The Global Switch Telehouse is the first of its kind to be established in our region. These telehouses, known in the industry as carrier hotels, will house the information databases of the world's largest telecommunications and information technology companies. It places Sydney as the key information hub not only for South-East Asia, but also for our entire time zone. Sydney was chosen over Tokyo, New Delhi, Singapore and a dozen other cities because of its unique advantages and its competitive edge in the new economy. Our multicultural and multilingual population, our advanced fibre optic infrastructure, our highly educated and trained work force and our international profile have placed Sydney in a unique position to build a world-standard information technology industry—an industry to rival our traditional industries of manufacturing and tourism in terms of long-term job creation and exports. The Prime Minister has stated a number of times that he wants Sydney to develop as a financial centre, but has done nothing to help the city with infrastructure or financial assistance of any kind. In fact, it has been pointed out by the property industry that there has been no press release, no policy coming from a Federal Government that talks about cities. The Federal Government has walked away from the cities.

**Mr Knowles:** Not since Brian Howe.

**Dr REFSHAUGE:** Not since Brian Howe. Nothing has come from the Howard Government. Members should compare that with the record of New South Wales. The Carr Government has worked hard to attract investment and businesses from overseas and to create jobs. Our efforts our paying off, with New South Wales leading the nation in employment growth and unemployment down to 5 per cent. The landing of the Global Switch company will build on our efforts to further enhance Sydney's reputation as the silicon valley of the region. Thank God we did not listen to the honourable member for Vacluse! If we had gone for the fire sale idea we would have had an asset that was worth very little and we would not have this major investment in Sydney. The Government is making sure that we realise the best potential for our assets. That is exactly what we have done with the Government Printing Office.

#### **POLICE LOCAL AREA COMMANDER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMPLAINT**

**Mr TINK:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police. Are senior commissioned police officers under investigation over the handling of a domestic violence complaint lodged with police by the wife of a local area commander, a complaint that was not notified immediately to the Police Integrity Commission as required by law?

**Mr WHELAN:** I will ascertain the information sought by the honourable member.

### HEALTH COUNCIL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Miss BURTON:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. What progress has been made on the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Health Council?

**Mr KNOWLES:** Honourable members are no doubt aware of the terrific reviews that the health budget has received around the State since it was announced in March, a budget that was reaffirmed by the Treasurer in this Chamber last Tuesday. Whilst I am gratified by that response, today is an opportunity to tell the House about the real story, the behind-the-scenes story, the work being done behind the scenes by the hard-working men and women of New South Wales Health. We recognise the terrific work that is being carried out by some of the system's best and brightest, 440 of them in all, who are fundamentally reviewing how we deliver health care to the people of this State.

It is a story of nothing but sheer hard work; a story of late nights on top of extra late nights, extra hours and extra commitment; a story of men and women traditionally working in operating theatres, wards, clinics, community health services, general practices or universities joining together as a team after many years of conflict to move our health system forward. I take the opportunity today to pay tribute to each and every one of them. I want the community to understand that there has been a sea change in health. People who traditionally have been on the outside looking in are now very much a part of the decision-making process. We have started a new collaboration. We must build on that as a health community if we are to continue to improve the quality of care for the people we all serve.

That task will not be an easy one. No-one is pretending that change will occur instantly. Inevitably there will be hard decisions along the way about how best to utilise the new money coming in through the budget over the next three years and how to use the skills and services that underpin the biggest health system in our country. One thing that is certain is that improvement will not occur without clinical leadership involvement, the involvement of those front-line people who recognise that this is an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process.

This was a cornerstone recommendation of the Health Council, one that has been picked up by the honourable member for Kogarah. It was a recommendation that we, as a government, chose to embrace as the only way forward and a better path than that old way of conflict and confrontation. The New South Wales Clinical Council is my peak group for driving the process. The council is made up of all those players one would expect to find—leading clinicians from around the State, each contributing in an honest and open fashion, all in the same room at the same time. The work of the Clinical Council and the 11 clinical implementation groups, made up of 440 doctors and nurses from around the State, provides an exciting opportunity for health professionals to be creative and productive, and lead the change.

For example, the acute care implementation group has already established statewide targets for day surgery and day-of-surgery admission. That is a big step forward. This will mean improved patient satisfaction with surgical care, more capacity in the system and better management of infection control and other complications—simply, better health. I congratulate the co-chairs, Brian McCaughan, a doctor at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, and Anna Thornton, a nurse at Westmead, and their team on delivering early results in less than two months. Likewise, the episode funding group—

**Mrs Skinner:** Case-mix funding.

**Mr KNOWLES:** Case-mix funding, no, no. The episode funding group, introduced with the support of clinical groups, will have established by 1 July a new funding model for acute procedures. This means that, for the first time in this State, there will be a spotlight on how much it costs for acute procedures and why variations occur. It will provide one of the foundation stones for driving best practice. Why does it cost twice the amount to do a hip replacement in one hospital, compared with another hospital just down the road? Why is it that in one town in this State the admission rates to the local hospital are almost double that of any other hospital in our community? I am sure there are many reasons for the variation. However, with the introduction of episode funding as part of an overall quality agenda we will have a much clearer understanding of the reason. It will drive greater transparency into how, where and why our health dollars are spent.

The funding models group is doing intense work on episode funding, and it will meet the 1 July deadline. It is on time, it is doing a terrific job and I thank members for it. Similarly, within the space of three

short months the chronic care group, headed by Ron Penny and Steve Boyage, will produce a new framework for the management of people with chronic conditions. Where our emergency departments have traditionally had a lot of people with crook lungs, bad hearts and other chronic and recurring illnesses, the overwhelming weight of local and international medical evidence is that many of these visits can be avoided by patients better managing their conditions.

That is not only taking the pressure off the acute end of the system; it is about better health care. Ron Penny and his team are leading the way in Australia. Similar work is being undertaken in our emergency departments, intensive care units, information technology systems, rural health, and metropolitan planning, consumer involvement, teaching and research.

**Mrs Skinner:** I can't stand it.

**Mr KNOWLES:** The honourable member for North Shore can't stand it. I cannot tell her what a pleasure it is to work with these individuals. Of course, they all realise—they have said to me as I have travelled around the State—that there will be no overnight sensations, no magic wands, nothing but teamwork and hard work to build a better system. To the 440 leading the way and the hundreds of others who are contributing their ideas, energy and time at a clinical level, I simply say thank you. The honourable member for North Shore does not like it. She has a problem with 440 individuals participating in redesigning how we deliver health, how we best use health dollars, and how we do it more transparently, openly and honestly, involving communities. The policy has shifted and she is left with nowhere to go.

The question for a bereft Opposition, a mob without a policy between them, is what would it do that is different? Which part of the Health Council recommendations would the Opposition not accept? When you take the fuss away, you get people like the honourable member for Gosford congratulating us on his local radio station. I can advise the House that we even have one of their own signed up to one of these clinical groups up in the Northern Rivers region. You guessed it, the Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti from another place has written in wanting to be part of the new-look team.

*[Interruption]*

I know you do not want the Hon. Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti, but a lot of people out there do not want you. He wants to be part of something that is new, refreshing and provides an opportunity for better care. We have heard a lot about the alleged problems with the Health Council report. I place on record a commentary by another historic critic of the health system to demonstrate what one can do when people work together as a team to move forward. Everybody will recall Professor Malcolm Fisher, the head of intensive care at Royal North Shore Hospital, a bloke who has stood in front of television cameras on more occasions than he has had hot dinners to criticise governments—Labor and Liberal—over the best part of 20 years. The Australian Medical Association [AMA] wrote to people like Professor Fisher after the Access Economics report, asking them to bag the Government's program. This is Fisher's letter, not to me but to the former New South Wales President of the AMA, Dr Kerry Phelps. I have his permission to put on the public record what he says, in part, about the activities of the Health Council and the work we are doing to involve clinicians:

I must say that I was impressed with the process and my dealings with the members of the Health Council. In my many years of battling bureaucracies, I have not encountered such efficient interaction with State Government.

**Mrs Skinner:** What about dealing with you?

**Mr KNOWLES:** We will get to that. You really do not like this. There is not one idea between your ears. You have nothing to offer and we have these people signing up. He goes on to say:

The new structure, which has been put forward as a result of the Health Council's deliberations and the Minister's initiative, I am impressed with. For the first time in many years clinicians are actively involved in the decision-making process.

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

**Mr KNOWLES:** The letter goes on:

The ease of communication with the Minister's department is unprecedented.

The letter continues:

Fundamentally, I think the Minister's response to the intensive care community over the last winter was very reasonable and we now face the challenge of lifting our own game and improving our own efficiency.

This next one is good:

I am impressed with the changes that have been instituted. I have spent many years as a negative guerrilla fighter, but this is a positive process I am excited to be part of ...

In all my years of dealing with health politicians and bureaucracies, I find the current situation the source of optimism and the first source of optimism for some years.

We look forward to some policies from members opposite. I think it will be a while coming, but in the meantime we will get on, working as a team, building a better system, knowing there are no easy answers, but knowing that a whole lot more people are willing to give us a go and let us get on with the job of building better health care for the State.

### STAR CITY CASINO CRIMINAL ACTIVITY ALLEGATIONS

**Mr OAKESHOTT:** My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. Will the Minister tell the House whether Steven Lam, a high roller who gambled \$10.2 million in six months, has been excluded from Star City Casino after allegations that he supplied cocaine to at least one senior casino employee?

**Mr FACE:** I do not have a role in determining exclusions from the casino. Exclusions are a matter for the Commissioner of Police, the casino operator or the director of surveillance. I have additional information for the honourable member. Today I have written to the Casino Control Authority requesting that any information relating to money laundering, loan shark activities, prostitution and criminal activity be referred immediately to the appropriate authorities so that there is no doubt that any necessary action will be taken. I make it clear to the honourable members, including those who have known me over the years I have been here, that if any of these matters are substantiated the strongest sanctions will be taken against those who are involved.

### EXPERIENCED HANDS COMMUNITY PROJECT

**Mr CRITTENDEN:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Community Services. How is the Government using the skills and experience of older people to benefit young families?

**Mrs LO PO':** As Minister for Community Services I hear first-hand from young parents really doing it tough—young parents who have little or no experience of raising children, and young parents with no extended family they can go to for help or advice. I then hear from older people who tell me they would love to share their knowledge and experience but do not know how. We have all heard of retired schoolteachers who have so much to offer long after they leave the classroom, or retired tradesmen with 40 years experience of repairing people's homes.

As communities grow sometimes people feel that they have to keep to themselves and not offer help to those who need it. I inform the House of a pilot project bringing people closer together and creating a more supportive community. The Experienced Hands project in Bathurst and on the Central Coast is making a real difference to the lives of older and younger people and in doing so building understanding between the generations. So far this year about 45 older people and 30 younger people are involved in Experienced Hands voluntary activities on the Central Coast. Today older women on the Central Coast are helping young mothers with their children. As well, younger people are teaching older people computer skills. In the Bathurst-Lithgow area there is strong interest from local schools, and an additional 45 older people are involved in volunteering.

The help older people provide goes far beyond the work they undertake. Their participation in Experienced Hands is helping to make our communities stronger. Further, it will mean that their wealth of life experience will not be lost but will be passed on through the generations. I am pleased to inform the House that this project will be boosted by another \$100,000 to allow it to be expanded to other parts of New South Wales. Expressions of interest will shortly be called from organisations interested in developing Experienced Hands projects in their areas. We want to hear from communities on how they think they can bring the generations together.

Tapping into the memories and experiences of our older generation is central to the future success of our nation. Older Australians have dealt with drought, war, depression and all manner of challenges. These successful Australians can offer so much to the younger members of our community. This project will bring the knowledge of older people to help those who really need it. It is about harnessing the energy and goodwill that exists within our communities, and tapping into the limitless skill that lies there. The Carr Labor Government is

serious about delivering to regional New South Wales. It is serious about harnessing the knowledge that exists in our older people, and it is serious about giving success to this project. That is why Country Labor is proving to be such a success in the bush. I urge all my colleagues, including those opposite, to encourage community groups to take part in this most worthwhile project.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

**CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS**

**Princes Highway Upgrade**

**Mr BROWN** (Kiama) [3.24 p.m.]: My matter for urgent consideration is of importance to the people of the South Coast. It is urgent because at the moment the Federal Government is wasting a lot of taxpayers' funds on an advertising campaign to promote the goods and services tax. We need to debate whether those funds should be better employed in promoting safer roads and better transport facilities for the people on the South Coast.

**Star City Casino Criminal Activity Allegations**

**Mr OAKESHOTT** (Port Macquarie) [3.25 p.m.]: Today in question time we had an admission of guilt from the Minister for Gaming and Racing that there is a serious problem in the high-rollers room at Star City Casino. It is critical that this issue be dealt with today, because there is a culture of fear in place at Star City Casino and within the regulatory bodies surrounding it. Not only has the Minister admitted in this House that he fears for his safety in regard to the allegations raised about Star City Casino and the high rollers; high rollers have also come forward and said that all sorts of illegal activities, such as money laundering, loan shark activities, drug dealing and illegal prostitution, have been taking place at the casino for two years.

The staff at the casino would come forward with information if the culture of fear was not prevalent at Star City Casino. I believe the casino staff would come forward to the section 31 inquiry if the Minister issued a directive that made it clear that their jobs and their lives would not be at risk if they came forward with information. This issue is bubbling under the surface of Sydney and New South Wales, and of great concern to all of us who have the best interests of New South Wales at heart. However, the Government and the Minister seem to be reluctant to do anything about it. They seem only to be interested in talking up concerns about their own safety.

Two weeks ago the Minister admitted in this House that he has fears for his own safety. That is a significant statement for a Minister to make. In question time the Minister admitted that today he has written to the Casino Control Authority seeking confirmation of money laundering at Star City Casino. Why are these issues and allegations being dealt with only today? These activities have been continuing not only for the past month, in which the Opposition has asked questions about the matter, but for the past two years. That was confirmed when the Minister said that the allegations contained in the letter he received from Mr Alexander Preston could be useful.

Those allegations, which were detailed in the House last night, are serious allegations about money laundering and threats by casino management that Mr Preston would be dealt with by criminal associates of Star City Casino if he continued to confess and to blow the whistle. The Minister has been in his present position for five years, and these activities have been continuing for the past two years. The Coalition has produced a list from 1996, and in the past month it has produced six names of people who have been involved in illegal activities or in washing dirty money through the casino.

It is extraordinary that honourable members are not taking this issue seriously. A man who is now in gaol on heroin charges put \$94 million through the casino in six months, and his only legitimate business was a barbecue duck shop. An unemployed storeman put \$16 million through the casino, and a man who runs a photograph developing shop put \$28 million through the casino. A Camperdown doctor has been missing for two years, yet nothing has been done about that.

Another man is allegedly missing. A sex-slave trader, a man who has built an empire for himself based on the importation of Asian prostitutes, has been referred to in about half a dozen major newspaper articles, yet the Government has done nothing about it. Has this man been excluded? No. Have any of these people been excluded? No. Another man has been allegedly supplying cocaine to a senior employee of Star City Casino. It

cuts right to the chase of the problem when it gets to the inside of Star City Casino management. Has this man been excluded? Has he been dealt with by the Minister? No. I find it extraordinary that he has not been dealt with. Either we have a cover-up on our hands or the Minister just does not know what he is doing. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 49**

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

**Noes, 33**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Allan	Mrs Chikarovksi
Mr Aquilina	Mr Fraser
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hartcher
Mr Carr	Mr R. W. Turner

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

## **PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE**

### **Urgent Motion**

**Mr BROWN** (Kiama) [3.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

1. congratulates the State Government on its \$380 million Princes Highway upgrade;



2. notes that the Federal Government's \$400 million GST advertising campaign would fully fund a dual carriageway from Kiama to Jervis Bay; and
3. calls on the Federal Government to designate the Princes Highway as a road of national importance and immediately fund the project.

The State Government should be congratulated on its \$380 million commitment to upgrading the Princes Highway. The people in the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven rely heavily on the Princes Highway to commute to work, for recreation purposes, and to have essential goods and services transported into the area. The Minister for Roads has come through with the commitments he made to the people on the South Coast in Action for Transport 2010. It is evident from the amount of roadworks that are being carried out that the roads program, as outlined in Action for Transport 2010, is running to plan. Indeed, in some instances it is running ahead of schedule.

On many occasions in this House I have raised the issue of the north Kiama bypass, and I have lobbied the Minister to ensure that it is constructed as quickly as possible. As recently as this week, tenders were called to construct a four-lane bridge across the Minnamurra floodplain. The bridge, will be almost one kilometre long and 23 metres wide, will cost approximately \$30 million and is a significant component of the 7.3 kilometre bypass, which will cost approximately \$100 million.

I recently announced the major upgrade of the highway south of Gerringong, at a cost of in excess of \$4 million. The upgrade will remove two curves which have a recommended speed of 45 kilometres an hour and will make travel safer and more convenient for motorists. In the northern part of the Kiama electorate, which adjoins the electorate of my colleague the honourable member for Illawarra, work is well under way on the construction of the Princes Highway and Oak Flats interchange. That project will cost approximately \$24 million and it is an important part of the upgrade plan. The town to the west of the interchange, Albion Park, is growing significantly and needs a link road to ease traffic congestion on what is locally referred to as pub corner.

Shellharbour City Council, which is constructing the road, approached me and my colleague the honourable member for Illawarra to find out whether the State Government could assist with funding for the project. We went as a delegation to see the Minister for Roads, who agreed to provide \$1 million towards the project. Some of that money is being spent currently to acquire land for the road. The road is well under way and will eventually become aligned with the highway. Those are just some of the examples of this Government's commitment to the people of the Illawarra and the Shoalhaven.

Many people ask how much the Federal Government is providing for the upgrade of the highway. I hear my Labor colleagues who are present in the Chamber say, "A good question." But unfortunately the answer is bad for my constituents. The Federal Government is not contributing a single cent. The Carr Labor Government has committed and will spend at least \$380 million on upgrading the Princes Highway. The Howard conservative Government spends nothing. It is little wonder that people in the Illawarra give their trust to the Labor Party. People in the Shoalhaven are beginning to see that they get more for their vote when they vote for the Labor candidate—who is currently the honourable member for the South Coast.

Judging by the comments I have made so far, it could be thought that the Howard Government is stingy when it comes to spending money, but that is not totally true. The Howard Government is a big spender of taxpayers' money—but on its own propaganda. The Howard Government spends its money telling people how good an extra tax will be. The Howard Government is stingy when it comes to providing services to the people who live in the Illawarra and on the South Coast. The Howard Government is very liberal in throwing money about when it comes to self-promotion.

The money that is being spent by the Federal conservatives could be used to build a dual carriageway from Kiama past Jervis Bay. That would eliminate the notorious stretch of road between Gerringong and Berry. That would save many lives and prevent accidents. It would also make motoring much more convenient for locals, tourists and transporters of goods and services, and increase opportunities for employment. What adds insult to injury to the people who live on the South Coast is that this issue has already been brought to the attention of the Federal transport Minister, the Hon. John Anderson. I have referred to this matter in this House on previous occasions. I was part of a delegation that met with the Federal Minister for transport to ask whether he would declare the Princes Highway a road of national importance [RONI] as the Pacific Highway and the Great Western Highway have been. Why will he not declare the Princes Highway a RONI?

Not only did the Federal Minister for transport decide not to declare the Princes Highway a RONI, but he decided not to allocate any significant funds towards construction of the road. In addition, he has not

allocated significant funds to the election promise given by one of his mob—a member of his own political party, Ms Joanna Gash—on behalf of the conservative Government in relation to Main Road 92. It is clear that the Federal Government is not committed to the people who live on the South Coast, at least as far as roads are concerned. It has allocated no money to the Princes Highway project and only a miserable amount towards the cost of Main Road 92. To illustrate the difference between the commitment of the Federal Government and the commitment given by the State Government, I refer to the State Government's provision of \$34 million to build a one-kilometre bridge over a flood plain and the Federal Government's allocation of \$34 million to build a road that is 160 kilometres long. It is little wonder that the people of the South Coast have no faith in the conservatives.

I doubt that anyone has ever seen a more blatant waste of money than that insult to intelligence: the goods and services tax [GST] feel-good campaign. The information in the advertisements is not specific and could hardly be called informative. The advertisements constitute blatant propaganda—something that one would expect to see in a communist country or dictatorship. Many people who live in my electorate, and those who use the Princes Highway would rather have a commitment to roads than listen to Joe Cocker try to make us feel good about being slugged by a new tax. Even if the money is not spent on the Princes Highway, it could perhaps be used in other areas to meet needs—such as providing an extra 2,600 nursing home beds.

Another alternative use for the funds could be the payment of 1,700 teachers' salaries over the next four years, or the construction of an additional 114 new primary schools. The money that is being used for GST advertising could also be used to fund more than 100,000 new four-year apprenticeships; another 1,600 police could be on the beat for another four years; or more than 18,000 child-care places could be subsidised. What makes these matters worse is that the Prime Minister has found another issue for which he will not apologise. He has said that he will not apologise for spending money to explain a new taxation system. The arrogance of the Federal Government!

The truthfulness of the GST advertising campaign should also be examined. The advertisements state that every Australian worker will receive income tax cuts from 1 July, but that is just a bare-faced lie. As outlined in the *Australian* on 18 May this year, the Federal Treasurer's own budget stated that at least 80,000 low-income earners will receive neither tax cuts nor increased social security benefits to compensate for the GST. The Australian Council of Social Service substantiated that claim and moreover stated that in excess of 80,000 people will be affected by that issue. Another lie in the advertisement is that income tax has kept going up during the past decade or two. The Federal Labor Government cut personal income tax rates seven times between November 1984 and November 1993. The people of the South Coast do not like being taken as fools. They do not want more lies from the Liberals; they want their fair share of money.

To further exemplify the situation one should note that the Howard Government is spending more on advertising than corporate giants such as Coca-Cola, Ford and Holden. Let us give a thought to small business. Small business is an important aspect of the South Coast economy, and it needs to have transport costs reduced, as well as a faster, safer highway to encourage development and attract tourists. The Federal Government's advertisement will do nothing to foster confidence in those potential job creators. I have spoken to a number of small businesses on the South Coast and they agree with the sentiments of Brian Toohey, when he said, "Joe Cocker is a great singer, *Unchain my Heart* is a great song, yet the Government seems determined that small business operators across Australia will never want to hear it again." I commend the motion to the House

**Mr J. H. TURNER** (Myall Lakes) [3.50 p.m.]: I intend to amend a number of points in this motion, but I shall first address the motion. It must be gratifying for the honourable member for Kiama to be able to say that he has got some money for roads in his electorate because the Carr Government has cut the roads budget by \$100 million this year. That will mean that 158 jobs will go, probably from his area, thanks to the Minister.

**Mr Brown:** A extra \$1 million!

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** Next time the honourable member for Kiama interjects, I will interject about him reading speeches. He has been here long enough to know that he is not supposed to read speeches, so he should just be quiet.

**Mr McManus:** You had better watch some of your own mob. They have got notes.

**Mr J. H. TURNER:** Yes, copious notes. The honourable member and the Minister have glibly flipped over the fact that the amount is not \$380 million this year but \$380 million over 10 years, or \$38 million a year,

and already the project has blown out by a year. The honourable member for Kiama should tell him about the time blow-out and the fact that he cannot get his people to fix up the road. The honourable member talked briefly about the GST. The front page of the GST document—the signature page—is signed by John Howard. The next signature, and the only other signature at the time, was that of Bob Carr. He could not wait to sign it because he knew he would be picking up the money. On 10 May an article in the *Age* stated:

Bob Carr tells Beazley to get on with it.

Mr Carr has joked that he would send the architect of his recent victory, Mr John Della Bosca, down to Canberra to convince the Senate to pass the package.

On 31 May an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated:

Bob Carr says the GST is a reality.

I and other Premiers will have to negotiate an amendment to the original agreement.

He said that while he had historically opposed the GST, "I have to deal with realities". Another article describes him as "Bob Carr the 'Road Runner'". Peter Costello said Bob Carr was "like a Road Runner racing to the table to get his signature on the document lest it be taken away". I make no bones about it: this Premier is certainly an advocate of the GST. The GST is new legislation that the people of Australia voted for. It was on the table; they knew what they were voting for. It was not some shonky deal brought in after the election. People are entitled to know the full ramifications of how it will affect them in their day-to-day life, and that is no more and no less than what the Federal Government is doing in its advertisements. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after the word "That" with a view to inserting instead the following words:

"this House condemns the Government, the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads and the member for South Coast on their refusal to provide funds previously promised by the Minister for the upgrade of Main Road 92."

Main Road 92 is a significant link in the Shoalhaven area and further south and one that the honourable member for South Coast has not been able to deliver on, nor has the Minister. The motion of the honourable member for Kiama, without my amendment, is no more than an attempt to take the heat off the honourable member for South Coast by focusing attention somewhere else. It is quite clear that this is a blackmail threat when one considers that the Minister said that he will simply not provide any money to Main Road 92 until and unless the Federal Government gives the Princes Highway a RONI status.

Whilst the Minister is posturing and grandstanding in relation to this matter—as he does—people of the South Coast in the areas of the Princes Highway and Main Road 92 are suffering. They are missing out because of the pomposity of this Minister, who does not have a humble bone in his body. He has never taken any blame for his decisions or lack of decisions. On 16 February on radio 2ST it was clear that the mayor of Shoalhaven saw through this Minister when he said:

... because country people are waking up, and have woken up ... that the Olympic black hole, I'm not talking about SOCOG, I'm talking about the black hole that's been caused in the State budget by all the infrastructure that's had to go into Sydney, roads...

Honourable members know that. The honourable member for Kiama said that the Commonwealth had not put any money into Main Road 92 and suggest that some skulduggery. The radio announcer referred to a tape which recorded an interview with the Minister for Roads on 3 September 1999. The announcer said:

We actually spoke to Carl Scully on 3 September last year, if you recall?

The mayor said he did recall. The announcer then played the interview with the Minister, who said:

Well, can I say I'm responding to very, very strong advocacy by Wayne Smith on behalf of the people of South Coast.

That is some advocacy: he could not get the road started! Then he said:

... the Commonwealth in getting Stage One done; they've put \$34m on the table, I will allocate the staff and people that are needed, the staff doing the planning work can make that a reality.

It is not a reality; it has not started. The people simply do not believe it will start and they have been constantly misled by the honourable member for South Coast, the Minister and the Government. The Minister continued:

I've told the RTA ... get on with their job, work with the Commonwealth.

We all know how he postures. He continued:

They want this road done, let's spend their money and get the work started as soon as we can.

We have just heard the honourable member for Kiama say nothing has happened. How good are the honourable member for South Coast and the other Labor members in that area if the Minister says the project is ready to roll and yet nothing has happened? Clearly they are ineffective. They cannot take the matter up with the Minister on behalf of their constituents. The announcer then cut back to the mayor, who said:

Yes, well, he hasn't told the RTA anything. They're confused, they don't know what they're doing, and they're telling us they haven't had any clear instructions from Scully to do anything.

The people want to know what is going on. I have not met the mayor. I have had no favours from him and I do not carry any brief for him. He has clearly enunciated the ineffective representation on the South Coast—even at the highest level of Minister. I have driven on Main Road 92 and I know the work done there with the gas pipeline. I know that the significant work that has been done could have facilitated work being started in relation to main road 92 if the Government and members of the Government had the will to do it. On 26 May the editorial of the *South Coast Register* stated:

And while we don't wish to seem ungrateful, what happened to funding for Main Road 92?

But Main Road 92 is one of the more obvious issues for the Shoalhaven.

Instead of posturing and carrying on about the Princes Highway, it is time that members of the Government put some muscle into the Minister for work to be done on Main Road 92. Quite frankly, the Opposition has got the message that the honourable member for South Coast will be a oncer.

**Mr W. D. SMITH** (South Coast) [3.59 p.m.]: It is with some pleasure that I support the honourable member for Kiama in this motion. I would like to correct some of the inaccuracies in the statements made by the honourable member for Myall Lakes about Main Road 92. For a start, there has never ever been any promise by this Government to commit funds to Main Road 92. The position simply is that if the Federal Government will come to the party and help this Government with the upgrade of the Princes Highway, this Government can come to the party and help the Federal Government with work on Main Road 92. I would like to clarify a few other comments made by the honourable member for Myall Lakes. To do so I quote from a transcript of a Federal Senate estimates committee hearing, which interviewed Mr Potter, from the Federal Department of Transport concerning Main Road 92. Mr Potter was asked:

Have you any idea when funds will be released to commence construction of the work?

Mr Potter replied:

That depends on whether New South Wales agrees to jointly fund it.

There, for a start, is proof that there was never any promise or agreement to jointly fund this road. The Federal Government certainly is spreading misinformation about a fifty-fifty funding arrangement. That also was never mentioned. I quote again from the transcript. Mr Potter was asked:

Even on the cheapest option to complete the road—

in fact, the cheapest option is a staggering \$130 million, with the other option being some \$300 million—

you are still talking about \$34 million from the Federal Government and \$12 million from the council ...

That leaves a staggering \$84 million that is required from the New South Wales Government—and that is on the cheapest option. On the top option of some \$300 million, the Federal Government expects the New South Wales Government to cough up \$254 million. So the range of cost for this Government is \$84 million to \$254 million. Senator O'Brien quizzed Mr Potter further, and asked:

Can you tell me how much funding has been provided by the Commonwealth Government for an upgrade of the Princes Highway?

Mr Potter's response was:

I only hesitate because under the national highway program the answer is none.

So the Federal Government expects the State Government to cough up between \$84 million and \$254 million for a road that the Federal Government has declared a road of national importance, when that Government has

put nothing back into the Princes Highway. I am new at this game, and I try not to be cynical, but prior to the last Federal election Prime Minister John Howard came to the Federal seat of Gilmore, within which my electorate of South Coast lies, with great fanfare, pomp and trumpeting and declared Main Road 92 a road of national importance. At the time I took him to be sincere, although I thought it may be an election stunt.

From a reading of the report of the Senate estimates committee it appears almost certainly to have been a stunt to get the Federal member, Joanna Gash, over the line. The reality is that last year's Federal budget led the people of the South Coast and me to believe that there would be \$10 million in this year's Federal budget. But what have we got? We have \$1 million from the Federal Government towards Main Road 92. That \$1 million would not even pay for an environmental impact statement on the road. I question the validity of the remarks made by the honourable member for Myall Lakes. I quote from Federal *Hansard* what Joanna Gash said:

Work will be done with the Kiama council and the State MP to establish the Princes Highway as a road of national importance.

I have not mentioned this to my colleague, but I wonder whether that has been mentioned at all to him. Joanna Gash went on to say:

All levels of government from Sydney to the Victorian border will need to unite to achieve a RONI status for the Princes Highway.

I do not think she has mentioned that to my colleague. I am pretty sure she has not discussed it with the Kiama council. There we have the Federal member wanting the Princes Highway declared a road of national importance, putting the New South Wales Government in the position of having to find a huge amount of money to construct a road that carries 90 vehicles a day. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr R. H. L. SMITH** (Bega) [4.04 p.m.]: There is no doubt that this motion has been moved by the honourable member for Kiama to take the heat off the honourable member for South Coast regarding Main Road 92. Obviously the honourable member for South Coast is in a serious political position: he has found himself and the Minister giving people in the electorate of South Coast an assurance that the State Government would fund half the cost of Main Road 92. Suddenly, after the election is over, the Government is withdrawing its funding. I was talking to the Federal member for Gilmore, Joanna Gash, only a few days ago. The Federal Government is ready to go. The problem it has is that this is a road to nowhere because the State Government simply will not come to the party; it will not put any money into the road.

Of course, while this finger-pointing continues, the people of the Kangaroo Valley must negotiate this narrow, winding road, which in wet weather collapses and is very dangerous. It carries a lot of traffic down through that beautiful area, but it certainly does not do the Kangaroo Valley and its environment and those who live there any good whatsoever. The people of the electorate of South Coast are sick of the excuses for the non-funding by the State Government of Main Road 92. The people have wanted the road for years. The fact is that Carl Scully has reneged on his promise to bring this proposal to fruition. The reaction to the reneging of the Minister and the inaction of the Government will be seen at the next election for the seat of South Coast.

I want to say a few things about the Princes Highway. I believe I would travel the length of the Princes Highway as much as any member of this Parliament. I live at Merimbula, which is near the Victorian border, and travel to Parliament by car. My electorate extends to Ulladulla, which is about halfway to Sydney, so almost half the Princes Highway is in the Bega electorate. The first thing I would say about the motion is that the \$380 million is not allocated in one year but over 10 years. The Government is trying to give the people of New South Wales, particularly those travelling on the Princes Highway, the impression that \$380 million will be spent on the Princes Highway in one year. That is a fallacy. The Government should admit that it is in fact a 10-year program. It is clearly stated in the budget that the funding is over 10 years. That is not very much funding per year on about 600 or 700 kilometres of roadway.

The honourable member for South Coast is interjecting, wanting to know what the Coalition did when it was in government. Its works included the Tilba bypass, Yellow Pinch, the Merimbula bypass, Frogs Hollow and Macleods Hill. Only a few months ago the NRMA released a report. The Government is now narrowing the road. It was told it had to have white guidelines on the edges of roads, so it narrowed the road to a width that does not call for white edging. The NRMA was very critical about passing lanes on the road. But what does the State Government do? It gives \$38 million a year for 700 kilometres of roadway. This is a State highway and it is the responsibility of the New South Wales Government. It is a disgrace that it has allocated such a small amount. Another relevant matter is that this year's funding for roads has been reduced by \$100 million compared with the funding for last year. Even \$100 million spent on the road in one year would be a significant amount of money.

There are a few other matters I would raise regarding business in the area. Everyone has to use this roadway. There is no railway line, and all produce is basically transported in and out of the area by road. We cannot even get B-doubles down there because of the inferior quality of the bridges. Therefore, if we want to move milk, cheese, produce or cattle in or out of the area, we cannot even use the cheapest form of transport. I would like to return to the motion. It is about trying to get pressure off the honourable member for South Coast because Minister Scully promised that he would fund half of Main Road 92 from Nowra to Canberra but reneged on that promise. The Federal Government is ready to go. It is about time the New South Wales Government put up the money. [*Time expired.*]

**Ms SALIBA** (Illawarra) [4.09 p.m.]: I support the urgent motion moved by the honourable member for Kiama. Like my colleagues the honourable member for Kiama and the honourable member for South Coast, I am well aware of the traffic problems which affect the people of the Illawarra and the South Coast. The State Labor Government has committed \$380 million for the upgrade of the Princes Highway. A budgetary allocation of \$240 million for the Oak Flats bus-rail interchange, which is on the Princes Highway, will be a blessing for constituents of both the Illawarra and Kiama electorates as it will alleviate traffic congestion and allow the smooth flow of traffic onto and off the Princes Highway.

The Oak Flats interchange is part of the electrification of the rail to Kiama, a bus-train depot, and will connect with the east-west link. The east-west link is a roadway connecting the west of Shellharbour city to the east, where many of the city's services are provided. Those works are demonstrated examples of the State Government's commitment to roads and transport. Only recently the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism launched the South Coast touring-by-car route, which is proving to be successful. The South Coast is a goldmine when it comes to tourism. It is a region of diversity, offering a wide range of tourism opportunities. It is where the country meets the coast.

With the downturn in blue collar jobs we turn to tourism as a genuine alternative for employment. While the State Government is committed to assisting the Illawarra region with employment opportunities by means of the \$10 million Illawarra Advantage Fund, roads and transport infrastructure and capital works, it is sad to note that the Federal Coalition Government believes that we do not need assistance and refuses to provide any. It should be a total embarrassment to the Federal Government that it does not recognise the Princes Highway—that is, highway number one—as a road of national importance. As such, it has not provided the necessary funding to improve it. It is reported in several newspapers, including the *Sydney Morning Herald*, that \$360 million has been spent in promoting the Federal Government's propaganda to support the GST.

This week the Leader of the National Party in this Parliament deliberately misled the Parliament by saying that the Government's provision of funding for transport for Olympic athletes, trainers, officials and media was a waste of taxpayers' money. That commitment was given by the former Coalition Government at the time New South Wales won the Olympics bid. The Leader of the National Party ought to condemn his own party for blatantly wasting taxpayers' money. The Federal Government should be ashamed of itself for spending that kind of money running an advertising campaign, which, at best, is a pack of lies and, at worst, uninteresting pedestrian tripe.

Constituents of the Illawarra and visitors to our region must battle the traffic jams that are experienced, especially during holiday peaks. Only a couple of weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition, Mrs Chikarovski, was in my region wanting to listen to the concerns of the community. I say to her loud and clear that she should take up this issue with the Prime Minister, the leader of her party. He should acknowledge the Princes Highway as a road of national importance and allocate the much-needed Federal funding required to alleviate the traffic problems and make the road a safer route on which to travel.

As the honourable member for Kiama has already said, the State Labor Government has committed much-needed funding of \$380 million for the upgrading of the Princes Highway, \$30 million for the north Kiama bypass, \$24 million for the Oak Flats interchange and budgetary allocations for a number of other works that are already in progress. It is a shame the Federal Coalition Government does not share the commitment of the people of the South Coast. No wonder there is strong support for Labor representation in this area. Labor is marching south, with Wayne Smith taking the seat of South Coast for Labor at the last election. Watch out Bega!

**Mr BROWN** (Kiama) [4.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank those members who contributed to the debate on this motion. I urge all members to support the motion and to reject the amendment. The Deputy Leader of the National Party said in debate that the Premier was an advocate of the GST. I remind the honourable member that

this is not a debate about the pros and cons of the GST; it is a debate about the Federal Government wasting important taxpayers' funds trying to sell an idea when that money could be better employed making roads safer for people on the South Coast—so that people no longer die or have accidents on those roads—and encouraging people to use those roads to promote business in the area. People have to be able to use those roads to gain access to the area.

The Deputy Leader of the National Party talked at length about Main Road 92. I am pleased he raised that issue. The honourable member for Illawarra and I are strong supporters of Main Road 92. We want that road to go ahead. We have been working with chambers of commerce, councils and other interested parties to try to speed up the progress of the construction of that road. But there is more to this game than a great idea. Members of the Liberal Party, who came up with a great idea, said, "Let's have Main Road 92."

**Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Order of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

#### **Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) postpone private members' statements until a later hour of the sitting; and
- (2) allow the introduction and progress up to and including the Minister's second reading speech of the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill and the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Bill, notice of which was given this day for tomorrow.

## **CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Bill introduced and read a first time.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr WHELAN** (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [4.16 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill. The bill contains a package of reforms designed to both enhance the criminal laws of the State and remedy minor anomalies that presently exist. This bill continues the Government's commitment to providing a responsive and effective criminal justice system. I turn now to the provisions of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Crimes Act 1900. The first significant amendment revises the law with respect to the geographical reach of criminal offences punishable in this State. This amendment will ensure that the State's laws can and will apply to events that occur in this State and to events elsewhere which have an effect in this State.

The provisions are in line with those recommended by the Model Criminal Code Officers Committee of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General and are intended to overcome the limitations placed on the operation of the existing provisions in recent cases such as the 1995 Catanzariti case. The part does not affect special provisions made with respect to the geographical reach of criminal offences already included in the Crimes Act such as: section 45 (2), prohibition of female genital mutilation; section 66EA, persistent sexual abuse of a child; section 93IG, offences relating to contamination of goods; and sections 178BA (3) and 178BB (2), misuse of public property by public officials outside this State. The amendments are to be inserted in a new part 1A of the Act.

The schedule also contains other amendments consequent on the proposed part 1A. The proposed new sections 230A to 203C are important provisions introducing new offences in New South Wales. They create separate offences of sabotage and threatened sabotage. The sabotage offence would criminalise the activities of a person or persons whose conduct causes damage to a public facility, who intended to cause that damage and who intended by that conduct to cause extensive destruction of the public facility or of any part of it, and/or major economic loss. Sabotage refers to damage to public facilities, with the intent to cause that damage and to cause extensive destruction of property or major economic loss. Public facilities are defined widely, and include government facilities, public infrastructure facilities, public transport facilities and public places.

It is expected that Australia will sign the United Nations Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing later this year. The provisions draw directly from the formulations and definitions of the United Nations convention and are designed so that the laws of New South Wales are compatible with that treaty. They also accord with provisions prepared for the Commonwealth and the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General by the Model Criminal Code Officers Committee. That committee, under the chairmanship of Judge Howie, QC, of the New South Wales District Court is to be commended for its efforts over the last decade to modernise and rationalise the nation's criminal laws. It is not intended that the new offence of sabotage would apply to any but the most gross or serious behaviour akin to terrorism. Existing provisions in sections 194 to 200 of the Crimes Act 1900 are adequate to deal with other crimes against property, as are other existing offences such as riot and affray and those dealing with contamination of goods. These provisions can be found in Parts 3A and 3B of the Crimes Act.

The Summary Offences Act also contains provisions prohibiting violent disorder, regulating public assemblies, and giving police powers to "move on" people if they are obstructing others or causing them fear. The schedule also repeals section 353 of the Act. This section is out of date and is no longer used. Its repeal removes an archaic provision from the Crimes Act. The repeal of the section does not affect the general powers of arrest of police officers and private individuals conferred by the Act. Schedule 2 amends the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987. The expression "serious indictable offence" is replaced with the term "serious children's indictable offence" to avoid confusion with the expression "serious indictable offence", which is defined differently in the Crimes Act 1900 and the Interpretation Act 1987. Recommendation 6.11 of the Drug Summit states in part that "the Children's Court be given comparable diversionary powers to the Drug Court."

The proposed amendments build on the work of the Drug Summit and ensure that the Children's Court has available to it sentencing options introduced to adult courts with the passage last year of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Section 33 of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act provides sentencing options for the Children's Court. This bill amends the section to extend the sentencing options of the Children's Court to include the deferral of the imposition of a penalty for the purposes of rehabilitation—Griffiths bonds—and for other purposes. This sentencing option is similar to that available with respect to adult offenders under section 11 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Section 33 is amended and a new section 41A introduced into the Act to extend the sentencing options of the Children's Court to include the suspension of an order for detention in a juvenile detention centre, subject to compliance with a good behaviour bond. This sentencing option is similar to that available with respect to adult offenders under section 12 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999.

Schedule 2 also inserts a new section 50B into the Act to facilitate the use of drug rehabilitation programs for child offenders. The provision is similar to section 31 of the Drug Court Act 1998 which applies to adult drug offenders involved in rehabilitation programs. Schedule 2 also contains provisions of a savings and transitional nature. Schedule 3 amends the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 and clarifies a number of matters arising from the enactment in 1999 of new sentencing legislation. They follow extensive discussion with judicial officers and the legal profession across the State by the Criminal Law Review Division of the Attorney General's Department.

The schedule amends section 4 of the Act to clarify the penalty applicable for common law offences and other offences for which a penalty is not specifically provided. Section 4 (2) (a) of the Act at present provides that a penalty of imprisonment for five years may be imposed if no penalty for the offence is provided by or under an Act. That provision replaced section 440 of the Crimes Act 1900, which applied only to statutory offences. In the case of common law offences, a range of penalties is applicable under the law for offences formerly classified as common law misdemeanours or felonies. Section 4 is being amended to make it clear that the replacement provision continues to apply only to statutory offences and does not affect the penalty for the remaining common law offences. The amendment does not affect the provisions retained in the Crimes Act 1900 that ensure that a penalty of 25 years is applicable for common law or other offences formerly punishable by death under section 431 or for common law or other offences, other than murder and certain narcotics offences, formerly punishable by life imprisonment under section 431A.

Section 10 of the Act provides that a good behaviour bond may be imposed under that section when the court finds the offender guilty of the offence but, because of the character of the offender, the trivial nature of the offence or other matters, does not proceed to conviction and the imposition of a penalty, under former section 556A of the Crimes Act 1900. The section does not limit the period of any good behaviour bond that may be imposed. At present, section 9 authorises the imposition of a good behaviour bond not exceeding five years as an alternative to a sentence of imprisonment. Section 12 also authorises the imposition of a good



behaviour bond when a sentence of imprisonment is suspended not exceeding the term of the sentence, but not in any case exceeding two years. In view of the less serious nature of offences for which a good behaviour bond may be imposed under section 10, including those for which a fine only may be imposed, the amendment of section 10 limits the maximum term of a good behaviour bond under that section to two years.

Section 11 of the Act is amended to ensure that the sentencing option of deferral of sentence for the purposes of rehabilitation—Griffiths bonds—or for other purposes that is available on conviction is also available where the court finds the person guilty of the offence but determines not to proceed to a conviction. Section 12 of the Act is amended to ensure that when a court suspends a sentence of imprisonment following a decision not to make a home detention order, any non-parole period previously set ceases to have effect. Section 12 (3) generally provides that when a sentence is suspended the court is not required to set a non-parole period for the sentence, but such a period is to be set under section 99 should a breach of the good behaviour bond during the suspension result in the removal of the suspension of the sentence.

The schedule amends section 25 of the Act, which relates to the prohibition on the imposition of penalties on absent offenders, to make it clear that an absent offender to whom the section applies is an offender who is absent from the court at the time of the imposition of the penalty concerned, rather than at any earlier time when the offender was convicted. Section 51 of the Act is amended so as to ensure that the power of a court to impose conditions of parole in relation to supervision are the same as the power of the Parole Board to impose such conditions under the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999. Schedule 4 makes consequential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986.

Schedule 5 amends the Criminal Appeal Act 1912. The amendment clarifies the provisions relating to appeals to the Court of Criminal Appeal involving sentences imposed on persons convicted or found guilty of offences. The amendment ensures that the right of appeal is not affected because of any delay in the sentence caused by the need to obtain assessment reports or otherwise—for example, for consideration of home detention orders—or as a result of re-sentencing, for example, following the breach of a good behaviour bond. Schedule 6 amends the Listening Devices Act 1984. The amendment ensures that the Act applies to a device that makes a sound recording of a private conversation even though the device also films the conversation, for example, a video camera, or also tracks the movements of a person, for example, a tracking device with an audio component.

Schedule 7 amends the Search Warrants Act 1985. Section 5 of the Act defines an indictable offence, with respect to which a search warrant may be issued, to include an act or omission that if done or omitted in New South Wales would constitute an offence punishable on indictment. Section 24A of the Act provides for ministerial arrangements with other States and Territories for things seized under a search warrant issued under this Act that may be relevant to an offence against a law of the State or Territory to be transmitted to that State or Territory. The amendment removes any doubt that may arise that the Act does not in fact authorise the issue of search warrants for extra-territorial offences. Schedule 8 amends the Victims Rights Act 1996. This amendment ensures that the Victims of Crime Bureau, a branch of the Attorney General's Department that is established by the Act with functions with respect to the support of victims of crime, may also exercise those functions to support the immediate family of missing persons. The bill contains constructive and worthwhile reforms that will improve the New South Wales justice system. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr R. H. L. Smith.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Private Members' Statements: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

#### **Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit up to 17 members to make private members' statements at this sitting.

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

## **TELEVISION CLOSED CAPTIONING**

**Ms HARRISON** (Parramatta) [4.28 p.m.]: I should like to inform the House today of the tireless work of Mr Nicholas Tayeh of Wentworthville, who is in the gallery. Nick is campaigning for 100 per cent closed

captioning on television, in particular for the Olympics this year, on behalf of the deaf and hearing impaired people of Australia. The original aim of Nick's campaign was to have all television programs and videos in Australia captioned by the year 2000. During the campaign, which began in 1993, Nick has collected 123,000 signatures of support in a petition that was presented to Federal Parliament last year. Nick also made a submission to the review of the captioning requirements of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. I believe only yesterday Nick was in Canberra to speak to the inquiry. Another aspect of Nick's campaign has been to gain the support of members of Parliament in lobbying Mr Kerry Stokes, Chairman of Channel 7, to extend the hours in which closed captioning will be televised during the Olympics. More than 80 State and Federal parliamentarians wrote letters on his behalf to Senator Richard Alston and Mr Kerry Stokes.

Nick was successful in gaining a commitment from Channel 7 to include closed captioning daily from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. and on weekends from 1.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m.. I believe that this will cover both the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games. However, that is not enough for Nick. He feels that the 3.7 million Australians who are deaf or hearing impaired are entitled to the same level of coverage as are all Australians with full hearing. While this issue is very close personally to Nick Tayeh's heart, as his son is profoundly deaf, Nick has made me aware that deafness is the largest disability in Australia. Studies done in South Australia last year showed that 21 per cent of the total population of Australia is hearing impaired, and 3.7 million people have a significant hearing loss. In 1993 Nick successfully campaigned to have subtitles on SBS and ABC television news, including the *7.30 Report*. He does not plan to give up until the level of television captioning coverage is 100 per cent. It is his very strong belief that the Federal Government should step in and stop what he regards as an injustice for deaf and hearing impaired television viewers. Nick said:

Deafness is an awful disability. The isolation, which can result from deafness, can lead to depression, insomnia, irritability, frustration, loneliness and lack of job opportunity. Being up to date with current events and establishing ways of communication can break the vicious cycle and stop deaf people from giving up.

Television coverage of the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 was fully captioned. Nick cannot understand why that is not the case in Australia. Nick's research has found that Scandinavian countries have almost 100 per cent captioned television content, America has 95 per cent and the United Kingdom has 50 per cent, while in Australia it is only 15 per cent. He cannot see any reason why the Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations is neglecting and isolating the Australian deaf community and denying deaf people their right to essential communication and information. One reason that Nick's campaign now focuses on the Olympic and Paralympic Games in September is that he feels these events should be something for all Australians to enjoy and be proud of. Instead, Nick says that the Olympic Games will be an occasion for frustration and sadness rather than of joy for the deaf and hearing impaired people who will feel that they have been neglected. Further, Nick says that it will also be a tragedy for deaf and hearing impaired visitors to Australia if they are unable to experience the spectacle that is the Olympics.

Nick believes that discrimination against the deaf or hearing impaired viewers will do nothing for the image of our country, our sporting values and our television industry. Nick's campaign has drawn wide support aside from the parliamentary community, including community groups and religious leaders. There is no doubt in my mind that Nick Tayeh is a good man, endeavouring always to promote better communication in our community. I have known Nick for more than six years now, and until recently he was also one of my constituents. Not many people would be as aware of the plight of the deaf and hearing impaired in our community as is Nick. In many ways, to say that he has undertaken this task tirelessly would be an understatement. He has been relentless in this challenge, and I can only commend him for his achievements.

I hope that in the near future the Federal Parliament will see fit to amend the current legislation so that progress in closed captioning on television can happen more rapidly. Again, I commend Nick Tayeh and I support his task of ensuring that Australian television has 100 per cent closed captioning as soon as possible. It is not often that we meet someone so committed to making life a little easier for others. I feel privileged to have been able to help Nick on occasions over the years. I do not think he fully appreciates how much he has done for the deaf and hearing impaired community in this country, and I wish him all the best for his future campaigns.

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [4.33 p.m.]: There is absolutely no doubt that someone who has spent so much time on such an important issue as ensuring that people who are deaf are not locked out but have an opportunity to keep up-to-date with world events deserves our congratulations and praise. We often hear about people who have struggled against adversity, but to have achieved some success is worth commending. The fact that Nick has been able to change Channel 7's viewpoint and get a significant amount of closed captioning on television is an important success. Nick Tayeh should acknowledge his success. He has put in a

great effort, and I hope he gets strong support from the community and politicians like ourselves so that there will be a change to 100 per cent closed captioning. Obviously, that would be a big achievement, and I hope it happens very soon.

### EPHING ELECTORATE SCHOOL SECURITY

**Mr TINK** (Epping) [4.35 p.m.]: I raise again the matter of security at Pennant Hills Public School in particular and all schools in my electorate generally. I understand that all the schools in my electorate are patrolled by a private security firm called CARS under a contract with the Department of Education and Training. As I said last week, recently Pennant Hills Public School has had a number of break-ins during which equipment has been stolen. The security firm, with full knowledge that break-ins have occurred, has not contacted the police. Instead, a security officer has left a little card with details of the break-in under the door of the principal's office to be picked up on the next working day. As I said when I last spoke about this matter, this is a ridiculous situation. It is of great concern to the local police, who want early and timely information about break-ins.

This matter is also of concern in the sense that there is clearly a problem with school security and the way security is provided at schools across my electorate. Unfortunately, there was another break-in at Pennant Hills Public School last Friday night. I went to the school on Saturday night as there was a big public fireworks event. When I spoke to the principal she was in some distress because there had been another break-in the previous evening. There was blood all over the floor of a classroom because apparently the person had cut himself while breaking in. Schools Security Patrol Response Report H25445, which was made out by a CARS employee and shoved under the door of the principal's office, stated:

Check of block A completed. Rear entry to the administration top pane in the window close to door smashed and entry gained. Blood on the blinds and blood on the carpet.

It is hard to know what to say in these situations. It is certainly not a political matter; it is a matter of commonsense at an administrative level. I am sure all honourable members would want to have this situation resolved. I wonder how widespread this security issue is in schools in other parts of the State, particularly in Sydney. Once again I have spoken to the Eastwood local area commander, and he is happy for me to say that he is very concerned that police are continually not told about these incidents. In this case the police took the view that the blood and so forth were an excellent basis for investigating the crime scene in a very proactive way to get some good leads. Unfortunately, the first person to see the security report and evidence of the break-in, other than the CARS officer, was the principal, who arrived at midday on Saturday to prepare for the fireworks display.

When I arrived at the school on Saturday about 3,000 people were at the display. After the principal's arrival at the school, people rapidly appeared to assist in setting up the display. Any suggestion that there was a helpful crime scene left with such a large number of people milling about is nonsense. The opportunity was lost. I understand that the police who attended the school—I must say, promptly—at the principal's request after she found out about the break-in, expressed utter frustration that this was the third or fourth occasion on which there had a break-in at the school and they had not been called. The parents and citizens, dedicated school staff and students all work hard to raise money for the school. The fireworks display raised a great deal of money. That money is usually used to buy equipment to enhance education at the school. It is extraordinary to think that a big effort can go into raising money to buy equipment and all of that money will march straight out the door because of a security problem.

Security at the school is not perfect: the police cannot always get there, resources are stretched, et cetera. However, when there is an opportunity basically to ensure that timely information is forwarded to the police, for heaven's sake let us ensure that that is done. And let us fix the problems with the security contract. If the problem is with the security company, let us terminate the contract if the company is not getting the message. We cannot allow this situation to continue. Both the president of the Parents and Citizens Association, Brett Lever, and the president of the School Council, Dr Hunt, have specifically raised the matter with me. Whatever steps can reasonably be taken should be taken to ensure that this does not occur again, either in the electorate of Epping or in any other part of New South Wales.

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [4.40 p.m.]: There is no doubt about the distress that such break-ins cause to school communities. I agree with the honourable member for Epping that it does not seem to be very productive that potential investigative powers of police are lost as a result of the police not being

informed of such break-ins in a timely manner. I am sure the honourable member would have raised the matter with the Minister for Education and Training. If he has not, I am sure the Minister will read the honourable member's contribution in *Hansard* and follow it up. I hope that the matter will be rectified rapidly.

### JANNALI GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL SITE REDEVELOPMENT

**Mr McMANUS** (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.41 p.m.]: Earlier this year Landcom and AV Jennings entered into a joint venture agreement to build 38 townhouses on the former Jannali Girls High School site. I have been told that the site could have accommodated up to 50 townhouses, but in the interests of better urban design the joint venture partners agreed on the construction of 38 new dwellings. The decision enabled a large part of bushland to be retained on the site and represents a better outcome than might otherwise have been the case in this environmentally sensitive area.

Landcom has entered into a legally binding agreement with AV Jennings. To opt out of the joint venture arrangement at this point could cost in excess of \$2 million. Obviously, that is not a clear option for the Government. After the actions of the former Sutherland Shire Council, it is understandable that this proposal has generated considerable community concern. It is important to inform the House that in October 1998 the then Liberal-dominated council rezoned the site to permit residential development, with no dissent and with the knowledge that there was a draft plan suggesting the construction of 50 residences on the site. Councillor David Redmond and his Liberal colleagues seem to have forgotten their support of that rezoning back in 1998, and they seek to blame others for their own incompetence. They now seem intent on opposing the redevelopment of Jannali Girls High and exacerbating community concerns for opportunistic political reasons.

Councillor Redmond and his Liberal colleagues contributed to many of the problems in the Sutherland shire with regard to the current development decisions. Instead of learning from their past mistakes and playing a constructive role in the consideration of this and other development applications, they are being destructive in an attempt to regain lost political ground. These tactics are doomed to failure and the community is very much aware of Councillor Redmond's deceit. What Councillor Redmond should have been done, together with his colleagues, was look at this development application and work with the joint venture partners and the community to improve the proposal. Indeed, if they were opposed to the proposal, they should have rejected the proposal out of hand in the first instance.

The Carr Government is committed to community consultation. I congratulate the members of the precinct committee in Jannali and members of the Como-Jannali branch of the Australian Labor Party, who have continually kept me advised of what is taking place within the council. Landcom has continued to consult with the community and engaged in ongoing discussions with the precinct committee. As the local member I am well aware of the Jannali community's concerns about this proposal and have made strong representations to the Deputy Premier, who is at the table. I acknowledge the work done by my colleague the honourable member for Miranda—who is with me in the Chamber for support—the support of the community, and the support of the Government in its efforts to fight the development crisis that the Sutherland shire is faced with, caused by this former Liberal council.

One of the issues of concern to the precinct committee was to ensure the construction of four ground-floor units which would be adaptable for disabled use. The joint venture partners have now agreed to that development. Another issue related to footpath access to the Jannali reserve at the rear of the development. The joint venture partners have also agreed to ensure that footpath access. A third issue related to an access road for the local St George-Sutherland Community College. Following my discussions with the Deputy Premier, I am pleased to advise the House that Landcom will contribute \$100,000 to resolve that access issue.

As I have said, the previous Liberal-dominated council made decisions on development proposals which were highly questionable to say the least. We now have largely resolved the issues of concern to the community about the redevelopment of Jannali Girls High. However, because of the actions of Councillor Redmond it now appears that the council is intent on taking this matter to the Land and Environment Court. This will mean council spending around \$30,000 of ratepayers' money on a case the council is highly likely to lose. The Deputy Premier's interest and support in this matter is most welcome. As I have said, the issues of concern have now been largely resolved. I call on Sutherland council to work constructively with the local community and the joint venture partners, and to abandon its case in the Land and Environment Court. The lesson must be learned by Sutherland council that the Government is intent on ensuring that the Sutherland shire is protected from the disgraceful development procedures that have gone on in the past. We are intent on working with the council, and it is time the council worked with the Government and stopped its political nonsense.

**Dr REFSHAUGE** (Marrickville—Deputy Premier, Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister for Housing) [4.45 p.m.]: There is no doubt that the great people of the Sutherland shire know when things are wrong and need to be changed. At the last State election the people of Miranda made it clear that they had the wrong bloke representing them—that they wanted a change—and they got it when they voted for Barry Collier. It was a great decision. The people of Heathcote recognised that Ian McManus was a real fighter, and they returned him, with a significant majority, because they knew he would fight for them.

At the local government elections the people of the Sutherland shire clearly saw that their council, the Liberal-dominated council, was not delivering as it should. They threw it out and replaced it with a council of a different complexion, and the people of Sutherland now have a Labor mayor. One of the things that the people of Sutherland will recognise is the hypocrisy of the present councillors who were then in control, and who endorsed this development that would potentially create some 50 townhouses. It is only through the work of the honourable member for Heathcote and the honourable member for Miranda, and the commitment of Landcom—a government instrumentality, although it was linked with a joint venturer—that the development was changed so that it fitted in with the local community and provided for the community in a better, more sophisticated and environmentally sensitive way.

Another issue was the need for an access road for the St George-Sutherland Community College. Obviously, we want to ensure support for that community college. The honourable member for Miranda is on the board of that college and is aware of its needs. The Government's commitment to providing \$100,000 for the development to ensure the establishment of that access road is a great win for the people of the Sutherland shire. I hope that they will appreciate that they have deliverers in the Labor Party, and that they will continue to vote Labor because we keep on delivering.

#### **VISY PULP AND PAPER MILL**

**Ms HODGKINSON** (Burrinjuck) [4.47 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the urgent need for Government action to support the ever-growing Visy Pulp and Paper Mill at Tumut. In particular I wish to refer to the importance of controlling noxious weeds and feral animals around the Visy site, as well as the importance of appropriate upgrades to local roads which are now supporting this large new industry. Visy industries—a manufacturing company with interests in waste paper recycling, recycled papermaking and the manufacture of recycled corrugated boxes—chose well when it decided to locate its new pulp and paper mill at Tumut, in the southern part of my electorate of Burrinjuck.

Tumut, in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains at the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park, is ideally situated. It is 423 kilometres from Sydney, 512 kilometres from Melbourne, 100 kilometres from Wagga Wagga and 180 kilometres from Canberra. The Tumut shire boasts the State's largest softwood plantations and many extensive hardwood resources. The timber is processed in some of the largest timber manufacturing plants in the southern hemisphere. I am a strong supporter of the Visy development in Tumut, as it will have a largely positive impact on the whole community. Much of this impact is currently being felt. In fact, it is extremely difficult to rent a property in Tumut at present. The Visy development will dramatically boost the regional economy and create many new jobs and opportunities for the area.

Recently I have been made aware of several issues which I feel must be brought to the attention of the House so that the Government is given the opportunity to address them immediately. I have been approached by several members of the community, most of whom are neighbours of Visy, who are concerned that not enough is being done to suppress both noxious weeds and feral animals on the Visy site. Since the acquisition of those people's properties, Visy has apparently attempted only one incomplete spraying of weeds and a small fox-baiting program on a portion of the property. There has been no serious rabbit control or any attempt to spray the St Johns wort on the high country. Time is of the essence. Weeds seed every year and feral animals continue to breed. The old adage "One year's seeding, seven years weeding" is extremely indicative of the urgent nature of the problem. Farmers would all agree on the necessity to keep noxious weeds and feral animals under some type of control as a combined community obligation. The commission of inquiry into the establishment of the Visy Pulp and Paper Mill promised that it would provide "a world's best standard of Agriculture" at the site. I trust this is still on the agenda.

I am aware that the Visy Community Consultative Committee [VCCC] has been meeting regularly to discuss community issues. I believe that the committee is currently looking into this matter. However, I would like the Government to work in conjunction with the VCCC to ensure statutory obligations are met with regard

to noxious weeds and feral animals. As I mentioned earlier, another issue arising from the Visy development is that local traffic now shares the Snowy Mountains Highway with B-double trucks and semitrailers. I have been approached by local bus driver, Mr Charles Manning, who is concerned for the safety of his young passengers following several near-misses with trucks on the Snowy Mountains Highway between Tumut and Adelong. That stretch of road was formerly fairly quiet but now carries a relatively heavy traffic flow including trucks. I travelled along the road a few days ago, and I can appreciate the point made by Mr Charles Manning.

There is a particularly narrow section of the highway which has no white lines on the outside and little or no shoulder to move onto if the need arises. Mr Manning is concerned that it is only a matter of time before an accident occurs. I have already made urgent representations to the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads on behalf of the Visy Community Consultative Committee regarding the intersection of the Snowy Mountains Highway and the southern end of Gadara Road. Those representations were made following a recent incident when a young girl was almost hit by a car after alighting from a school bus at the intersection. I am still waiting to receive a response from the Minister. I understand that the Minister is caught up in one CityRail crisis after another, but I remind him that his responsibilities extend beyond the Sydney city limits.

I acknowledge that Visy Industries has offered \$10,000 towards moving school bus stops from critical spots in the area. I commend the company for its swift response. I understand that Premier Bob Carr is eager to show his support for the Visy project in Tumut. I witnessed the Premier turn the first sod at the mill in November last year. He was due in Tumut again this week to talk to local community members about the effect of the Visy mill on their businesses but, unfortunately, his trip did not eventuate. I hope that the people of my electorate will begin to see some outcomes from all the talk that has been heard from the Government to date. I would like to see some real evidence that the Premier cares for the people of the Tumut region and is not just enjoying the publicity that this new development attracts. I would certainly appreciate action being taken in relation to the matters I have mentioned at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Mrs LO PO'** (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.52 p.m.]: It is really encouraging to hear that the prediction that was made about Visy locating in Tumut has developed and resulted in job opportunities being created and that the livelihood of people in the area is being secured. The issues that have been raised by the honourable member are obviously being taken up by other Ministers. However, I will draw their attention to *Hansard* and make sure that her representations are re-examined.

#### **NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS PLAYER MATTHEW JOHNS**

**Mr GAUDRY** (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.52 p.m.]: Newcastle and Hunter people are passionate about their sport. The valley has always been a stronghold of Rugby League, with passionate support for local teams being a part of life. The passion and commitment which is shown by fans and players underpins the phenomenal success of the Newcastle Knights, which was especially evident when the team came through to win the premiership in 1997. Although lacking a major leagues club, the Knights' administration has built a highly successfully team which is based on individual, business and corporate sponsorship as well as a passionately loyal body of fans who make the crowd at the Marathon Stadium the envy of the rest of the National Rugby League [NRL].

It is within this context that I pay a tribute to Matthew Johns for his outstanding service to the Newcastle Knights and to deplore the handling of this talented local player by the management of the Newcastle Knights—a player whose loyalty is unquestioned. I have had the privilege, along with thousands of Knights fans, to watch the development of Matthew Johns into the outstanding club, State and international representative that he has become in his 10 years with the Newcastle Knights. His dynamic partnership with his brother, Andrew, his ability to read the game and the timing and accuracy of passes between the brothers have contributed to many a Knights' victory.

Matthew Johns' leadership on the field, his role as a spokesperson for the players of the field—in the media and in discussion with club administrators—have led me and many members of the public to believe that he would be a vital part of the future of the club. The genuine shock of the community on 7 May when the announcement was made about Matthew not playing for the Knights in 2001 was compounded by the knowledge that he had not even been made an offer by the club. On that day and since then, Matthew Johns has conducted himself with dignity despite the obvious hurt felt by him and his family because of that slight. An instance of his exemplary conduct can be found in Matthew's statements to the *Newcastle Herald* on 9 May:

They've made a decision. I know that things are a little bit tight with the salary cap, I know they can't hand out charity and I can accept that ... The most important point I want to get across is that I don't want to leave the Newcastle Knights on a downer.

Personally, I want to leave on a high note and I'm looking to play my best football ... and really finish with a bang.

This club will always mean something special to me.

I do not underestimate the complexity of running a successful NRL club which involves balancing the need to work to develop the talent of the region's juniors, fulfilling the public's desire to have a winning team and meeting the market value of players within the NRL \$3.25 million salary cap. However, it must be realised that this is a sport that has been built on the loyalty of fans within the Hunter Valley, their commitment to the team and the fans' belief that there was a community approach to sport in the Hunter region rather than a straight commercial proposition in which players are products without the expectation of loyalty being part of the conclusion of their careers.

The failure of the Knights' management to sit down with Matthew Johns and his management and giving him an opportunity to provide input on his playing future based on the way in which he envisaged concluding his playing career with the Knights, while taking into account the economic realities confronting the club—those imposed by the salary cap and the large number of players who are coming off contract—was an insult to a player who has given great service. Matthew Johns has also given inspiration to the thousands and thousands of fans who loyally turn up at the Marathon Stadium for each home game, and he has been a role model for young sports people in the Hunter. The treatment that he has received is a disgrace and it must be taken into account by the Newcastle Knights management in their dealings with this talented player and in planning for the future of the club.

**Mrs LO PO'** (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.57 p.m.]: I would like to make a positive contribution but, as a loyal Panther's fan, I am somewhat restricted in what I can say. However, as a person who was born and educated in the Hunter Valley and who knows the Newcastle people very well, I appreciate that it is to their great credit that they take sporting heroes to their hearts and go to bat for them in a way that only Novocastrians can. I feel deeply concerned for their loss but one never knows—Penrith might pick him up!

### KANGAROO VALLEY AMBULANCE SERVICES

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [4.58 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an important issue related to the security of ambulance services in the Kangaroo Valley. Some months ago, plans were announced to downgrade the ambulance service in Kangaroo Valley. Prior to that, the area had enjoyed the services of Mr Russell Hassett, the resident local officer who lived in the ambulance residence and who was available for after hours on-call services for night-time emergencies in particular. His ambulance vehicle was garaged next to his home. Mr Hassett is enormously well respected in Kangaroo Valley because of his genuine care of community members and his local knowledge. He is credited with saving the lives of two people that I know of, and no doubt has saved many others.

Without the Kangaroo Valley ambulance station and the overnight availability of the ambulance vehicle, during emergencies people are dependent on ambulance services from Bombaderry-Nowra, which is approximately 35 minutes drive away, or Bowral which is also 35 minutes or more away, or even Picton, of which we learned to our regret as a result of the tragic death of Mr Munday a few months ago. As I understand it, for reasons concerning Mr Hassett's health the night-time on-call facility that he provided has not been available for some months but the vehicle remained in the valley overnight because he uses it during the day. Prior to last March, the Kangaroo Valley community was very alarmed to discover plans to downgrade the system in association with Mr Hassett's secondment to a different job that is more appropriate to his health.

Under new arrangements, the ambulance will be removed from the valley and will be driven in and out of the area every day by an officer who is stationed at Bombaderry, which is on the other side of the Cambewarra Mountain. That involves a difficult drive, which is not one that should be undertaken at speed in the case of an emergency. The officer could well be diverted during the day to perform other duties at places such as Nowra or to take patients to and from hospital appointments at Wollongong or elsewhere along the coast.

People were very worried about this prospect. A public meeting was held, addressed by Superintendent Bill Williams, a senior officer of our local Ambulances Service. Mr Williams tried to reassure the community that although this new arrangement was correct, and the ambulance would be brought in everyday and taken out

every afternoon, it was envisaged, as far as I understand, that that would not continue for longer than about 12 months. After that time the old service would be reinstated, that is, the ambulance vehicle would again be located in the valley overnight and therefore available to do on-call work. People were reassured to hear that, although they continued to protest that for the next 12 months, at least an ambulance would not be located in the valley overnight.

I wrote to the Minister and said that I understood that there were a couple of ambulance officers who lived in the valley—even if they did not actually work in the valley—who might be prepared to be available for on-call duty overnight. Of course, that would require an ambulance vehicle being stationed there overnight. As yet I have not received a reply from him. I had a meeting with Robert and Narelle Cochran, Geoff Butterworth and Laurie Barton not long ago following the public meeting. They told me about Superintendent Williams' assurances. We were very keen to get those assurances formalised as there had been no media release by the Ambulance Service at the time, and no documentation had been issued by Mr Williams. I attempted to telephone Mr Williams to ask him to write to me formally about the things he had spoken about. I could not reach him by telephone, so I wrote him a letter and asked him to formalise those things. I wrote:

Whilst I have had a report from a number of people in Kangaroo Valley regarding the issues you covered and commitments you gave at the meeting about the present and future arrangements, I would be grateful for a written brief from you about those commitments and service plans.

That was a reasonable request to Mr Williams who is a senior officer. I was therefore quite surprised to get a letter from Mr Greg Rochford who advised that I was not to approach Mr Williams directly for information of that sort; I was to contact him because in that way I would get information that was both timely and accurate, and in line with the Premier's memorandum No. 92/32. I cannot think of any more timely or accurate source of information than the senior ambulance officer that gave that assurance at a public meeting. I am concerned that this appears to be obfuscation by the Ambulance Service. We desperately need to have that information formalised. We need to know what is the future of that ambulance service and we need to be sure that at some point—sooner rather than later—the ambulance vehicle will be reinstated to a 24-out presence in the valley with sufficient staff either on call or on a permanent basis to make sure that essential services are provided.

### COOLANGATTA AIRPORT EXTENSION

**Mr NEWELL** (Tweed) [5.03 p.m.]: The last time I addressed honourable members by way of a private member's statement I referred to a number of matters where the responsibility of Tweed Shire Council. While tonight I do not propose to talk for too long about the Tweed Shire Council I will express my concern that the local Mayor Mrs Lyn Beck has called an extraordinary meeting of the council for tomorrow at 12.30 to rescind a rescission motion on part of the development at Casuarina Beach. Mrs Beck seems to think that her style of management of council is apt for the area. I can assure the electorate of Tweed that as the local member I will keep a close eye on what is happening there to ensure that proper planning provisions put in place by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning are not overturned.

I will now refer to another issue that has the potential to cause enormous impact on the electorate of Tweed, that is, plans for the extension of the airport at Coolangatta. The airport is now under the control of a corporation called Gold Coast Airports Ltd which purchased a lease of the airport from the present Federal Government some years ago for a reported \$80 million. At the time of the announcement the company expressed the intention of spending another \$30 million to \$40 million approximately to extend the airport and build up infrastructure. The expansion of the airport was of concern to everybody at the time because it would have serious implications for the people of the Tweed, particularly west Tweed and Banora Point valley where there is great concern about aircraft noise.

People have been misled over a number of years in relation to certain matters and, in the limited time available, I will point them out to honourable members. I will do so because of dishonesty and because people have been misled in relation to flight paths and a noise amelioration program that was promised to the people by the National Party candidate, Larry Anthony, in the run-up to the 1996 election. Within a matter of months of being elected, Mr Anthony prompted the Minister to write to the airport committee to indicate that no longer was that promised noise amelioration plan to be fast-tracked. That was the first broken promise in the electorate of Richmond.

The recent war of words in relation to the airport has extended across the border. At the present time the Federal member for McPherson, Mrs Margaret May, has weighed into the argument and has attacked Tweed Shire Council for attempting to delay some of the draft airport management plans being accepted by the Federal



Minister, Mr John Anderson. The area is not affected and her constituents have been misled during the years about a number of issues in relation to the extension of the airport and flight paths. The flight paths come in over Tugun, as they always have, and will not be varied, unlike Tweed where the airport flight paths have been varied to suit vested interests during the years. The flight paths will now be subject to another review.

The major concern at this stage is the extension of the airport and what will happen. Recently, the *Gold Coast Bulletin* published an article in which Qantas Airways Ltd and Ansett Australia airlines pointed out that they have ruled out international flights into Coolangatta airport and said that they were battling to make money from their domestic Gold Coast services. It is all well and good for them to make those comments but I say that it is nothing but a confidence trick to placate the electorate of Tweed to ensure that the draft master plan is accepted by the Federal Minister for Transport.

The local member for the Federal seat of Richmond, Mr Larry Anthony, has again sat on his hands. For a number of years he said that he was not against the airport extension, and was in favour of an environmental impact statement for the airport extension. Now, after all these years, because of the political reality of being in a marginal seat and facing the death knell from the people of Tweed about this airport extension, he pretends to be opposed to the airport extension. The Federal Minister could hammer this matter on the head by rejecting the draft airport management plan. [*Time expired.*]

### GOOD OIL PLANTATION GROUP EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

**Mr STONER** (Oxley) [5.08 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of honourable members the plight of employees of the Good Oil Plantation Group, a business located on the north shore of Port Macquarie. The Good Oil Plantation Group was a successful producer of tea-tree oil. Its facilities include a nursery, plantations and a distillery for the production of tea-tree oil. However, a fall in the international price for tea-tree oil, combined with an abundant supply of the product, has led to a situation where the cost of producing tea-tree oil is actually greater than the market price. This has had disastrous implications for the employees at Good Oil. On 19 April a meeting was called and 33 employees were told that they had been stood down from the close of business on the preceding day, 18 April. The employees had not been paid since 5 April; they were supposed to have been paid on 19 April. If they had been sacked, they would have been owed accrued long service leave and annual leave entitlements, plus pay for the 12 days that they had been owed since 5 April.

A voluntary administrator was appointed on 27 April. However, at this time the employees are still in limbo as to whether they can expect to be paid their entitlements, including their salary for the last pay period. The employees got together and are in the process of applying to the Federal Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business for assistance under the Employees Entitlements Support Scheme, which came into being after the National Textiles closure. They were advised to do that by the voluntary administrator, so it does not sound as though they have much hope of recovering their entitlements.

It is appalling that employees can be sacked without notice. In fact, one of the employees who had a young family was unable to buy Easter eggs for his children, that period coinciding as it did with the Easter break. The employees were sacked at the end of the pay period and were not paid on the following payday. Nearly two months later they are still waiting for their money. The most recent advice from the voluntary administrator, given on 26 May, is that the employees are unlikely to recoup their full entitlements. The next creditors' meeting is not until 19 July. Thankfully, Centrelink in Port Macquarie has been sympathetic in its treatment of these employees, and that has given them some income.

However, the employees are still left short, and they are pursuing redress under the Federal employee entitlements scheme, which I believe will pay up to 50 per cent of their outstanding entitlements. In my view, the State Government should match the assistance from that scheme, help the workers in these difficult circumstances and provide the other 50 per cent. I have written to the Attorney General, and Minister for Industrial Relations to ask whether there is any other form of assistance by way of advice regarding the entitlements, or even information that would be helpful for the employees. Therefore what I am saying in this House is not new, but I wanted to raise it this evening. Any assistance that the State Government can provide to these workers would be welcome. I reiterate that should the Federal scheme provide 50 per cent of the employees' outstanding entitlements, the State Government should match that assistance.

### SWANSEA ELECTORATE TOURISM GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

**Mr ORKOPOULOS** (Swansea) [5.13 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to raise a matter of great concern to small businesses, especially tourist operators, in the electorate of Swansea. As honourable members are aware, the electorate of Swansea encompasses the great regions of the Hunter and Central Coast, with

residential communities, tourist operators, coalmines and power stations, and small manufacturers wrapped around the coast and the eastern and Sutherland foreshores of beautiful lake Macquarie. The Carr Government's recent budget has been well received in Swansea, particularly among the small business community, with progressive cuts in payroll tax and a large capital injection into regional New South Wales, but also for first home buyers, who clearly will be ahead with the First Home Plus Scheme. As well, the entire community will benefit from extra capital works spending, sustaining employment in a region of high unemployment.

Small businesses, especially tourist operators, in the Swansea electorate have only four weeks to go to the dreaded GST being imposed on them and Australian families by the Federal Liberal-National Government, with the quiet acquiescence of those opposite. This is at a time when the *Australian Financial Review* of today's date reports Treasury Secretary, Ted Evans, forecasting a slowdown in consumption after 1 July because of the GST. This is after two interest rate increases, which already are cutting into the so-called tax cuts which allegedly were to compensate families for the introduction of the GST, and after price increases from the collapse of the Australian dollar and pre-GST demand. It is at a time when the deputy chairperson of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Alan Asher, was reported in the *Australian Financial Review* today as saying in evidence before the Senate estimates committee that the regulator could not guarantee that petrol prices would not rise in the bush following the GST impost. At a time of all those events, this nation is hurtling towards a GST that the people do not want.

The plight of the established tourist industry in the electorate of Swansea is of great concern to me and to those small businesses in the electorate. Whether it is Rafferties Resort on the beautiful shores of Lake Macquarie, small hotels and motels around the lake, restaurants and cafes, ships chanderies or bait shops, indeed any business in the Swansea electorate deriving income from the tourists, those businesses will have to confront and pay the GST. The latest statistics available, those for 1996-97, show that Lake Macquarie experienced 941,000 visits in that financial year, with visitors spending 2,811,000 nights there and a total of \$193 million. Those are in 1996-97 figures, and clearly there has been a demonstrable increase in tourism since.

But what will be the implication of the GST on those activities? Early indications compiled from Tourism Task Force and Tourism Council of Australia reports on the impact of the GST on the tourism industry are for price increases comprising 7 per cent for accommodation, 7 per cent for food and beverages, 4 per cent for entertainment, 7 per cent for convention registration, and 6 per cent for transport fares. Tourism, under this Federal Government, is not to be zero-rated, and it is the only export industry to be treated in that way. The implications of the GST for Lake Macquarie and the tourist operators is that domestic travel could fall by 4.4 per cent, leading to the loss of 34,100 jobs in the State. It is estimated that the number of international visitors will fall by up to 10 per cent and that export revenue will fall by \$1.6 million each year, leading to a potential loss of another 25,400 jobs.

The GST will add approximately 5.7 per cent to the cost of a holiday in New South Wales for domestic travellers. That advice comes from the Tourism Council of Australia. This amounts to an incentive for Australians to take overseas holidays as there is no GST on outbound airfares. Domestic travel will fall by approximately 4 per cent upon the introduction of the GST. Therefore, there will be a strong negative impact on tourism employment in all regions, leading to a potential loss of more than 34,100 jobs. It is time this House and honourable members opposite took a stand against the GST because it impacts on the tourism industry in the electorate of Swansea. I ask honourable members for their support.

**Ms NORI** (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism) [5.18 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Swansea for raising this matter and for his active interest in promoting tourism in his local electorate. It is quite clear why the honourable member is keen to preserve the economic benefits that tourism brings to an area like his electorate because, as we all know, tourism is a very important part of non-metropolitan economies. It is extremely disappointing to me, as Minister for Tourism in this State, that tourism, though an export industry, will not be zero-rated under the GST. We must understand how aggressive the competition is between countries to attract international visitors. The sad and sorry thing is that it will increase the cost of coming to Australia for a holiday. Australia is generally known as a destination of good value but in many sectors it is regarded as being a long way from home, so we have to overcome that problem.

The GST will make a difference. The honourable member quite rightly referred to the comments of the Tourism Council of Australia and the tourism task force. They have drawn the frightening conclusion that literally thousands of jobs in the tourist industry may well be lost, given the important role that tourism plays in creating jobs, not just in Sydney but in regional economies. Whilst that industry does not exclusively comprise young people it clearly offers a lot of young people, in particular in the regions, a chance at a job that often

enables them to climb the ladder of success. Young people who might start off humbly somewhere might one day be managing a major resort. The Federal Government, which professes to be in favour of the private sector—a profit-motivated enterprise—has slugged this incredibly important industry in this way with the GST.

### CRONULLA ELECTORATE RAIL SERVICES

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [5.20 p.m.]: I refer tonight to the hardships being endured by train travellers in my electorate. I advised the Minister for Transport that I would make a private member's statement on this subject and I am pleased that at least his Parliamentary Secretary is in the Chamber to respond to my statement. Train travel in the Cronulla electorate is a disaster of the first order. A number of people in my electorate have written to me and to the Minister. One such person sent the Minister an email which states:

So the new rail link to the airport is opened to a great fanfare. And what about all the commuters trying to get to work from Tempe between 7.30 and 9.00; not one train stopping in the morning? 29 trains going from Macarthur to the airport before the first one stops at Tempe at 9.08. And the trains from Cronulla are full anyway at this time of the morning. A disgrace! Are the Government expecting a mass exodus from Campbelltown every morning?

Given the quality of the member who represents that electorate, the Government may be expecting a mass exodus from Campbelltown. The email continues:

The train system is yet again mismanaged. Perhaps you should go back to the drawing board because not one announcement, not one consultancy with people who catch the trains. No wonder Sydney roads are congested. Who the hell would trust the trains?

The Minister responded to that email by saying:

I acknowledge your email. If you wish to receive a written reply, please supply your postal address.

Of course that person wrote back and said:

I am glad to see our technically advanced railway system is in the hands of someone who cannot deal with electronic email.

Such is the competence of this Government. If the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads opened a chat room I am sure he would receive many emails. "Desperate" at Cronulla would surely forward emails to him. I would like the Minister to answer a few questions. Is it true that, during the Olympics period, trains will terminate at Sutherland? There is what I call the saga of the *Mary Celeste* on rails. For the benefit of the honourable member for Lismore, who is looking a little puzzled, I will tell him about that saga. During the course of this month a fully loaded peak hour train was waiting, with its passengers, to depart from Cronulla to the city. Suddenly that train was cancelled; it was moved to a siding. Suddenly, like the *Mary Celeste* with all its passengers and its crew, it became a ghost train. People want to know why. An article in the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* entitled, "Insider tells why late trains get the shunt", states:

Trains are regularly cancelled because of embarrassment over their late running, according to a rail "insider" on the Illawarra line.

He said a diary he had kept of train cancellations last week helped prove his point.

There has not been a denial in relation to that story. No wonder people who travel by train in my electorate have been shocked by the level of service. The Minister for Transport denigrated his predecessor, the Hon. Bruce Baird, who did more for the public transport system than any Government member has ever done. Mr Baird, who was in a position to know, stated:

Unless timetable issues are addressed it's unlikely commuters from the south will use the Airport line.

Alan Jones said:

Who will use the Airport line if you can't take your bags with you—if you can't fit them on? As the train's coming from Campbelltown, just imagine, it'll be absolutely chokers before it gets to the Airport. And then what are you going to pick up? What are we going to tell international travellers—catch the train? Are we going to tell international travellers there's a train from the Airport to Central Sydney? What a laugh that'd be, arriving with 3 bags and a trolley and trying to climb on one of those trains. No dedicated trains. I mean why build a rail-line if we don't have the train suited to that particular rail-line?

That is a good question, but that question has never been answered. All we have had is personal insults in relation to this whole matter. [Time expired.]

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 p.m.]: The honourable member intimated earlier that he was glad I was in the Chamber to reply to his statement on behalf of the Minister. But after listening to him waffle there is not much to which I can reply other than to say that I do not know why he is

concerned about the good citizens of Tempe. He commenced his remarks by stating that his constituents had been inconvenienced and he then read a letter from someone complaining about people waiting for a train at Tempe station. The residents of Cronulla are a long way from Tempe. The honourable member said also that the trains at Tempe were crowded. However, when trains pull into Cronulla I am sure they are not crowded.

The honourable member said that a train at Cronulla was cancelled and that people were left standing on the platform and that that train had become a ghost train. Recently, when I was at an airport, my flight, which was delayed, was eventually cancelled. It was delayed and cancelled because the captain would not fly that plane as he was concerned about the safety of his passengers. I was forever grateful to that captain for cancelling that flight. The train to which the honourable member referred might well have been cancelled for safety reasons. That is a pretty legitimate reason to cancel a train.

**Mr Kerr:** Why didn't you tell us?

**Mr MOSS:** The honourable member told us a story about a train being cancelled and people being stranded on a platform. Trains are cancelled for a reason. That train could well have been cancelled for safety reasons. I refer to the congestion on the airport link. This Government has never denied that the airport link is part of the CityRail network. It is not and was never meant to be a separate line when it was first planned by Bruce Baird, the person about whom the honourable member spoke so highly. The airport line was always meant to be a part of the network. I acknowledge that there are problems in relation to international transport. *[Time expired.]*

#### MAITLAND ELECTORATE CORROBOREE 2000 CELEBRATIONS

**Mr PRICE** (Maitland) [5.27 p.m.]: I wish to speak briefly about the impact of Corroboree 2000 on the electorate of Maitland. Honourable members might recall last weekend a significant demonstration on Saturday and Sunday—an event that was televised on SBS—which had an impact on all those who watched it, and on those to whom I have spoken. It was extraordinary listening to the comments made by people like Mike Dodson and the Prime Minister and detecting the different feelings and emotions in those speeches. On Sunday there was a vast demonstration far in excess of anything that was anticipated. More than 250,000 people crossed Sydney Harbour Bridge. A full day of entertainment was provided at Darling Harbour, that once despised program that now accommodates people from all over New South Wales. Last Sunday the facilities at Darling Harbour were put to maximum use by people attending that function. Maitland celebrated Corroboree 2000 in a most important and appropriate way. It was my pleasure, on behalf of the Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Faye Lo Po', to open the Mindaribba Aboriginal Land Council Child Care Centre.

It has been my pleasure to accompany the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the Minister for Community Services on several occasions to that council centre and to be quite humbled by his comment that it was the best land council of his 119 councils. I put that comment down to the quality of the co-ordinator, Mr Rick Griffiths, who does a splendid job with his committee and the volunteers. To be more specific about the childcare centre, elders, parents and children were there on 27 May. That day commemorated that very famous and extremely important referendum in the life of Aborigines in this country when, on 27 May 1967, 81 per cent of Australians voted to have Aborigines counted on the census and to be treated as real people—the original owners of this country. That was a great day. A figure like that has never been equalled in a referendum and I doubt it ever will be.

It was important for the people who were present; it was certainly important for the elders, but the children did not care, they were having a great time. The centre houses 20 children and operates three days a week. It was funded very quickly because, by some extraordinary twist of fate, they managed to get the application in just before the decisions were made, and away it went. The centre has a waiting list of more than 30 children. It has applied for a further two days, to take up the full five days. It is a long day care centre running from 8.00 a.m. until 4.00 p.m. It has a staff of a full-time co-ordinator, two assistants and a driver-cook. The driver lives at Heddon Greta. He picks up children from there and from Rutherford, brings them to the centre, cooks them a meal in the middle of the day and then drops them home.

It is a happy, co-operative centre. The officer from the department who was present at the opening indicated that it was one of the best-run centres in her jurisdiction. The forms are always in on time and are always correct, the budget is looked after, the nutritional value of the food is spot-on, and it is a happy place. I was interested to talk with a number of the children and parents. A number of the children from Aboriginal families were wards of the State. In some cases those kids were brought up from Newcastle to attend that centre

because the community felt more comfortable with their own. They also reserve four spaces for children of non-Aboriginal descent, who are also happy to be there. The mums in that area are happy to get the kids into the centre. The centre is doing everything we would expect from an Aboriginal land council. It houses a church on Sunday and a museum of quite some significance. I give full credit to the people of the centre. I hope their gymnasium is soon funded sufficiently to give them the part-time supervisor they need.

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.32 p.m.]: I support the comments of the honourable member for Maitland, who pointed out how Corroboree 2000 was celebrated in his electorate. It is only right that Corroboree 2000 should be celebrated in rural and regional areas, not only because rural areas are isolated and should get with the spirit of any celebration like that, but also because the rural and regional areas of the State are where the majority of Aborigines reside. I too celebrated Corroboree 2000 by crossing the bridge last Sunday with my seven-year-old great-nephew.

Like the Aboriginal children in Maitland, I suppose he had a great time but did not understand too much about it. I took him along to instil some sense of social justice in him. I am sure when he is older he will remember it and appreciate what happened. Earlier tonight an honourable member spoke about congestion on the trains. The trains were extremely congested last Sunday but everyone put up with the congestion with great humour and did not mind at all, because of what they were doing. I commend the honourable member for Maitland for his comments and for telling this House how Corroboree 2000 was celebrated in his electorate, in a tangible way, with the opening of an Aboriginal centre.

### **PRIVACY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT**

**Mr GEORGE** (Lismore) [5.34 p.m.]: I raise this afternoon my concerns about changes to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act. I understand the Act introduces a number of information protection principles that impact upon the collection, security and disclosure of personal information by New South Wales public sector agencies and that section 57 of the Act places limited restrictions on the use of public register information unless it is to be used for a purpose relating to the purpose of a register of the Act under which the register is kept. I believe also that the public register provisions of the Act are very flexible and are merely designed to stop inappropriate use of public register information rather than to restrict any legitimate access to information. For example, the provisions of the Act would entitle a local government body to refuse access to anyone if the information were subsequently used for another purpose, such as direct marketing to prospective sellers in the local area.

Councils are provided with information about the purchase price of properties as part of the notice of transfer provisions under section 604 of the Local Government Act. There seems to be some uncertainty as to whether the disclosure of councils' rating information to real estate agents and valuers is a disclosure for purposes directly related to the purpose of the register or the Act. Real estate agents and constituents who have brought this to my attention rely on obtaining notice of transfer information from local councils in order to complete opinions, valuations for mortgages, stamp duty and other purposes.

Constituents such as agents, builders, et cetera, are concerned about any impact from the introduction of the Privacy and Personal Information Act on the work undertaken by them. I understand from constituents that a council on the North Coast has withdrawn its service of providing monthly updates on notices of transfer. I am also aware of other councils that have taken this action. As the privacy legislation does not come into force until July this year I request that the notice of transfer information continue to be made available. I understand also that in November 1999 councils were told in a weekly circular:

... councils should note that Part 2 of the Act, which deals with the collection and use of personal information, does not commence until 1 [July] 2000. Discussion with officers of Privacy NSW indicates that, even after that day, the commonly accepted practice by councils of supplying details of sales of properties in the area to valuers and other persons with similar need for such information will not be forbidden under the Act provided that the information supplied does not include details of names and addresses of vendors and purchasers, ie, it will continue to be in order for details of property location and sale price to be given.

There is a need for people to have information of the owners and the property addresses. Organisations such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service and others need to address a variety of matters of mutual interest and benefit with adjoining land-holders, not least of which is fire management and suppression, and there is no reason to believe that land-holders would object to the transfer of this information for this purpose. Information on land ownership held by those organisations should not be used for those purposes. It should be held in their filing system and should not be open to any other persons or bodies to access, other than in accordance with relevant legislation under the Freedom of Information Act. On behalf of those who made these representations, I ask the Attorney General to support the adoption of a commonsense approach for councils to still provide this information to the respective people. [*Time expired.*]

### PINE PARK CARAVAN PARK DISPUTE

**Mr LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.39 p.m.]: On 3 May I spoke in the House about the caravan park from hell—the Pine Park Tourist Grounds and Marina in West Street, Greenwell Point. On that occasion I spoke of the difficulties encountered by constituents of mine, Mr and Mrs Hargraves, in their dealings with the bombastic and overbearing proprietor, Mr Steve Devett. Since that time I have received further complaints concerning the caravan park and its proprietor. Constituents of mine, Mr and Mrs Flay, told me of the unfortunately all too typical treatment meted out to them and their family. For 12 years Mr and Mrs Flay rented a caravan site at the park. Their daughter, her husband and their children recently travelled to the park to stay in their caravan. For no particularly rational reason, the owner-manager ordered all of them out of the park. When the Flays' daughter and family stood their ground, Mr Devett called the police solely on the basis that someone refused to leave the caravan park.

When this action was challenged, Mr Devett simply demanded that the police remove the family. He refused to give the police a substantive reason and said to them, "I own this place. I don't have to talk to you." The police subsequently informally apologised to the Flays. Mr and Mrs Flay tell me that the caravan park was originally lovely. However, this has changed. According to Mr and Mrs Flay, Mr Devett has now merited the title of the "most hated man in Greenwell Point". He is, in their phrase, a weird and strange man who has managed to chase many tenants out. Many of those who remain refuse to bring their children down as Mr Devett seems to dislike them, which I would have thought was quite a serious handicap for a caravan park manager.

Following the altercation with the Flays' daughter and her family, Mr Devett contacted Mr and Mrs Flay and told them that no-one else could use the van and they would have to get rid of it. This is the same practical problem as that of Mr and Mrs Hargraves—the caravan has been there for years and cannot be moved. So either Mr Devett continues to get the benefit of rental fees for the site or he will presumably try to seize the caravan. Alternatively, my constituents are forced to a fire sale of the caravan. This is a most unsatisfactory situation. I have also been contacted by Mr and Mrs Andison, who have also been the victims of Mr Devett. In a letter they explained what happened:

We have had a caravan at a South Coast caravan park for the last seven and a half years. On the night of January 24 our 14 year-old son was using the public phone outside the caravan park when the caravan park owner came home. For whatever reason, he took exception to our son using the phone and went out to see who he was talking to; when told he was talking to his girlfriend he walked away, then came back, snatched the phone from him and physically threw him out of the phone box ... Naturally our son (and two friends that had been with them) came straight home and told us what happened.

After clarifying our son's story we went up to see the park manager, asked him what had happened; he told us the same story the boys had. He said he was sick and tired of the kids in the park disturbing people and told us if we didn't like him disciplining our son we should move out of the park. We ended up having an argument with him and his wife after that and he said he would come and see us the next day. We have since found out that no one had complained about the kids. My husband ended up going and seeing him the next day. He said he thought we should move out as we'd been there long enough and there was too much tension; there is tension but it's not just from us. Just about everyone in the park would be able to tell you a story of a run-in they've had with him especially the people with kids; he just doesn't like them and picks on them even when they have done nothing wrong.

As I stated before we have been going there for over seven years and it is our second home; we've built an aluminium annexe onto our caravan, built a bathroom onto the annexe, as well as a new kitchen, carpets and curtains at considerable expense to make it more comfortable for us. As this is a fishing community we've also bought a boat for ourselves and a dinghy for our kids. We go down every school holidays, some weekends and my husband stays in it when he works down the South Coast.

The Andisons went on to note that the park does not have a very good name because the manager is a very rude and arrogant man. Mr and Mrs Andison noted that the most disappointing thing about this is that no-one seems to be able to help them. They wrote:

There are rights for people who live in caravan parks but nothing for anyone who pays annual site fees and uses their vans as second homes. We have spoken to solicitors on the phone who advised us to drop it because people who fight for principles usually make it worse for themselves. It just isn't right that this man can destroy our lifestyle like he has and there is not a damn thing we can do about it.

After writing this letter Mr and Mrs Andison were forced to sell their van. However, this is where insult was added to injury. When the van was sold the Andisons were \$450 in credit for site rental. They tried to collect this from the management of Pine Park, but they were told they would not get anything back. Some \$100 was for electricity, which was probably legitimate, and \$300 was to be paid to Mr Devett for the van being sold in his park. I must say that this is even more outrageous than the rest of what is already a pretty outrageous situation. In the words of Arthur Daley, Mr Devett seems to be on quite a nice little earner! The moral is clear. The cases of Mr and Mrs Hargraves, Mr and Mrs Flay and Mr and Mrs Andison show clearly that the law must

be amended. An impartial low-cost tenancy tribunal must have jurisdiction to deal with disputes between unscrupulous caravan park managers and long-term lessees who use caravans as a second home. At the moment the only option for the lessees is an uncertain and expensive course at common law.

### **ST IVES COMMUNITY AND ROAD EDUCATION SCHEME**

**Mr HUMPHERSON** (Davidson) [5.44 p.m.]: I draw the attention of honourable members to the Community and Road Education Scheme [CARES] at St Ives. When I visited the scheme at Mona Vale Road, St Ives, on 18 October last year I was impressed. The scheme, which has had great success, is about encouraging young children to understand road safety. Groups of about 60 young children attend the program four days a week to learn about road safety, including road rules, hand signals, signage, how to handle their bikes safely, and the use of safety helmets. A secondary benefit of the program is developing good community relationships between police officers and school students. Most of the students are aged between eight and 13, and the police tend to be younger officers. It is good for both the students and the police to develop an understanding and a good relationship. The program has been so beneficial that schools make bookings for their classes years in advance, and a number of schools have bookings for several days a week.

I estimate that some 10,000 students attend the program at St Ives annually. I congratulate Superintendent Alan Clarke on his support for the program, which is evidenced by the substantial number of letters of thanks received from parents and students over the years. As the Minister for Police is in the Chamber, I register my disappointment that the program at St Ives will close for three months during the Olympics period. I could understand the program closing for several weeks, but a three-month closure means that approximately 2,500 students will miss out on the program, simply because police will be allocated elsewhere. Those 2,500 students will never be able to catch up. Because of the demand for the program, it will be impossible for them to attend at another time this year or in future years. And the problem is exacerbated.

St Ives CARES is one of four such schemes. The others are Prospect, St Mary's and Bankstown. I understand that the program at Prospect has closed, and as of today the program at St Mary's is closed because of the inability of the local area command to provide police resources to conduct the program. The people of St Ives, including students, are very supportive of the program. Not only have schools in the St Ives region, the northern beaches and the North Shore made bookings for the program in St Ives, but schools further to the west and on the Central Coast have also made bookings.

Many students have completed the program over the years. I am disappointed that the level of support for the scheme is not greater, with sufficient resources to ensure that the programs at St Mary's and Prospect were not forced to close. I invite the Minister for Police to indicate his support for CARES. There is a feeling in the St Ives community, which has supported CARES, that the Minister and the Commissioner of Police have not shown their support for the program. The community would like a stronger level of commitment and a genuine display of care to ensure that the requisite number of officers is provided to conduct the programs. The police running the program do a terrific job. Typically, they tend to be younger officers, and it is good experience for them. I invite the Minister to place on record today his commitment to CARES and his preparedness to ensure that the two CARES programs that have closed, that is Prospect and St Marys, are reopened and that the remaining two, St Ives and Bankstown, continue and, indeed, that he is prepared to direct resources into opening up CARES programs elsewhere.

### **BLUE GUM HILLS REGIONAL PARK**

**Mr MILLS** (Wallsend) [5.49 p.m.]: I speak about what can only be described as an excellent good news story in the Wallsend electorate: the proposed establishment of the Blue Gum Hills Regional Park. I had the pleasure of welcoming the Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, who is now in the Chamber, to the park when he launched the project in November last year. I should like to report to the House on the ongoing process of development of the plan of management for the park, funds for which were allocated in the 1999-2000 budget. I was appointed to the committee as the local member. An open day was held at the park on 29 April. About 150 people from all over the lower Hunter region walked through the park for about an hour and 45 minutes. We all became a little tired.

The regional parks unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service provided an excellent set of diagrams and displays. Before we toured the park, officers of the service and the consultants who are preparing the draft plan of management conducted discussion groups to allow the community to discuss and argue several points. It has been an extremely worthwhile and rewarding process of community involvement and consultation.

That is indicative of the Government's approach to the development of a new concept, regional parks, and it is a credit to both the former Minister for the Environment, Pam Allan, and the current Minister, Bob Debus, and also the officers of the regional parks unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The *Newcastle Herald* reported:

Proposed parklands near Minmi will be tailored to suit the needs of residents after an open day and forum on the site...

Project coordinator Greg Giles said the intention was to get feedback from the community to help create a park that would cater for everyone.

"We've been very heartened by the turnout and the response so far has been very positive," he said.

Minmi Progress Association...vice-president...said....

"We are ecstatic about the fact that the park is going to happen, but we are concerned about whether it is going to live up to its potential."

The vice-president of the association was referring to a matter that was the subject of television media interest on the day: the outcome of Newcastle City Council's deliberations regarding a large void that resulted from mining activity in the area more than 100 years ago. The void is being slowly filled up by the workings of the Summer Hill waste management centre, a regional waste facility for Newcastle City Council which is immediately to the east of the regional park site. The local community has expressed some concern about that matter. However, the matter will be resolved as we go through the stages of the master plan, which will be written in such a way that it will take account of what council eventually decides to do with regard to the void. The land handover is dependent on the draft master plan, which is proceeding on schedule at this stage. There is already agreement between the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Newcastle council with regard to the service commencing rehabilitation and construction, and the council being allowed to make its decisions in its own time.

The project steering committee for the regional park is working well. Its members include consultants Michael Wright and Adam Fowler of Spackman and Mossop, Sue Suter of Sue Suter and Associates, and Chris McCormack from the regional parks unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The National Parks and Wildlife Service chairs the committee. Greg Giles, the project co-ordinator for the Newcastle City Council, is secretary of the committee. Committee members also include Brett Stein and Lynn Gray, officers from Newcastle City Council; Chris Gibbons, the superintendent of properties for Conzinc Rio Tinto; Ian Broadfoot and Kerrie Heslop from Lake Macquarie City Council; Councillor Peter McLeish—the park is in his ward; Glenn Newton, the secretary of Minmi Progress Association; Brian Purdue from the Maryland Progress Association; Robert Quirk and Scott Seymour from the National Parks And Wildlife Service in the Hunter; Sharon Vernon and Melinda Anderson from the Hunter Catchment Management Trust; Rick Griffiths, the co-ordinator of the Mindarriba Local Aboriginal Land Council; Kevin McKenny, the chairperson of the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council; and Doug Lithgow, representing the Parks and Playground Movement.

Schoolchildren have also been consulted on the project. Some of their feedback is interesting. What they liked most were the view, the shade, the open space, the mine shaft, the water and the wildlife. What they liked least were the mosquitoes, the long grass and the mud. They thought the park could be improved by cutting the grass and establishing more trees. Some of them even thought that a swimming pool would be a great idea. The committee is going well, and I look forward to reporting to the House after the management plan is completed.

**Mr DEBUS** (Blue Mountains—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Corrective Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [5.54 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Wallsend on his involvement with the Blue Gum Hills Regional Park and his continuing commitment towards its success. I acknowledge the extraordinarily good work of the regional parks unit of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, not only in the Hunter but also throughout western Sydney. I join the honourable member in thanking the representatives of all the community organisations he has referred to for the work they are doing in the preparation of the draft plan.

I understand that the National Parks and Wildlife Service meets with the project steering committee for the regional park every month. The next meeting is scheduled for next week, and that will be the last meeting before the draft plan is finalised. The draft plan will obviously identify natural and cultural heritage values, the potential uses of the park and the previous uses of the site to provide cues for the development of infrastructure in the park. The park is a unique concept that allows for the preservation of conservation values and the enhancement of recreational opportunity at the edge of urban areas. A master plan is being developed to provide



a design framework to reflect the values and opportunities that will be shown in that plan of management. I well remember the opening of the park last November. I remember the excellent sandwiches and the perfectly legitimate advice given by some people that these days one has to go to the Hunter to get a decent loaf of bread.

### VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**Mr DEBNAM** (Vaucluse) [5.56 p.m.]: I address a number of public transport failures in the electorate of Vaucluse. At the outset I make the point that the Vaucluse electorate is located on a peninsular, as many people would be aware, and as such is very much dependent upon public transport. We are lucky enough to have various forms of public transport in my electorate, including buses, ferries and access to the train services at Bondi Junction. There is also no shortage of cars in and around the electorate, and there is simply no more room for roads. There is only one solution for the future of my electorate in terms of transport, and that is to promote public transport usage and ensure it is working well. Public transport is simply failing at the moment. We have massive public transport problems across New South Wales, particularly in Sydney, with regard to trains, buses and ferries. The Vaucluse electorate is extremely dependent upon public transport, and each of those public transport modes is failing.

It is clear that there is a massive problem with regard to the maintenance of Sydney ferries. Regularly ferries either do not turn up, they are late, or other vessels have to be substituted. People are left on wharves, unable to get to work. One common complaint is raised in my electorate in relation to public transport: people can no longer rely on public transport to get to work on time. Indeed, many people are fearful of losing their jobs if Minister Scully does not improve public transport services across Sydney. Apart from the obvious lack of maintenance on the ferry systems, a number of other aspects are of concern. We need only look at the facilities on which the residents of Vaucluse are so dependent. The interchange at the Bondi Junction redevelopment is under construction at the moment. The redevelopment is a massive project, but the commuters who are at present using the services through Bondi Junction are suffering enormously during the redevelopment.

I appreciate that for the next couple of months that will continue to be a problem, but the Minister should investigate what else can be done to improve the lot of commuters who travel through Bondi Junction. My constituents also depend upon the Edgecliff railway station. Yet 14 months after the hailstorm that hit Sydney, repairs to Edgecliff railway station still have not been completed. I am appalled when I consider this Government's priorities in response to the hailstorm from day one.

On many occasions over the last six years, especially in the past few years, I have submitted a proposal in relation to the Waverley bus depot to move buses off Oxford Street during driver changeover so that the traffic in Oxford Street outside the Waverley bus depot will not be blocked. Addressing the problem would involve only a minor change. It would not cause a great hassle for anyone to institute a parking bay for buses. This is another instance of requests having been made over some years. Despite that, buses continue to block traffic as the driver changeover takes place in Oxford Street. What can one say about train schedules? Cancellations continue to occur frequently on the eastern suburbs line. On a recent occasion, people were left sitting in a dark tunnel on the eastern suburbs line. In some cases, scheduled trains do not arrive at all.

My understanding is that the Bondi Junction-Bondi Beach bus route is the busiest and most profitable bus route in Australia, yet the Government still cannot allocate appropriate resources to it. People are being left stranded along Bondi Road and Bondi Beach every single day when they are trying to get to work. I reiterate the point that I made at the outset. People in my electorate are fearful of not keeping their jobs because Minister Scully cannot deliver basic services. Somehow one has to get the message through to the Minister that people are relying on him to actually make the trains and buses run on time and to keep the ferries going rather than have them lying in the harbour waiting for an engineer to fix them.

The important issue for my constituents and many other people throughout Sydney is that they need adequate public transport services so that they can get to work. I extend an invitation to Minister Scully, if he has the time, to come out to Bondi Junction on a Friday evening at approximately 6.00 p.m. and wander around the area with me. I would be delighted to spend the time showing him all the people at Bondi Junction who are actually trying to get home by using his bus and train systems but who find it extremely difficult because the system he attempts or claims to manage—perhaps the issue is that the Minister claims not to be managing it—is simply not working.

### NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

**Mr TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [6.01 p.m.]: As most people in Australia would now be aware, the internationally acclaimed pianist Roger Woodward has been appointed head of the New England

Conservatorium of Music, which will have its first intake of students next year. The University of New England has appointed Roger Woodward as Professor of Music for two years while the conservatorium is being established. This is an exciting development, not only for the northern part of the State but nationally and internationally because of the number of eminent musicians who have expressed an interest in becoming involved because of Roger Woodward's reputation as a performing artist.

The conservatorium is unique because of its location and because of its aspirations to both reach out to the regional community and employ the talents of internationally acclaimed performers. This conservatorium will follow to the letter the much-quoted maxim for the new millennium, "Act locally, think globally". At a local level, it already has outreach programs in place linking 80 students from Guyra and Glen Innes, which are both in my electorate and within 100 kilometres of Armidale, through weekly lessons on a number of instruments. Plans are under way to extend this arrangement to Inverell as part of Inverell's program for its new arts centre. Requests for similar programs have come from as far away as Coffs Harbour and Grafton. The arrangement is for teachers to visit the centres each week for classes, both group and individual, and for students to come to Armidale at various times for special workshops. Plans are also in place to deliver music lessons to students in remote areas through live video link-ups.

These programs provide additional work for music teachers in the region and opportunities which previously did not exist for talented young people in country areas. In international global terms, the appointment of Roger Woodward has captured the attention of a long list of international musicians who are attracted to the concept of course components being taught by performers at the peak of their careers. At present, negotiations are being held with a number of interested artists who are performing on the international circuit and who want to spend part of the year teaching at the new conservatorium. Composers and instrument makers also want to become involved. Among the many who have expressed interest are well-known forte pianist Geoffrey Lancaster, composer Richard Meale, harpsichord player Nicolas Parle, and renowned instrument maker Bill Bright, who is currently at Barraba.

In common with many of the historic buildings in Armidale, the old Teachers College was conceived on a grand scale. When it was completed in the early 1930s it was so imposing and its aspirations so inspiring that the great art collector and benefactor Howard Hinton decided to endow it with his entire collection. This collection of Australian art from the mid-nineteenth century is now valued at \$20 million and is retained at the New England Regional Arts Museum. When Howard Hinton was alive great paintings by Streeton, Condon, Roberts and others hung on the walls of the Teachers College for the enlightenment of the students.

I believe the new conservatorium continues this tradition and deserves financial support from the State Government to refurbish the building for this important new artistic venture. It is a heritage-listed building surrounded by magnificent heritage-listed gardens, and it belongs to the State Government. Friends of the Old Teachers College, which is a strong community group, has entered a memorandum of understanding with the university and occupies a section of the building where it continues its work of encouraging the many community arts and history groups who currently use the building. In the spirit of their often-expressed backing for the rural regions, I would like the Minister for Education and Training and the Premier to take on this project as a regional initiative that is worthy of their patronage and sponsorship.

A Bachelor of Music degree will be offered for students who complete their two-year diploma course at the conservatorium. The courses being considered offer great opportunities for gifted musicians in country areas. There are also plans to establish recording studios for the use of the broad spectrum of musicians whose talents range from the classical to rock. Associated with the conservatorium will be a number of recitals and concert series each year in Armidale and throughout the northern region. Professor Woodward describes the venture as a conservatorium without walls. I believe that the way that the conservatorium is opening up to the community, to students, to music lovers and to artists who want to build careers and perform is of enormous value.

This wonderful venture is located in the State-owned old Teachers College in Armidale, which housed the first teachers college to be built outside Sydney. The site became the College of Advanced Education before its amalgamation with the University of New England in 1989. Since that period the College of Advanced Education has been absorbed into the University of New England campus, leaving the grand building near the centre of town occupied by the music department and a number of community arts organisations which are working constructively with the committee. The Government has always made a point of helping those who help themselves. Armidale and its surrounding regions have demonstrated their drive and determination. I call on the Government to provide assistance in the refurbishment of this magnificent building.

**Private members' statements noted.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE****Supplementary Answer****STAR CITY CASINO CRIMINAL ACTIVITY ALLEGATIONS**

**Mr WHELAN:** On 30 May the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development was asked a question without notice by the honourable member for Port Macquarie. I inform the honourable member for Port Macquarie that I have been advised by the New South Wales Police Service that there is no record at the community tracing section that either Dr Thien Phoung La or Paul Desmond is missing. Police have also spoken to staff at Star City Casino. I am advised that staff have informed the police that Paul Desmond was seen by security personnel at the casino on the very day that the honourable member for Port Macquarie claimed that Paul Desmond was missing.

**CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDERS REGISTRATION) BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

**Second Reading**

**Mr WHELAN** (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [6.08 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time

This bill responds to recommendation 111 of the Wood royal commission paedophile inquiry and realises a key commitment in Protecting Our Children, the Carr Government's 1999 child protection policy. The Carr Government has a proud child protection record. It has pursued this agenda with the support of the people of New South Wales. It has passed the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, which will ensure all government agencies work together in responding to child abuse. We have established the Child Protection Enforcement Agency [CPEA] in the New South Wales Police Service, which has been recognised by the FBI as a world leader in investigating child abuse.

We have introduced joint Police Service-Department of Community Services [DOCS] investigations of child abuse matters and provided for the out of court audio and video recording of child abuse victims' statements, reducing the traumatic impact child abuse investigations and legal proceedings may have on child abuse victims and their families. In 1998 the Carr Government introduced three Acts that acknowledge the recidivist nature of paedophile offending. Those Acts impose certain restrictions on child sex offenders after their release from prison into the community. This bill is the latest brick in the wall that the Carr Government is building around our most vulnerable—children—protecting them from abuse and exploitation. It sends out a clear message: the abuse of our children will not be tolerated and all possible steps will be taken to prevent, investigate and prosecute this terrible crime.

All child sex offender registration schemes require child sex offenders in the community to inform government agencies, usually police, of changes to certain personal details. There are currently more than 60 such schemes worldwide. Child sex offender registration schemes recognise that many child sex offenders, when released into the community, may pose a further risk to child safety. Studies of child sex offender behaviour show a high rate of recidivism, which is even more alarming given the low rate of reporting of child sex offences. Currently all the American States have registration schemes, as do most Canadian provinces. The United Kingdom Sex Offender Act 1997 established a registration scheme in the United Kingdom. Child sex offender registration schemes have received some consideration in Australia.

Queensland has a limited registration scheme, where courts, in certain circumstances, may order that sex offenders report their name and address details to police. In 1997 the Wood royal commission recommended that consideration be given to the introduction of a system for the compulsory registration with police of all convicted child sex offenders, to be accompanied by requirements for the notification of changes of name and address, and for the verification of the register. The royal commission supported the registration scheme being developed along the lines of the United Kingdom Sex Offenders Act 1977. It did not support the Megan's law approach adopted in the United States of America, where registration information is frequently available to the public.

This bill also realises the commitment made in the Carr Government's Protecting Our Children policy. It will increase, and improve the accuracy of, police child sex offender intelligence; assist in the investigation

and prosecution of child sex offences committed by recidivist offenders; provide a deterrent to reoffending; assist police from New South Wales and other jurisdictions in monitoring high risk child sex offenders; assist in the management of child sex offenders in the community; provide child abuse victims and their families with an increased sense of security; and assist police to enforce the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998 and the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Child Sexual Offences) Act 1998.

Superintendent John Heslop, the commander of the Child Protection Enforcement Agency [CPEA], has stated that the introduction of a child sex offender registration system will mean the CPEA and local police will be able to gather previously unavailable intelligence. He states, "if the CPEA and local police have knowledge of the whereabouts of convicted sex offenders, they are better prepared to prevent child sex abuse". However, the bill should not be regarded as a child protection cure all. Whilst it may deter some recidivist offending, it will not prevent everybody who has been convicted of a child sex offence from ever abusing another child. It is a sad fact that many child sex offenders offend compulsively and will reoffend—indeed, that is the premise that underpins the bill.

The bill will make a difference. It will make children safer. But it is only one of a number of child protection tools and its capabilities must not be overexaggerated. The bill establishes the first full child sex offender registration scheme in Australia, which will serve as a role model for other States and Territories. I will now outline the key provisions of the bill. Clause 3 contains a number of important definitions. One of the most important definitions is "child", which means any person under the age of 18. This is consistent with the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act and the Commission for Children and Young People Act.

The offences that attract registration, known as "registrable offences", are broken down into class 1 and class 2 offences. The most serious offences, being child murder offences and offences involving sexual intercourse with a child, are categorised as class 1 offences. A number of child sex offender registration schemes also extend to child murder. The Government sees a clear need for this position to be adopted in New South Wales. Some child murders have an underlying sexual motivation, but there may be conviction for a sexual offence. There is not a more dangerous or despicable sex offender than one who murders his victim. There is a high rate of recidivism amongst such offenders, with United States of America research showing 53 per cent of offenders who abduct and murder a child have committed previous violent and sexual crimes against children.

I will now outline the class 2 offences covered by the bill. Like the three 1998 Acts impacting on post-release child sex offenders, the bill extends to indecency offences against children carrying a maximum penalty of imprisonment for 12 months or more. As with those Acts, the bill extends to the possession and publication of child pornography, as there are established links between such offences and indecent and sexual offences against children. The bill also extends to child prostitution offences, other than those committed by a child prostitute. The bill also reflects research that demonstrates a link between child kidnappings and child sex offending. The New South Wales Judicial Commission's study of sentencing trends for kidnapping offences shows that persons convicted of kidnapping offences are convicted for concurrent sexual and indecent assaults more frequently than any other offence.

Those figures are even more alarming, as in some kidnappings the victim escapes before they can be abused or the abuse is not reported or proved. Like a number of United States schemes, the bill extends to the kidnapping of children. The bill does not, however, seek to cover complicated custody and access matters that are better resolved through the Family Court. Registration in those cases will not help the children, their family, or the police. Accordingly, the bill excludes kidnappings when the kidnapper has had a previous care relationship with the child. Those who attempt, conspire or incite the commission of a registrable offence will also be required to register.

I will now outline one of the most important provisions of the bill. The registration provisions will extend to offences committed outside New South Wales that, if committed in New South Wales, would be a registrable offence. Research has shown that paedophiles are often highly mobile. The New South Wales scheme will be compromised if offenders from other jurisdiction who move into New South Wales cannot be registered. This will also allow the registration of New South Wales residents who commit registrable offences whilst in other jurisdictions—for example, child sex tourism offences under the Commonwealth Crimes Act. I will now explain the definition of "registrable person". Most persons who are found guilty of registrable offences will be registrable persons, and therefore subject to the provisions of the bill. However, there are some exceptions.

A person will not be required to register if their conviction has been quashed or set aside by a court. Also, there will be exceptional cases when a registrable offence has been proved, but the court dismisses the charge under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. The court has made a clear decision

that persons in this category do not pose a significant risk to child safety. The bill will also exclude first time class 2 offenders who receive a fine or unsupervised good behaviour bond. As these offenders are less serious than class 1 offenders, there is no demonstration of actual recidivism, and the court is satisfied that such offenders are not of sufficient risk to the community to warrant any supervision after sentencing.

The bill also recognises that juvenile child sex offenders should be treated differently to adults. This is consistent with the approach taken in the United Kingdom, and by other registration schemes. The bill also requires the registration of persons who are still under some form of correctional or parole supervision at the time the legislation commences. The judicial and correctional systems recognise these "existing controlled persons" still pose a risk.

Division 1 of part 2 of the bill establishes mechanisms by which registrable persons, and agencies responsible for supervising them, are made aware of the obligations of those persons to report changes in relevant personal information to police. The division provides for three levels of offender notification: first, the courts, second, the supervising agency—generally the Department of Corrective Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, or New South Wales Health—and, third, the New South Wales Police Service. Those bodies will keep a record that they have notified the offender of their reporting obligations. Clause 9 details the relevant personal information that registrable persons must provide to police. If registrable offenders fail to provide this information accurately or within the prescribed period they can be gaoled for up to two years and/or fined \$11,000.

Registrable persons must advise police of their name and any other names by which they have previously been known. This is consistent with a number of United States registration schemes, and recognises that persons with a criminal history frequently operate under assumed names, or change their name by deed poll, to avoid police or community attention. Registrable persons must also provide information on places they regularly reside or, when they are transient, the localities in which they are generally found. This allows police to better monitor such offenders and investigate offences in areas near where the offender lives.

Registrable persons must also provide information on where they work, the name of their employer, and the nature of their employment. The bill also requires registrable persons to provide information on the make, model, colour and registration number of any vehicle they own or regularly drive. This reflects United States research that found that many child sex offenders offend in or from their vehicles. Clause 10 specifies when registration information is to be provided. Registrable persons are required to register within 28 days of sentencing or release into the community, whichever is later. Offenders entering New South Wales from other jurisdictions will also have 28 days to register. Registrable persons who are under some form of correctional supervision at the time of commencement will have 90 days from the time of commencement to register. Subsequent changes of relevant personal information must be reported within 14 days.

Clause 11 corrects a defect in the United Kingdom scheme identified by British police. In the United Kingdom offenders who are charged for failure to report claim they have only just returned to the jurisdiction and are therefore not required to report for a number of days. It is often difficult to verify the truth of this. In order to prevent this excuse, registrable persons must inform police of absences from New South Wales before they go. As a number of offenders will live in border regions, or will travel interstate for short periods, only intended interstate absences of 28 days or more must be notified. All overseas trips must be reported, irrespective of length. This will also assist in the investigation of child sex tourism offences.

Registration information is to be provided personally to a police station in the offender's locality. This will ensure local police are made aware of the offender's presence in their community, better convey to the offender that police are aware of them, ensure registration information is correctly provided and reduce disputes as to whether information was or was not provided. Registration information may only be received by sworn police officers, given the sensitivity of that information. Police will provide an acknowledgment of registration so the offender can prove he complied with his obligations.

Clause 12 contains special reporting provisions for children and persons with a disability. Clause 13 contains modified reporting provisions for registrable persons who are, or have been, protected witnesses under the witness protection program. Consistent with the Witness Protection Act 1995, the Ombudsman is given a specific review role in this area. Clause 14 sets out the length of time a registrable person is required to report to police. The registration period runs from sentencing or release into the community, whichever is later. Class 2 offenders have a base registration period of eight years for a single offence, and class 1 offenders have a 10-year period. When repeat offending is demonstrated to a level of criminal proof, the registration period will be extended by 150 per cent. This approach is consistent with a number of registration schemes in the United States.

An offender on the register for a class 1 offence who subsequently commits another such offence will be registered for life. Clause 16 provides that this may be appealed to the administrative decisions tribunal after 15 years, in the same manner as the application of the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act may be appealed. The tribunal is only to order an exemption from lifetime registration if it is satisfied that the offender does not pose a risk to child safety. The extended and lifetime registration provisions are key components of the bill. They recognise that offenders who have demonstrated recidivist behaviour pose a greater risk to child safety and should be monitored for longer.

Clause 14 also provides that the reporting period cannot be less than a period of licence or parole. This means that extreme high-risk offenders released on lifetime parole under truth in sentencing legislation, such as Mr Lewthwaite, will be registered for life with no appeal. Clause 14 also recognises the differences between juvenile and adult sex offending. It provides that registration periods for juveniles are halved and juveniles cannot be registered for life. Clause 15 provides that a person does not have to register whilst outside New South Wales. It also stops the clock on registration periods when a registrable person is placed in full-time custody.

Division 4 of part 2 requires the Commissioner of Police to establish and maintain a register of offenders, on which relevant information will be stored. This will be provided for on a secure part of the Police Service's computer operated police system. In order to ensure that police exercise their powers appropriately, the Act will be scrutinised by the Ombudsman in its first two years of operation. The bill provides the Ombudsman with wide powers to investigate any aspect of the registration system. The Ombudsman will provide the Minister with a report on the registration scheme as soon as possible after the two-year monitoring phase.

Schedule 1 to the bill provides for the cognate amendment of the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act and the Commission for Children and Young People Act. Those amendments enable a person's placement on the register to be considered in employment screening and prohibit a person from working in child-related employment. The provisions of schedule 1 ensure that the registration scheme fits seamlessly with other legislation applying to child sex offenders released into the community. The Megan's Law approach adopted in the United States of America highlights the problems associated with community notification. A number of American States are now moving away from community notification.

In some parts of the world local community groups may be given details on child sex offenders who live in their areas. Once information on child sex offenders is released to a small number of people it is difficult to prevent it being spread throughout the community. This is particularly the case in small or isolated communities. Available research suggests community notification does not reduce recidivism amongst child sex offenders. Indeed, there are strong concerns that community notification may increase the risks of recidivism, thereby exposing children to additional danger.

The case of Sydney Cooke, a high-profile sex offender in the United Kingdom, highlighted the dangers of vigilantism that may arise from community notification. The police station where Mr Cooke was believed to be hiding for protection was surrounded by a mob of rioters for two days. Over 50 police officers were injured in this incident. Vigilantism is not only a danger to child sex offenders, people mistaken for child sex offenders, and members of the public who are caught up in lawless behaviour; it is also a danger to children as it simply drives paedophiles underground. Community notification reduces compliance with registration schemes as child sex offenders will avoid registering if they believe information about them will be made public.

Superintendent Chris Gould, who is responsible for the child sex offender register in the United Kingdom, recently visited New South Wales to advise Commissioner Ryan and other senior police on child sex offender registration and notification issues. He advised that paedophiles will simply run the risk of being prosecuted for failure to register and move and change their names without notifying police if they are threatened with community notification. He advises that compliance with registration is less than 10 per cent in some areas of the United States of America, which contrasts with the 97 per cent compliance rate in the United Kingdom. Community notification not only means the community loses track of child sex offenders; it means police also lose track of them. The cost to police of tracking them down is enormous. The cost to child safety is even greater.

Community notification also makes offenders move more frequently, destabilising their lives and making it less likely for them to be rehabilitated. Victims groups, such as VOCAL, have previously expressed concern that community notification may cause stress to the offender which leads to his reoffending. Community notification is likely to create a false sense of security in the community, with the community focusing on the dangers posed by a

specific offender, rather than the dangers posed by other offenders in the area of whom the community are unaware. The vigilance of children and their families is best maintained if they are educated about the dangers of general situations, such as getting into a car with a stranger.

The recent public debate about CRIMENET, the private Internet service that posts criminal record information on the web, also highlights the dangers of publicly releasing child sex offender information. That release may be used to argue that a trial should be aborted, or it may be pleaded as a mitigating factor in respect of the commission of an offence. Community notification should not be allowed to be used to get child sex offenders off the hook or to receive more lenient sentences. One of the greatest drawbacks of community notification is that it may cause further harm to a victim of abuse. It is a sad fact that much of the child abuse in our society is committed within the family unit—the public identification of an offender may also identify the victim, causing additional humiliation and hurt.

Victims groups such as VOCAL oppose community notification for all of the above reasons. They, like this Government, want a scheme that will work. This will only work if convicted child sex offenders register. It is bad for victims, bad for offenders, bad for the community and bad for law enforcement and child protection agencies. The Government has put forward a bill that offers significant additional protection to children. It has done so after conducting extensive research into paedophile offending and registration schemes in other jurisdictions. I commend this bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr R. H. L. Smith.**

#### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Special Adjournment: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

#### **Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the House at its rising this day to adjourn until Friday 2 June 2000 at 10.00 am.

**House adjourned at 6.28 p.m.**

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