

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 11 October 2000

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES

Debate resumed from 10 October.

Mr KNIGHT (Campbelltown—Minister for the Olympics) [10.00 a.m.]: Like the overwhelming majority of members of this House and indeed the community in general, I wholeheartedly endorse the sentiments of the motion. In my case, I had the enormous privilege of being able to lead the Sydney 2000 team. That also meant that I have been fortunate enough to have a number of opportunities in other places to express sentiments similar to those in the motion before the House, such as being able to speak at the closing ceremony and being able to talk to a number of people and groups mentioned in the motion. I was also able to do press conferences on the last day at the main press centre, with international media as well as domestic media, and similarly at the Sydney media centre on the Sunday of the closing ceremony.

I was lucky enough to be able to talk to volunteers at the parade and a number of other venues, to go out with President Samaranch quite early in the piece to the Tennis Centre to thank a large group of volunteers there, and to speak to volunteers in the common domain at various venues and thank them personally. I was also able to go to receptions for the Australian team and congratulate the athletes. So I will not take the time of the House today to repeat all of the things that I have been fortunate enough to have opportunities to say at other forums.

Today I want to focus on two things. The first is the issue of reconciliation, involving indigenous people of Australia. The second is the last part of the motion, which looks forward to the future. The Olympic Games helped carry forward the long-overdue reconciliation process between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. It is important that we do not overstate the significance of the part played by the Games in that process. The Games, of course, did not cause the reconciliation process, but I am pleased that the Games were able to play a small part in facilitating and advancing the cause of reconciliation.

It is important to stress again that we were not central. So, for example, when John Coates and I chose Catherine Freeman to be the final torchbearer and to light the cauldron in the stadium, that helped in the reconciliation process. But what helped was not John's and my choice. What helped was the outstanding individual, the outstanding Australian that Catherine Freeman is. And what helped is the way in which the community responded and embraced her. I have done a lot of things in the course of the Games that have attracted criticism, but there was almost no criticism over the choice of Catherine Freeman to be the last torchbearer. And that says volumes not for the decision but about Catherine Freeman, about reconciliation and about how the Australian community as a whole views her and views that process.

There was a similar outpouring of national pride and delight when Catherine Freeman won the 400 metres event on the track. I was sitting next to Lyle Munro, who is an activist in the Metropolitan Lands Council. Lyle Munro was in fact the Metropolitan Lands Council's co-ordinator of protests for the Olympic Games period. Lyle turned to me, with tears in his eyes, and said, "In less than 50 seconds that girl has done more to advance the cause of Aboriginal people than I have done in a lifetime of activism and protest." I am not sure that Lyle should downplay his own contribution so readily, but I understand the sentiment of his statement. He did not mean just that Catherine Freeman had achieved a magnificent sporting victory; he also meant that the whole crowd there in the stadium, no matter what colour people were, rose as one, as Australians proud of this wonderful, wonderful Australian woman, this wonderful, wonderful Australian athlete. Lyle was right in the sense that the advance that she had made for recognition of the Aboriginal people by the broader community was very, very significant.

I know that when I first suggested that Nova Peris-Kneebone be the first torchbearer and that the torch start at Uluru—a suggestion supported at the board approximately three years ago—it was, at the time, a little

controversial. But by the time the torch landed at Uluru it was hard to find anyone in Australia who did not believe it was the right place for it to land. It was hard to find anyone who had another suggestion as to where it should be. What was terrific was that with the traditional owners at Uluru, who had initially been sceptical—it was much easier to convince the SOCOG board to go to Uluru than it was to convince the traditional owners to subject Uluru to that level of invasiveness from the media from around the world and others—we negotiated that through. Lowitja O'Donoghue was a great help in that process because that is her country; she comes from that part of central Australia.

The way in which the traditional owners embraced the Games and the torch relay, and the way in which the country embraced the torch relay beginning there and Nova being the first torchbearer were incredibly important. We saw similar things at happenings at the Indigenous Cultural Pavilion which Jenny Munro and others, particularly associated with the Metropolitan Lands Council, conducted in The Boulevard at Olympic Park at Homebush Bay. We saw great spontaneous interest from the huge queues of people, both domestic and international, with very high sales of Aboriginal art work and a lot of interest in the Aboriginal history and the messages that were on display.

I should not depart from that subject without mentioning that of course there were some tensions within different parts of the indigenous community. We should not be surprised about that. We should not be shocked by that. We should not be surprised or find that strange. After all, the non-indigenous community in Australia—for want of a better word, white Australians, to put it crudely—are not homogenous. There are differences of view. There are differences on both sides of this Chamber. There are more differences in the upper House. And there are even more differences out there in the community. We should not expect that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be politically homogenous.

I was also delighted at the ways in which the welcomes at venues were received. David Richmond came to me, when we began to open the facilities that the Olympic Co-ordination Authority and the private sector had conducted, with a proposal that each of those openings begin with a welcome on behalf of representatives of the Aboriginal people from that community who had a link with traditional ownership. I was very happy to do that. But I have to say I thought there was a likelihood that that would come under criticism for being, for want of a better phrase, too politically correct.

In fact, the reverse happened. As we would go out to venues, like the softball site at Aquilina Reserve at Doonside, where two sisters were involved in giving the welcome, the reaction was of spontaneous applause and endorsement from a mixture of sporting people and working-class people from the surrounding area. That was terrific. It was genuine. It was warm. We saw that at every venue. We saw it again at the stadium, where Rod Townen from the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and other representatives of land councils in Sydney, before the opening ceremony formally commenced, led a traditional welcome to the country. Of course, we saw important parts of the Aboriginal culture and Torres Strait Islander culture showcased in the opening ceremony itself.

During the period of the Games we saw some parts of the less favourable aspects of relations between the broader Australian community and the indigenous people displayed to the world, but we also saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people positively on display. We also, just as importantly, saw Australians as a whole embracing that part of our nation with great pride and great admiration. That was a delight to witness. I am very proud to have been able to play some small part in helping to facilitate that process, rather than cause it. Talking of pride and admiration brings me to the last part of the motion, which states:

That this House:

...

- (2) recognises that New South Wales in particular, and Australia in general, has a tremendous opportunity to build upon the increased international reputation for Australia and Australians and is united in pursuing this potential legacy for the benefit of all citizens of New South Wales.

There is the important issue of how we now build on the pride in Australia, the pride that Australians feel and the admiration that the rest of the world feels for Australia. Notwithstanding what people might say about Athens, it is extremely unlikely that we will see the Games here again, certainly in the near future. The Games are over, the athletes have gone and we will not in the next few years see the Olympic Games beach volleyball or the 100 metres men's or women's track, swimming or anything else. However, we have an enormous opportunity to capitalise beyond the sport on what happened here during the period of the Games.

For a while Australia was unquestionably flavour of the month. The challenge for us is how we turn that into making Australia flavour of the decade, and that is entirely possible if one looks at the history of the Games in other countries. Barcelona, which was seen to have run an excellent Games—indeed, before Sydney probably the best Games ever—increased its tourism year after year after the Games. Last year its overnight bed stays, seven years after the Games, were over 1½ times more than during the Games year itself, notwithstanding that there was the huge influx of people during the Games period. It has more overnight hotel bed stays now than any time in its history, including during the Games. We have a great opportunity to build upon that.

It is worth reminding ourselves collectively that we really did run the best Games ever in the history of the world. That is better than Barcelona, better than Los Angeles, better than Seoul and better than Tokyo, even though after the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 people started to look very differently at Japan. Post-war items made in Japan had a cheap, shoddy implication. The 1964 Olympic Games helped change that; it was not the only reason but it helped. Seoul and the emergence of those well-known Korean companies in the worldwide market really kicked on after the Seoul Games in 1988. We as Australians are in a position now of having run and achieved something better than any of those countries.

Imagine how difficult it was for Juan Antonio Samaranch to get up and say implicitly that the Sydney Games were much better than the Barcelona Games, in his own city, in his home country, a Games that he was deeply and personally involved in the running of; and not only say it, but mean it. Imagine how hard it was for the American press almost universally to say how much better the Games were in Sydney than in Atlanta and Los Angeles, and how much better we have done! That puts us in a tremendous position. What does that say about Australia and Australians to the rest of the world? It says something very special and it is important that we look towards how we can capitalise on that.

I am pleased that, with the odd exception where people from the other side of the House or elsewhere occasionally gave in a little to the temptation to play some petty politics, overwhelmingly people on both sides of the Parliament, outside of the Parliament and in most sections of the media are looking forward. Some of the things about us and about how the world sees us can be demonstrated by some stories and I shall tell the House of three. First, I took Francois Carrard a few months before the Games to Tetsuya's Restaurant for dinner. Francois is the Director-General of the International Olympic Committee.

One might imagine that a person holding that position is not unfamiliar with having a nice meal in different parts of the world. It is not a prerequisite of the job never to eat a decent meal or have a decent feed. Such people tend not to stay at the YMCA or to eat in Harry's Café de Wheels, not that I have not had the odd nice meal at Harry's Café de Wheels. At the end of the meal Francois said to me, "That is the best meal I have eaten anywhere in the world in the last year." I could have taken him to a number of other Sydney restaurants and he would have had a similar view. What is important is that he did not just tell me or the people at the restaurant. Many other people, sponsors, senior people and chief executive officers have said to me, "Francois Carrard has told me that I have to go to this restaurant where he has had the best meal anywhere in the world in the last year."

Jack Welch is the Chief Executive Officer of General Electric, which owns NBC and about half the known universe. Welch is the doyen of chief executives in America and is arguably the most powerful chief executive in any private entity in America. Welch came to Sydney for several days during the Games. It was the first time he had been to Sydney and he was blown away by Sydney. He kept raving about Sydney and people who have talked to him since he has left Sydney say that he is still raving about Sydney and how wonderful it is. Jack Welch has a huge amount of money and power, and tickets and accreditation to anything he wants. One night his wife told me that even though they were only here for about five nights, they decided just to have a look around the city rather than attend an event, even though they had tickets.

They went for a walk down from the hotel and ended up at the Olympic live site at Circular Quay. Jack Welch spent all night watching the free site rather than attend an event because he could not believe the crowd, the happiness, the joy and the safety. In how many cities in the world can one of the leading chief executives in the United States go and just mingle with the crowd, have fun, have a drink, enjoy chatting with people and be completely safe? That is the sort of thing that was happening in Sydney and that is what people are going away and telling the rest of the world about.

I mentioned that Jack Welch is the Chief Executive of General Electric, which owns NBC. There has been a little toing-and-froing about whether NBC received good or bad ratings. It is important to note that NBC made money on the Games; it did very well. But from Australia's point of view the single most important rating

that NBC received was at the opening ceremony. A couple of times its ratings tailed off at certain hours on delayed broadcasts in sporting events in which the Americans were not doing well and people knew in advance that the Americans had not done well.

However, the opening ceremony rated higher in America than any opening ceremony at any Games except for the Games held in America. Therefore, other than Los Angeles and Atlanta, more people watched the Sydney opening ceremony than any other opening ceremony; heaps more than at Seoul and much more than at Barcelona, notwithstanding that the time differences were more favorable there.

At the start of that program there was a huge audience. NBC ran a 10-minute feature on how great Australia is and how terrific Australians are as an introduction to the opening ceremony. That sort of thing was repeated throughout its telecast. They included short features on Kalgoorlie, the Barrier Reef, something on Sydney, the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the lovely little feature on Gallipoli and what that means for Australians. It also ran a short feature on the Australian coastwatcher who was credited with saving the life of John F. Kennedy during the Second World War, which was run along the lines that Camelot would never have happened without one brave Australian.

That is the sort of stuff that people were seeing. That has been replicated all around the world. Before the Games Australia was known, but was not all that well known. We were a little exotic country a long way away, and people still knew us more for kangaroos, koalas and other things than they did for the modern, innovative country we are. Now the world knows us a lot better, and it knows us in a more positive way. We are entitled to feel better about ourselves, as the world feels better about us. One of the really significant things that happened to me during the Games period was that lots of people would come up to me in the common domain and on the streets as the Games were going well and say positive and nice things about how well they were going. But the most common thing and the best thing that they said was, "I feel really proud to be Australian. I feel really proud of this country." It reminded me of what we set out to achieve.

Early in the morning in November 1996 I came back from my first meeting as President of the organising committee on a United Airlines aeroplane—one of our sponsors' planes. We came on the most unusual flight path up the harbour. We did not come across the harbour; we came up the harbour. It was about 7 o'clock in the morning, the sun was up, and the harbour was glistening. We came through the heads, up the harbour, over the bridge, saw the Sydney Opera House on the left, saw Darling Harbour, went up the Parramatta River and, almost on cue, turned left at the Olympic site where construction was under way, came back and landed into the east on the east-west runway.

Two things happened on that plane. The first was that a whole lot of Americans, who had never seen Australia before, were literally gobsmacked. They were running to the windows, oohing and aahing and pointing out the windows. They were just astounded by what they could see. The other thing that happened was that as I looked around the plane all the Australians were sitting up a little taller, puffing out their chests. It did not matter whether they lived in Bourke, Melbourne or Darwin—they just felt this sort of pride as the rest of the world marvelled. Those are the two things that we really set out to capture. We really set out to get a Games that made the world feel good about Australia and that made Australians feel good about themselves. I think we achieved both those things. Australians can do anything. I think there is justifiably in Australians a greater confidence and an assertiveness about ourselves. We do not feel quite so embarrassed about telling the world how good we are. It is a great starting point for us and for Australian business.

Of course, when an Australian businessman or businesswoman goes into America, Asia or Europe tomorrow, nobody will give him or her a deal just because Sydney ran a great Games. Nobody will say, "Ah, great Games in Sydney, let me sign up for the deal on whatever you want to do." But it is a hell of a lot better starting point than if business men or women had to go in apologising for what went wrong. It is a great ice breaker and it sets a climate. If business men and women are going in on behalf of an Australian company, people overseas know that they are coming from a country that can do competent, extraordinary and, at times, amazing things.

Similarly, we brought in huge numbers of people from around the world during the Games. NBC occupied most of the Intercontinental Hotel. It also had a boat and it brought in people in five-day waves. NBC brought in about three groups of people—literally thousands of people—to have a five-day experience of Sydney. Those people were NBC's leading contacts around America, its big advertisers, its big corporate customers and its big corporate clients. No-one is naive enough to say that any of those people will say, "We had a great time in Sydney. We must put our regional headquarters there." No-one will make a decision as

simplistic as that. But when the time comes to decide where to put a regional headquarters, when those decisions about investment have to be made, the climate that we created during their visit here and the climate that we hope to build upon after their visit here and after the Games gives us an enormous leg up.

Businesses spend a fortune on wining, dining, forming relationships and trying to create a positive climate. We have just done that for the nation and all the businesses in one go. Everyone has their favourite moment about the Games. There were lots of wonderful, wonderful moments on the sporting field and in surrounding areas. But, for me, my single favourite moment, amongst many great moments, was at the closing ceremony when Juan Antonio Samaranch formally proclaimed, in the words required by the charter, the closure of the Games of the XXVII Summer Olympiad held in Sydney and the crowd, as one, went, "Ah." That really indicated how Australians felt about the Games.

It is true that the Games are gone, but we should not feel downcast. We should not feel "Ah" about the future. The great opportunities that lie before Australia as a result of how the world has seen Australia, as a result of so many hundreds of thousands of Australians delivering so well, gives the Federal Government, the State Government, and people from all sides of politics and business in particular an enormous opportunity to capitalise for the benefit of this country—a benefit that the people of this country so richly deserve.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [10.26 a.m.]: I place on the record my appreciation of the role played by the Minister for the Olympics, who just contributed to debate on this motion, and for the extraordinary amount of work required of him over the last few years. As the Minister publicly said in front of billions of viewers around the world, thanks go also to his family. I do not suppose many people outside this building would understand exactly what the families of members of Parliament do or put up with. Members of Parliament could only try to imagine what the family of the Minister for Olympics put up with over the past few years.

Mr Knight: They have had to put up with me as well as everything else.

Mr O'DOHERTY: Indeed. I say to the Minister, "Thank you" and I ask him pass on our thanks to his family in particular. I am sure that members of the Minister's family will be glad to have him back now that the Games are over. Members of the Opposition wish the Minister well in the future. The Sydney 2000 Games were an extraordinary Olympics. I thank the Minister for sharing with us his unique perspective. Those are great stories for Australians to hear. All honourable members have great stories about what happened in their electorates and their communities. In my brief contribution I will not have much time to do more than just skim across a few things. Inevitably I will leave some out.

I pass on appreciation to the shadow minister for the Olympics, the Hon. Chris Hartcher, who represented the Coalition admirably on SOCOG in the past few years. He played a not insignificant role in the organisation of the Games. Yesterday we heard some of the shadow minister's stories in particular about the torch relay. I cannot imagine what it would have been like representing this country as the flame was handed over in Greece. What an extraordinary honour was afforded to the shadow minister. I could not think of a better person to take that honour. The honourable member for Gosford, the shadow minister for the Olympics, thinks deeply about his community and about Australia and understands it well. I think that would have been a great perspective for SOCOG. I am looking forward to the ongoing way in which the honourable member, through his understanding of the unique values and philosophies of the Australian character, continues to bring out those themes in future discussions in his role as a senior member of the Coalition and a senior member of this Parliament.

I thank also Nick Greiner and Bruce Baird, who had the determination and the vision—a word from which we should not shy away today—to bid for the Games. Bruce and Judy, who are great friends of my wife Georgina and I, have told us many stories about the bid process and what a nervous and difficult time it was. The Minister for the Olympics just reminded us how Australia used to feel nervous about itself. When we went into international forums we were not sure how we would be received. We felt good about what we did but we were not sure what people felt about us. Imagine going, as the then Minister for the Olympics did, to the International Olympic Committee and around the world to visit various delegates and explain just why Australia should have the Games. Imagine the reception that would have been afforded Australia in the days prior to the Olympics.

It has become an important marking-point for our history—we will now talk about things being either pre-Olympics or post-Olympics. Remember the days before the Sydney Olympics when we did not have the world recognition we now have. Imagine how difficult it was for Bruce Baird and Rod McGeoch and the others

to go to the delegates and explain why it would be good for Sydney to have the Games. Imagine the delegates asking, "How many people do you have in Sydney? How many people do you have in your whole country? What can Sydney do for the Games?" To win against the odds was, in itself, a gold medal performance. I pay tribute particularly to the work done by Bruce and Judy, considering the impact on them and their family of that extraordinary and gruelling series of meetings that they went through, as well as Rod McGeoch and others involved in the bid. Their contribution to this country should not go unmarked by Parliament, and I am pleased to be able to support that part of the motion.

To everyone involved in the bid, through through the changes of government—including you, Mr Speaker—to the preparation of the Games, and the staging of the world's best Games, our community says thank you and congratulations. Something has been done for this nation that has truly set us up at the start of this millennium to be a nation that is now happy and proud about what it has done in the past and excited and proud about what it can do in future. In the opening ceremony, which I watched at home with my family, I saw a new maturity in Australia.

As someone who has been involved in the media, the community and public life for quite a long time now, I have always noticed when I talked to Australians, on my talkback radio program or whenever it was, that there was a cultural cringe in this country. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s we laughed about ourselves but we laughed nervously and there was an element of embarrassment about the Hills hoist or the Victa lawnmower or the tin sheds. We did away with that in one magnificent event in the opening ceremony. Ric Birch was able to showcase all these icons which in the past may have given us some small tingle of embarrassment and tell us to be proud of these things. This is where we have come from.

Let us all celebrate our Aboriginal heritage together. Let us celebrate the heritage of all those who came to this nation in the past, including people who came from Ireland, where my ancestors came from, or people who came from Germany, where the ancestors of the honourable member for Gosford came from. Let us say this is what we are, we are proud of that, and because it has made us strong and has forged our character we will hold our heads proud as the pre-eminent nation in the world at the moment. So it was a new maturity we were able to celebrate in the opening ceremony and from that moment the Games were a stunning success. And Australia is now a mature nation amongst the nations of the world. The benefits from the Games for my children and all of our grandchildren are inestimable. I hope that, like my family, many members of our community took the opportunity to create special events around the Olympics. It is not just the Olympics themselves but the things that happened around them that enable us to go forward. With our children being 8½ and six, we decided to try to have an Olympic experience for them. In the ballot we purchased tickets to the soccer and to the handball, and we made them very special events. We planned for them. We spent a long time at the Olympic site when we went to see the handball. We walked around and enjoyed the atmosphere and ambience and we stayed late and watched the bogong moths descend on the stadium. We had dinner at McDonald's and watched the passing parade and saw NBC setting up for the *Today Show*. My children will remember that forever.

We saw two handball matches—Australia versus Tunisia and a second game involving Spain. We decided we would barrack for Spain. My six-year-old was sitting there yelling out, "Espana". Someone who was clearly with the Spanish delegation sitting in front us turned around with absolute delight on his face to see this Aussie boy with Aussie flag tattoos on his face—as his dad had too, by the way—yelling out, "Espana". That was the spirit of the Games, with Australians cheering for whomever they thought was the underdog, basically, or whomever they felt they wanted to go for. That was part of the character of the Games. The values of our community come through when Australians are able to celebrate, as we can in such a free democracy. I was blown away by Cathy Freeman's lighting of the flame, which was a masterstroke, and I was blown away by her success on the track. The men's 4x100 metre freestyle swimming relay was unbelievable. It was a real highlight when we just pipped the Americans—the guitar smashers.

Despite all those sporting highlights, for me the real highlight was to walk through the southern part of the Olympic site and come to the Quest tent. There is a history to this. When the Olympic Arrangements Bill was going through this House, I raised in shadow Cabinet my concerns about its impact on the Quest organisation. Quest Australia is the organisation that represents, as an umbrella, all of the Christian churches in our community. It was planning a series of events for the Games, which included very significant contributions to things like Homestay. Forty per cent of all the Homestay programs for families of athletes at the Olympics were provided by Christians in our community, co-ordinated by the Quest organisation.

Quest also organised 110 festivals on opening night throughout Australia, from border to border in New South Wales, way out to the west, and also interstate, at which something like 150,000 people watched big

screens in churches, in parks and in communities—organised by local churches through the Quest organisation. Quest held sports clinics with international sports people for 2,500 children from the city and country during the Games. It had an extraordinary program.

We were concerned that Quest would be disadvantaged by certain provisions in the Olympic Arrangements Bill. The shadow Minister for the Olympics—the honourable member for Gosford—and I went to see the Minister for the Olympics. The result was that Quest was authorised to have a special tent set up at the Olympic site in the common domain area. I am told that tens of thousands—perhaps more than 100,000—people visited the site during the Games. There were queues 20 people deep for the face painting provided for the kids and to watch the clowns, and thousands of pieces of literature were handed out, including Bibles in many languages and magazines with Christian sportspeople telling their stories. About 36 Quest volunteers per day staffed that tent. Quest has done a magnificent job and I thank each of the Quest volunteers.

I thank all the volunteers from my electorate who helped at the Games. As we know, the volunteers were one of the great successes of the Olympic Games. I thank in particular my electorate secretary, Joy Saly, who worked at the stadium. She did 12 shifts—probably 100 hours or more. For the most part she was on one of the gates but one of her supervisors said to her on the night of Cathy Freeman's final, "I want you to come and guard Cathy Freeman at the end of the final to make sure the media do not crowd around too close." So, Joy from my office, as a volunteer, was standing right there just metres from Cathy Freeman and had the job of trying to usher her around so she had some protection from the media crush. What a great moment for Joy. I am proud of the work she did as a volunteer during the Olympic Games. I know many of the Parliament's members and staff were also volunteers. Let us celebrate their achievements as well.

We celebrate the achievements of our athletes, and in closing I will just mention the names of a few local athletes. There was Matthew Dunn, who also lit the flame at our community cauldron at Pennant Hills Park; Ellie Overton; Kim Briggs, the women's handball player and former Pennant Hills High School student; Jana Pittman, Keiran Noonan and Jane Jamieson—all of these local athletes from the northern area of Sydney. We are proud of the achievements of each and every one of them—those who won and those who did not do so well. They all took part.

That really is the story of the Games so far as Australia is concerned. We did it! We happen to be a winner in the eyes of the world and anyone who took part in any way played a role in that. As a nation we can now say with great pride that this was probably our finest hour, or series of hours, in peacetime. In saying that, I believe it is important for each of us as members of Parliament to recognise that every day in our electorates individuals are doing things that, for them and for their small communities, probably surpass even what was done at the Olympic Games.

Let us not say that the Olympic Games are the be-all and end-all of human endeavour. It is not, but it is a very public expression to the world of what we, as members of Parliament, know happens in our electorates because individuals do those things every day. During the Olympic Games we showed the world what we are like every day. It was a special event; and it was a special effort, but it was achieved only because that is what Australians are like. As we remember and celebrate the Olympic Games let us remember and celebrate the efforts that individuals make every day, in individual ways, that same Olympic ideal effort. The result of that is a community that is strong, has great character and, indeed, can hold its head high in the communities of the world. We have shown the world what we can do. Now, as we continue to do that, let us recognise each of those special efforts that are made every day in the Australian community, the best community in the world.

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [10.41 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support the Premier's motion and speak about the Games of the XXVII Olympiad—Sydney's Olympic Games, described by Mr Samaranch as the best Games ever. To say that the Games, our Olympic Games, were a great success is an understatement. The success went beyond the 58 medals our athletes achieved. It went beyond the outstanding organisation, beyond the wonderful facilities and beyond the simply electric atmosphere that prevailed at each of the events.

For me the success of the Games, our Games, lies in the way that we as a nation came together in peacetime; how we worked together and demonstrated to the world and to each other the features that make Australia the wonderful country it is and the qualities that make Australians the wonderful people we are. In all of that I think that we as Australians learnt something about ourselves. We recognised ourselves as a people capable of great achievement in every field of endeavour. We recognised the great spirit and the unselfish commitment we share within our community. Above all we recognised the pride that we take in calling ourselves Australians.

For my family and myself the Olympic experience was something that we shall never forget. The Olympic Games will not be held again in Sydney in my lifetime and I felt privileged to be a part of them as a spectator, as a Sydneysider and as a member of Parliament. I was fortunate enough to have had the Olympic Torch pass through my electorate of Miranda twice. On 11 September the Torch relay paused outside Miranda Fair just near my electorate office. The excitement and enthusiasm of the large crowd was extraordinary. The torch then made its way to Tonkin Oval at Cronulla, where the community cauldron was lit in front of a huge crowd by one of the Sutherland Shire's own legends, Susie Maroney.

As the crowd gathered at the oval I was privileged to meet other local torchbearers, including Andrew Ettingshausen from the Cronulla Sharks, and hockey Olympian Ron Riley. But I also met many of the volunteers who make a contribution week in, week out—and who made a contribution to the Games, I might add. I met many local volunteers, among them constituents such as Denise Lewis from St John Ambulance, and Allan Humbly, who works tirelessly for the Police and Community Youth Club—people with that unselfish commitment to which I referred earlier.

The following morning, 12 September, at 6.00 a.m. my wife and I joined hundreds of spectators to watch the torchbearers as they carried the flame down Port Hacking Road in Sylvania, a suburb in my electorate. I was absolutely delighted to see and talk to a number of senior citizens from the nearby Frank Vickery Village who were out on the footpath in their dressing gowns with a mug of hot tea, cheering on those who proudly bore the flame. Alongside them were a young couple with a four-year-old—who woke her parents at 3.30 a.m. just to make sure they got there in time to see the flame!

My family and I were fortunate enough, through the ticketing process and ballot, to attend 13 events, including swimming, soccer, athletics and boxing. We travelled by bus and by train and when we were not at the venues, we, like other Australians and the world, were glued to the television set. We, the people of New South Wales and Australia, have much to be proud of with our Games. We have much to be thankful for and there are many to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

We opened the Games by showing a world audience the first-class quality and breadth of our artistic talents. Whether we talk about the pageant of our history, our culture and our traditions or about the images, themes, extraordinary choreography or the lighting of the Olympic Cauldron by Cathy Freeman, the opening ceremony was simply awesome. The next morning one could feel a groundswell of national pride. My neighbours and the local shopkeepers I spoke to who came from many different cultural backgrounds—Romanian, Italian and Greek—were telling me not just how unbelievably good the opening ceremony was but how proud they were to be Australian citizens.

I travelled to and from Olympic events by bus and train on 13 occasions, and I take this opportunity to thank the transport workers for their efficiency, courtesy and hard work, and for their excellent contribution to the success of the Games. Their performance and that of the transport system was absolutely faultless and I commend them for it. I chatted to a Melbourne couple on a train journey from Jannali to Redfern about our trains and our transport system. I recall them saying, "We have nothing like this in Melbourne." But they were proud to be Australians and proud to be on their way to the Olympic Games.

At the venues we showed the world the true meaning of sport, and the value Australians place on just getting in and having a go. We cheered our athletes the loudest—that was to be expected, of course—but we also cheered all athletes who participated. I shall never forget my good fortune to be present when Susie O'Neill won a gold medal and when the Australian men's 4 x 200 metres relay team won gold, defeating the Americans by seven seconds and setting a new world record. My family and I will also never forget being witness to one of the most exciting sporting events that I think I shall ever experience—our girls winning gold in the women's water polo.

I will always remember the crowd in the stadium giving the loudest cheer to the African athlete who was lapped and came last in the heats of the 3000 metres, or the way the crowd got behind the Cameroon soccer team when they were 2-0 down to Spain in the gold medal final in the stadium. Much of Australia stops each November for a two-mile horse race, but every Australian I know stopped for a 400 metre race won by our own Cathy Freeman. Watching that race on television at home with my family will be a lasting memory of the Games for me as an Australian.

I congratulate all our athletes who participated, whether they won a medal or not, and all those who trained hard but were not fortunate enough to be selected. I thank those in every capacity who contributed to

making our Games such a success—police officers, health workers, Roads and Traffic Authority personnel, ORTA, SOCOG and our transport workers, to name but a few. I congratulate honourable members on both sides of politics—those members of the Coalition Government who won the Games for Sydney, and those, including Michael Knight, the Minister for the Olympics, who translated that winning bid into the wonderful successful reality it was in September 2000.

Much of the credit for our success on the world stage must go to our volunteers. There were many from my electorate and from the Sutherland Shire. I met them at the venues and on the trains. I spoke to them and I heard of many more. They came from all walks of life—teachers, drivers, Rotarians, police and even a local journalist. I thank them for their hard work. Their smiles and the friendly way in which they offered assistance to all without being asked will long be remembered by overseas and local visitors to the Olympic Games. I know that many of the volunteers will assist with the Paralympic Games, which I am looking forward to. Every visitor from overseas whom I met commented on the wonderful work of our volunteers. Their work says much about ourselves, much about the way we see ourselves as a nation. It makes me proud to be an Australian, and along with other members of the House I look forward to our successful Paralympics, which are due to start very soon.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.50 a.m.]: I support the motion. Along with other members of the House and, indeed, all those who were fortunate enough to attend the Olympic Games, the past month or so has been characterised by a degree of goodwill, nationalism and pride that is too often lacking in both public and private life in this country. All our memories of the Games and the weeks leading up to them will be dominated by our personal experiences. I will touch on a couple of mine. About 10 days before the Games commenced I was having lunch in a Sydney cafe and I saw Phil Coles and his partner. I approached Phil and congratulated him on his foresight in the planning of the Olympic torch relay.

As you know, Mr Speaker, it was Phil Coles who basically drove through the SOCOG board the concept of the torch going on its extraordinary odyssey around the country, an odyssey which to my mind rekindled the spirit that existed within this State when we won the bid in September 1993. I thought that spirit had been lost over the successive seven years; it had been tainted by a divide between country and city and between parts of the city but, thankfully, the torch relay brought home to everyone what we were participating in and that the world's attention would focus on in Sydney—a world-class sporting event.

People from the Ku-ring-gai electorate participated in the torch relay. I instance two: Sue Basten, who has made a significant contribution with the Ku-ring-gai Netball Association; and Ken Willoughby, who ran on behalf of those who have survived stroke and heart surgery. As the honourable member for Miranda said, the Paralympics are about to commence and later this week we will see a replication of the Olympic torch relay. I hope the Paralympic torch relay does for the Paralympics what the Olympic torch relay did for the Olympic Games. James Chang, former President of the Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association, is to run through Castle Hill next Saturday. A significant leader of the Lebanese community and media proprietor, Mr Awar Harb, will also run in the Paralympic torch relay. I send them my best wishes. James and Awar have been chosen for good reason to contribute to the Paralympics.

Another experience that will remain in my memory was the opening ceremony, which I was fortunate to attend. I was even more fortunate to run into Bruce and Judy Baird outside the Olympic Stadium. Mr Speaker, as a former shadow Minister for the Olympics you know that the Olympics bid would not have been as successful, would not have been won, without three key individuals—John Coates, Rod McGeoch and Bruce Baird. In 1989 Bruce was asked by Nick Greiner to head up a three-person subcommittee to decide whether the State should bid for the Games. Nick Greiner chose Bruce Baird because of Bruce's economic rationalist credentials. Nick chose Bruce because he thought that if anyone was going to say that this was a pipe dream, was not worth the effort, Bruce Baird was the one to prove them wrong.

In December 1989 Bruce Baird produced a report, supported by accountants and others, which said that the Government should make a bid, and Cabinet made a decision later that month. Much has been said in other places about the roles of spouses in this exercise. Pauline Coates, Deeta Colvin, Judy Baird and other spouses involved in the bid process worked very hard to ensure its success. Many spouses worked very hard over the following seven years to ensure the success of the Games. Rather than single out individuals, I acknowledge those who on a paid, unpaid, voluntary or other basis contributed to the success of the Olympic Games bid. I refer to those whose names do not appear in the media: the wives, husbands and families.

I had the pleasure of watching the Olympic ceremony in the company of Ros Kelly, not someone to whom I would normally pay an enormous amount of credit. In the post-Olympic euphoria many people have

been forgotten. Ros Kelly was Minister for Sport in the Keating Government at the time the bid was won. As Minister for Sport, Ros committed additional funding for athletes to train for the Olympic Games. I am sure I am not speaking outside of school when I say that I was disappointed that there was no acknowledgment of her contribution. One of the dilemmas of public life, which is about to confront the Minister for the Olympics, is that as soon as one leaves the scene one is quickly forgotten. In some cases that is welcome; in others, as in the case of Ros Kelly, it was unfortunate. The generosity of spirit that the Premier has captured post the Games—and let us hope it continues—certainly was forgotten with Ros Kelly.

Another experience that will remain in my memory is of getting home that night. Along with the Premier, the head of State Rail, the Minister for Olympics and the Minister for Transport, who would not appear on the *Sunday* program to talk about Olympic transport, I doubted the capacity of our transport systems to cope with the crowds. As I said at the end of the first week and again during the second week, they did a magnificent job. To all those involved, we owe a debt of gratitude. I realised how significant that effort was when at 1.30 a.m., an hour and a half after the opening ceremony had finished, as I was about to get on the 1A bus to St Ives to pick up my car, I spied, working the lines of passengers waiting to get on buses, Bernie Royle, the owner of Forest Coach Lines Pty Ltd, and his son, Anthony. They had not been in the stadium or at home watching the opening ceremony; they had been outside with their sleeves rolled up helping passengers to get on their buses and on their way home.

I do not know whether their efforts were replicated by other bus owners in this city but I do know that in other parts of the world bus owners and their families would have been inside the stadium watching the celebrations, with a limo waiting outside to take them home. But the two proprietors of this significant coach company were out there working to ensure that people got away from the Games as quickly as possible. As the Games proceeded I was fortunate to meet an Olympian, Stuart Welch, who won a silver medal for the rowing eights on 24 September. Stuart lives at Killara and has been rowing since school. There are many benefits of being a silver medallist, and Stuart showed signs of all of them. He had not come down from the personal high he had achieved a few days earlier. I hope that high continues for him.

Many young people from my electorate, as in many across the State and across Australia, competed at the Games. Not all were medal winners but all gave their best for both themselves and their country. We need to thank them for that. I have touched briefly on the volunteers, as has everyone who has spoken in this debate. Significantly, there were an enormous number of volunteers from the Ku-ring-gai electorate. On my first visit to the Games I was recognised by a couple of volunteers, which is not what I expected. I will not embarrass them by naming them, but they were well on the wrong side of retirement age, and what struck me about the volunteers at the Olympic Park was that they covered the full spectrum of ages. That was terrific. People who may have been viewed as well past it were working tirelessly and they deserve our enormous thanks.

Notwithstanding my differences with the Minister for the Olympics I acknowledge his efforts in instituting the volunteers parade, but I express my concern that the Minister was not on the podium at the Domain. He had been shoved aside by his superiors. Before, throughout and after the Games he has clearly acknowledged with a generosity of spirit that he does not always extend to other people, the role that the volunteers played towards the success of the Games. For that I am happy to give him credit. Not everyone in this place, or in life generally, is all bad. We should be prepared, notwithstanding our differences, to acknowledge that.

The Olympic Games are terrific, but sport was never my cup of tea, as one can see. I never in my wildest dreams had any delusions of sporting prowess; nor did I think I would ever represent my country, or even my family, in a sporting contest. The Olympic Games bring the youth of the world together to compete in a positive way. However, I foresee two problems. Sydney did very well in its tough approach to drug testing. Certainly international pressure, particularly from America, has resulted in the International Olympic Committee [IOC] being much tougher in relation to drug testing. And so it should be.

However, I am still astounded that not every athlete who competes in the Games is drug tested, that largely these are random tests, and that largely these random tests do not fall on elite athletes or elite sports but often fall on sports that do not attract a lot of attention and therefore would not necessarily be a target for those who seek to introduce and use drugs in sport. The time has come for the IOC to get even more serious than it has been, because one point about the new drug testing introduced by the IOC in time for these Games is that the proposed test for human growth hormones would not pick up what is in fact being called for. Indeed, there is a double test, and unless both tests show positive, no action will be taken. We need to go beyond that.

Notwithstanding the success of these Games, a question mark still exists over the accountability and ethics of the International Olympic Committee. Australia and New South Wales should be rightly proud of the

success of these Games. As President Samaranch said, they were the best Games ever, and I do not think anyone disputes that. But we should not forget that in the success of the Sydney Games we have given credibility and a new glow to the IOC which, frankly, I do not yet believe it deserves. It is still the same organisation that wields power without any sense of accountability, that has engaged in terrible practices in the past, and has put commercial interests above those of individual athletes and individual sports. I hope that in its attempts at window-dressing to date it manages by accident to appoint people to its committees and various bodies who get on with the serious job of cleaning up that organisation.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.03 a.m.]: When the Premier spoke to this motion yesterday he said, among other things, how lucky we are to be living in this State and in this country. His remarks echoed a statement I made on the night of the opening of the Games. That night I was sitting in the lounge room at a friend's place with a group of people watching the opening ceremony. Just before the Games started I turned to my friends and said, "Well, it's great to be alive in Sydney in the year 2000." And it certainly is. From the time the lone horseman, wearing his Akubra hat and oilskin coat, galloped into Stadium Australia to the time he halted in the centre of the stadium, pulled on the horse's reins and cracked the stock whip and we heard a spontaneous roar of applause from the crowd of 110,000 people, I could not help but think that it was an ideal way to commence a great show in Australia. The opening of the Olympics set the pace for what have been acclaimed as the most successful Olympic Games of all time.

Before the Games commenced the Government was concerned about three issues: the weather, terrorism and transport. As we all know, the weather was splendid. Although it rained early in the evening on the Monday of the second week, there were no athletic events being held at Stadium Australia. I believe we have God to thank for the excellent weather throughout the Games. As to terrorism, it was unlikely that we would have a terrorist attack, as has occurred in other countries, but it was always a possibility. One madman can slip through the system and cause havoc and great tragedy. However, thanks to the efforts of the police and all those who were concerned in security services, there were no threats of terrorism, and everything was peaceful.

As to transport, the system ran smoothly, and it ran smoothly for a number of reasons. It was excellent that no tragedies or derailments occurred. Other factors which are totally outside the Government's control can cause upheavals in the transport system. A suicide on the rail system can foul up the entire system. However, there were no great problems throughout the Games. The transport system ran well also because many people did not go to work during the Games, many industries closed during the Games, and that freed up the system considerably. I was amazed at how smoothly traffic ran along the main roads in Sydney.

We all thought that there would be congestion on the roads. Perhaps we scared people into thinking that there could be congestion. Indeed, there could have been congestion if industry had operated as it normally does. But industry co-operated, and individuals co-operated by using public transport. That freed up the roads to the extent that driving around was a little like driving on the roads during the first week after Christmas, when most factories are closed. I planned to travel to the Games by train from Canterbury railway station and to change trains at Redfern station to travel to Stadium Australia on the western line. However, the transport system was running so smoothly that I simply went to the park-and-ride facility at Canterbury racecourse and caught a bus; I was at the stadium within 20 minutes of leaving Canterbury.

The volunteers deserve our utmost praise. Some people may think that being a volunteer was somewhat glamorous. And it could well have been glamorous if volunteers were fortunate enough to be at a venue such as the aquatic centre. It may have been exciting for volunteers to be based at Stadium Australia, to be involved with the hundreds of thousands of people converging on the area at any given time. However, during these Games most volunteers had fairly mundane roles. They were based in the city as guides, they were based at railway stations throughout Sydney and they were based in car parking areas at park-and-ride facilities, directing and assisting people to get on and off buses. Most volunteers were nowhere near the venues or the events during the Games. The volunteers deserve our praise, and the parade of volunteers immediately after the Games was appropriate.

I congratulate all the Australian athletes who took part in the Games. In particular, I honour those who won medals. Australia broke all records: It won more gold than ever—16 gold medals—and more medals overall, with a tally of 58. In fact, this time Australia finished above Germany on the medal table. If I remember rightly, in Atlanta Australia was fifth on the medal table and Germany was ahead of us, so we have improved on our medal tally. Even when Australians missed out on medals that they expected to win we were compensated in other ways. For example, Susie O'Neill did not win gold in her butterfly swim this time, but she was compensated by winning gold in the 200 metres freestyle, which I believe even she did not expect to win.

Another example of being compensated was the fact that during the Games we did not fare well at all in terms of winning medals in rowing. However, in other boating sports we picked up two gold medals in sailing and a silver and a bronze medal in canoeing, so again we were compensated. Our medal tally also demonstrates what great team sports men and women we have in Australia, and how team sports dominate our victories. For example, nine of the 16 gold medals we won at the Games were won with teams of two or more persons. There is no doubt that we are great team sports people.

Not only did we excel in team sports but we excelled in a variety of team sports including swimming, equestrian sports, cycling, water polo, beach volleyball, sailing and hockey. In the seven different types of team sports we had nine victories. Australia and Australian athletes can be very proud of our record at these Games. On the opening night Minister Knight remarked in his address that Australians love their sport. That was a great line. We certainly do love our sport, and we have once again proved to the world that not only do we love it but we are good at it.

Unfortunately, to my knowledge the Canterbury electorate did not have an athlete who performed in the 2000 Olympic Games. However, it does have Nikki Webster, the very talented young lady who performed in the opening and closing ceremonies. Needless to say, when I heard that Nikki Webster resided in the Canterbury electorate I wrote to her and pointed out that she had brought great credit to Australia. I also mentioned in my letter that her contribution assisted in no small way in the overall triumph of the Olympics. I went on to say to Nikki, "Break a leg in the closing ceremony", which she did superbly. If anyone deserves a gold medal it is Nikki Webster, if for no other reason than for the heights to which she soared at both the opening and closing ceremonies.

The honourable member for Hornsby referred to the Home State program, which operated in Sydney and which was largely sponsored by churches. I am pleased to say that I was involved in the program in a small way in my electorate. The Hurlstone Park Baptist Church, which was also involved in the program, set up a very large screen in its local parish hall, which was open at all times for members of the community to view the Games. I was approached by the church to secure funding to set up a jumping device—similar to a jumping castle, except the device was called an Olympics obstacle course—for the children to enjoy on two occasions during the Games. The cost of hiring that huge device for two days was \$2,000. I am pleased to say that Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSL Club assisted, as it has often done in the past with other community ventures, with a donation of \$2,000, which of course helped the church. The important feature of the Home State program was that it assisted children and people generally who could either not afford to go to Olympic events or who, for other reasons, could not get to an Olympic event. It was a great program and fitted in very well with the general Olympic spirit that prevailed throughout the Games.

Much has been said about the atmosphere in the city during the Games; people could not believe the friendliness and the general mood of the people. I believe that if the same crowd were to come out at any time in the city of Sydney there would be the same friendly atmosphere. When the people come out en masse, as they did during the Olympics—and 99.9 per cent of the population are decent, law-abiding citizens—the hoods and the yobbos pale into insignificance and restrain from misbehaving because of the large number of decent people who are about. The problems we encounter with hooliganism and violence at other times are quite often the result of the fact that we tend to lock ourselves up in our own homes and let the undesirables take control of the streets. However, there is a wonderful atmosphere when the majority come out en masse, as was demonstrated during the Games.

In his speech earlier the Minister for the Olympics said that a number of dignitaries were extremely excited about and interested in Sydney; that they loved the atmosphere, the people and the food; and that they could not get over the place. Of course, we know how great Sydney is. Most of us live here, and those of us in this Parliament who do not live in Sydney are here more often than not. I think it is fair to say that I have travelled probably more than most people. Over the years I have been fortunate enough to travel around the world to many countries and cities. However, despite my travels and all that I have seen, I will never stop singing the praises of this city and this country. We know what we have here. But it was very nice during the Games to be able to show to the world what we have, and we managed to do that very well. Deep down we knew that we could pull off a very good Olympic Games. At the end of the day, that good Olympic Games turned out to be the best on record. We knew we could do a good job of it, but it is very nice to be able to show the world that we were able to do it. I conclude by saying: Well done, Australia!

Mr BARR (Manly) [11.18 a.m.]: I support the Premier's motion. To stage the Games we had to galvanise our human and material resources to produce this mammoth event of mind-boggling dimensions

involving enormous logistical efforts. We were all enriched by the torch relay procession, the pageantry of the Games, the excitement of all the elite athletes, the overseas visitors, the press, the media and so on, and the performances of the athletes. However, above all, we were enriched because the Games were a celebration of our common humanity. They were not just about top performances by athletes; they were about getting together and enjoying our Australianness and our internationalness, showing overseas visitors what we have to offer, and extending our hospitality to them. By all accounts, the overseas visitors were simply knocked out by what they saw in Sydney and by the hospitality extended to them.

The Games were a celebration of Sydney and Australia, and what a wonderful place Sydney is. Many of us watched the triathlon and observed the triathletes swimming in the harbour, coming out onto land and our wonderful harbour foreshores, and going through the enormously exhausting process of a triathlon, against an incredibly attractive backdrop. Recently I spoke with a journalist from the United States of America who came to Australia earlier this year to set up his newspaper's coverage of the Games. He told me what a wonderful place Sydney is, and he was astounded that people could swim in Sydney Harbour. He said that in a comparable city in the United States of America if a person fell into the water he or she would rush to the hospital for shots. You do not know what you might pick up. He was also astounded that people give up their time on weekends to patrol our beaches. That highlights the issue of volunteerism.

There were 47,000 Olympic volunteers at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, and we cannot praise them enough. The volunteers exemplified the importance of social capital. Economists and sociologists are increasingly recognising that people are undertaking activities for altruistic purposes which are not reflected in gross domestic product [GDP]. No dollar and cents value is put on what they do, yet it is of critical importance to the functioning of a modern economy. Their contribution is underrecognised, as is their altruism. That is not the case with the Sydney Olympic Games volunteers, because their magnificent efforts have been recognised. If we had not had those 47,000 volunteers and had to pay people to do those jobs, the Olympic Games would have cost much more than they did. As well as assisting to keep the costs down, the inclusion of volunteers gave many people from all walks of life the opportunity to be involved in the buzz, excitement and pageantry of the Olympic Games.

Even those of us who were not volunteers and who did not run or swim in the Olympic Games participated, in a sense, as part of the Australian community, because we were all so enthusiastic. The Olympic Games held us enthralled for two weeks. I had a lump in my throat on many occasions—when Australia won a medal, and when the flame was lit at the stadium during the opening ceremony. To me, that was a magnificent drama of epic proportions, which would be hard to beat. Often our chests swelled with pride because we are fortunate to live in a country about which we can be optimistic. We know that our children can share a good future. There are not many places in the world where that spirit of optimism prevails. To sum up the feeling of all Australians for the Sydney Olympic Games, I would have to say that there seemed to be a happy optimism because not only did we mount the best Games ever, but we showed that we could do it with a degree of humility and self-deprecation.

The opening and closing ceremonies and the manner in which Australians behaved was not an overbearing we-are-better-than-everyone routine. We recognise that we have our quirks and foibles and that we owe our indigenous culture a great deal for where we are today. I am pleased that that was recognised in the opening ceremony, when the little girl met up with the Aboriginal tribal elder and was shown the Aboriginal and spiritual ways of our indigenous people. That all-encompassing and all-embracing aspect of our culture is terribly important. The Games provided not only a strong recognition of indigenous culture but also a depiction of suburban Australia, which is what most of us know. I remember the Victa lawnmower, the Hills hoists, the thongs and all the other wonderful props that showed up in the opening and closing ceremonies. I understand that it was intended that Jimmy Barnes should enter the stadium on a huge blowfly, but the weather conditions were too windy. That would have been something to see. Recognition by Australians of our Australianism exemplified the spirit of the Games.

We can recognise our Australianism and do not have to cringe about it. Some of the overseas people would not have understood the Ned Kellys, the outdoor dunnies and the Hills hoists, but we did; it was almost an inside joke. I hope that some overseas people managed to get the joke after it was explained, but it was important to cater for our culture because it demonstrated that we have confidence in it and that we adopt a sense of humour about it. That sense of humour also came out very strongly during a popular television program, *The Dream*, with Roy and H. G., which was screened throughout the Games. The larrikinism and the droll and laconic humour, which is a long-held Australian tradition, came through very strongly in that show, and I think everyone enjoyed that. It certainly gave us a new insight into what goes on in water polo, among other things.

For me, one of the highlights was Eric the Eel, or Eric Moussambani. Eric comes from a very poor country. He learned to swim—or to do not much more than dog paddle—in a hotel swimming pool and came over here to give it a go. He had the opportunity to give it a go and he swam the 100 metres in a little under two minutes. He stated that he hopes to halve that time before the next Games. I look forward to seeing him in Athens and to him reducing his time by half. Perhaps he may even attempt the butterfly. His story tells us about the spirit of the Games: Winning is not everything. The Olympic Games is about our common humanity and letting people from other countries have a go at sport, even if they are not going to be the best. It is all about the enjoyment of participation and making an attempt, and that is what the Olympic Games should be all about.

I kept abreast of the foreign press by reading *USA Today* and other foreign newspapers. I believe that Australians are interested to know what people think of us, and that we are all proud to see that basically the press reports were very favourable. There was the odd report of the home-invading kangaroos in the Northern Territory, which is the type of article that the foreign press seems to like. Unfortunately there were two shark attacks during the Olympic Games, which reinforced some stereotyped images about Australia, but, overall, the press coverage was fairly sophisticated and included articles on our restaurants and the way we do things. Overall the foreign press coverage was pretty good. I am proud to say that my electorate of Manly has a particularly close connection with the Olympics. Harry Gordon, who is the official historian of the Australian Olympic Committee, has stated:

In terms of Olympic heritage and pride, Manly has to have the great claim of any locality in Australia.

There are more than 50 former Olympians in the Manly area who have participated in Olympic Games, and in the Manly electorate and in areas close by, at least 15 people participated in the Sydney Olympics. The medal tally for the Manly area was two gold and three silver. I do not want to name names; those people know who they are. There were also some magnificent performances by people who did not win medals but who were very gracious in not winning medals by being absolutely enthusiastic about having had the opportunity to participate in the Olympic Games and to give it their best shot, which is all that can be asked of people. We can all feel their sense of pride in having had an opportunity to give of their best and in having done their best. That is what the Olympic Games are all about.

The last segment of the torch relay was run through Manly. The torch was held by Zali Steggall, a gold medal winner in the 1998 Winter Olympics. She ran the last segment, along the Pathway of Olympians—a pathway that was created by Manly Council. The pathway includes plaques which recognise all the Olympians who come from the Manly area, and highlights the strength of the Olympic movement in Manly. Zali then boarded a ferry to Circular Quay, and I was lucky to be on the same ferry. It was a wonderful half hour of my life: standing on the ferry, seeing all the boats and, as we approached Sydney Harbour, seeing the Olympic rings on the bridge and the tugboat with water spraying from it. There was also a boat flying a large indigenous flag. It was quite an occasion. There were thousands of people at Circular Quay to greet us. That was my favourite moment.

I would like to support the comments made by the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai about the International Olympic Committee. We have staged a terrific Olympic Games in Sydney and although there were some drug cheats, the Games seem to have been relatively clean, as far as I know. Greater efforts must be made to ensure that competition in the future is totally clean. Pressure must be brought to bear on the International Olympic Committee to do this because over the years its performance has been less than satisfactory. Efforts must be made to open up the committee's activities, to democratise the committee and make it more accountable.

The Paralympic Games commence next week, and it is disappointing that the Olympic rings have been taken off the Sydney Harbour Bridge. That is a disservice to the Paralympians. I do not know why the rings have been taken down before the start of the Paralympics. They should be put back. A lot of money was well spent on the Olympics, which enriched and galvanised us. There is now a great deal of infrastructure in place and there will be all sorts of beneficial flow-ons, not only for sport but for transport and in other areas. We have to start getting serious about making Olympian efforts in education, and research and development. If we are capable of building the necessary infrastructure to mount the Olympics there is no reason why we should not aspire to having the best public education system in the world. We have to put a big effort into bringing education and health services up to the standard of the Olympics and the way they were run. In conclusion I congratulate everyone, not least the people of Australia, on the wonderful time provided by the Olympics.

Mr GIBSON (Blacktown) [11.32 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion about the greatest Olympics Games the world has ever seen. Over the years we have often wondered about patriotism in

other countries. When compared to that patriotism, the Anzac spirit has not been as evident as it was many years ago. There is no risk in the world that the patriotism we witnessed during the Olympic Games was the return of the Anzac spirit; it was a new beginning for national pride. The Olympics Games and everything connected with them were an inspiration to the nation. So far as the Olympic Games are concerned the point I want to make is that they were a celebration not only of everything associated with the Olympic Games but of Australia and Australians. The indelible mark left on me from the opening and closing ceremonies was that they were Australian. It was important that well-known Australian artists and icons were used in those ceremonies because they gave us the opportunity to sell Australia to the world.

As has been mentioned by previous speakers, credit must go to former Premiers Nick Greiner and John Fahey for their efforts in negotiating the bid. I was a member of Parliament at that time and there is no doubt that the person most responsible for the success of the bid was Bruce Baird. I congratulate Bruce Baird, who worked tirelessly to make sure the bid was successful. We should be very proud of what the present State Government and the Opposition have achieved in relation to the Olympic Games. If one person has to be singled out to be given credit where it is due, I give tremendous credit to Michael Knight for a great job well done. Probably nobody in the world could have done it better than Michael Knight.

The Olympic Games gave us the opportunity to show the Australian sense of humour to the rest of the world. I was fortunate to have attended 13 out of 16 days of either swimming or athletics. People from other nations could not believe that we would clap somebody who came last as strongly as we would clap somebody who came first. Eric, the marvel from Equatorial Guinea, was mentioned earlier. At one stage I was about to jump over the rail because I thought Eric was drowning; he was floundering but he made it. The cheer of the crowd when Eric did make it summed up what the Olympic Games are all about. They are not only about winning; they are about competing and about what Cathy Freeman did for us at the opening ceremony. The Games made it clear that in this nation you can make it if you are prepared to get off your backside. It was terribly important to do that.

As I say, people who came last were given as much applause as those who won. America and the other nations of the world must have been amazed when they saw Roy, H. G. and the fat-arsed wombat and the joy that they brought to many people. Initially they thought that Australians are very funny characters, but eventually they grew to like Roy, H. G. and Fatso. It is important that the international visitors also grew to like our sense of humour. The Australian sense of humour is an important commodity that we sold to the world during the Olympic Games. In this House that humour is not often expressed, but that is a story for another day.

Another marvel so far as the rest of the world was concerned was the success of the volunteers. I am certain that the happy feeling in the crowd during the whole of the Games, with nobody pushing and shoving and everyone appearing to be totally relaxed and on holidays, was because of the volunteers. Most people from other nations could not believe that the volunteers worked for nothing but for the love of the nation. Credit must also be given to the unions that were responsible for building the facilities both under budget and on time. My union, the National Union of Workers, covered most workers on site in most of the Games facilities. Everything went like clockwork and the support from the unions, the volunteers, the police, security personnel and everybody else was absolutely first-class.

Somebody asked me about the origins of our war cry "Aussie! Aussie! Aussie!" and the reply "Oi! Oi! Oi!" I do not know the answer and I am not sure that anybody does know. It is something that manifested itself over time. The war cry also demonstrates the Australian sense of humour to the rest of the world. That in itself is a great success story as well. The community involvement in the torch relay stamped the success of the Games: by the time the Games were upon us everybody in Australia knew what they were in for. I attended a meeting at Penrith on the Sunday afternoon prior to the start of the Games. The torch relay team was due at Penrith during the time of the meeting. I was in two minds about watching it, but I went and I could not believe that there were 55,000 or 65,000 people in Jamison Park, Penrith. When the torch arrived and when the cauldron was lit people cheered, cuddled one another and jumped up and down, just as they did at the end of the Second World War. For that reason I then realised that the Olympic Games had to be a winner.

In my electorate the first person to carry the torch was a teacher from Blacktown, Marian Morris, who has been teaching at Blacktown for 24 years. Marian represented the Doonside Little Athletics Association. It was a great moment when the torch went through our suburbs. Who will ever forget Cathy Freeman? She not only won a gold medal; she inspired the nation. She inspired many Australians to get off their backsides and put in the effort to make it in this country. She brought joy. When I looked at Cathy Freeman's face as she went across the finish line she did not show frustration, tiredness or pleasure at a nation congratulating her. The look on her face was one of relief at the pressure of the whole nation being lifted off her back. She carried a tremendous burden into that event.

A few days after seeing the joy of Cathy Freeman we saw the anguish and dismay of Jane Saville, who only a couple of hundred metres from the finish line in the 20 kilometre walk was shown a red card and was disqualified. Most Australians were furious. Most people in the world would be furious in such a situation. But Jane Saville, in an interview soon after that event, said, "Well, that's my sport. That is the joy and disappointment of sport, particularly the sport of walking." That says a lot about Jane Saville. Who would ever forget Lauren Burns and tae kwon do? I do not think too many of us would have known what tae kwon do was before the Games. For Lauren to win a gold medal in that sport was absolutely tremendous. And what about the women's hockey team, probably the greatest hockey team in the history of this nation?

At the Olympics Jai Taurima did two of his personal best long jumps, and with one jump to go was leading and in a gold medal position. Then we saw the real championship nature of the Olympic Games, because then we saw world champion Ivan Pedroso, who knew he had to make a super jump to win the gold medal with his last attempt. It is very easy to foul in the long jump, but he came through: he hit the board superbly, nearly jumping out of the pit to win gold. We have seen a lot of publicity about Tatiana Grigorieva in the pole vault. There again, prior to the Games I am not sure how many people would have been interested in pole vault, but as a result of the Olympics there will be a lot of people interested in pole vault for a long time to come.

Among the unsung heroes in the Games were 200 metre semifinalists Lauren Hewitt, Cathy Freeman and Melinda Gainsford-Taylor. We had not had three Australian girls in a semifinal for many years; we have to go back to the 1950s to see representation like that. Then for Cathy and Melinda to get into the final was a superb effort. At the end of the day, some might have been a bit disappointed because they ran sixth and seventh, or seventh and eighth, or whatever it was. But they were placed, say, seventh and eighth among the best sprinters in the world over 200 metres. I think that is a great feat in itself.

We saw a lot of controversy about the beach volleyball at Bondi. Of course, Kerri-Ann Pottharst and Natalie Cook made it their own, winning the gold medal. One of the most popular venues in all of the Games was the beach volleyball at Bondi Beach. Who would ever forget Ian Thorpe swimming on the first day of the Games? I will never forget the atmosphere on that first night when Ian Thorpe won his gold medal in the 400. Of course, this was the first time for many years that we beat the United States in the 4 x 100 metres relay, breaking the dominance of the United States in that event. That was an occasion that had to be seen to be believed.

From Blacktown we had in weightlifting a good friend of mine in Mehmet Yagci. Mehmet represented Australia and was Australian champion. This young fellow, a battler, gave away work at Christmas time last year, going from house to house selling paintings of himself and of the Olympics to get some money to support himself during his training for the Olympics. He competed well. He did not win a medal, but he lifted his personal best. We cannot ask for any more than that. Two girls from out that way, Fiona Hanes and Melanie Roche, finished up bronze medallists in softball.

We could go on forever talking about people involved in Olympic events, but I suppose the event that will stay with me forever was the 10,000 final between that great Ethiopian Haile Gebreselassie and Kenyan Paul Tergat. I will never forget that race. Gebreselassie was reportedly one of the greatest runners of all time, and people were wondering whether he could win a second gold medal in the 10,000 metre event. Win it he did. He made the race his own. He was taken on in front, but no matter who took up the lead he made sure he was clicking at their heels for the whole of the 10,000 metres. Then, coming down the straight, Tergat and Haile were going head to head after 10,000 metres, with the great man getting up right on the line. Those are the sorts of things of which legends are born, that fairytales and books are written about.

Of course, one has to mention Marion Jones, probably the greatest female sprinter we will ever see in our lifetime. She was asked, "What is it all about?" She said, "This is what I like to do." I thought that was great, because it summarised what sport is really about. She was doing something that she likes to do, which is probably part of the art of living today. The other great man of the Games was Michael Johnson. No-one had ever won two 200 metre sprint gold medals at the Olympics. He proved beyond doubt that he is one of the finest athletes that the world has seen.

The Olympic Games have taught us all a lot. They taught us to believe in ourselves. They give us hope, whatever our walks of life in this country. The Olympics proved to the world, and more importantly to us, that we can achieve anything in this nation. The Games gave us the opportunity to let the world appreciate our sense of humour. If we can retain our sense of humour after the Games, and no doubt we can, then the Olympic Games have been a fantastic success—the greatest peacetime event we may ever see.

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [11.47 a.m.]: I am delighted to join all of my colleagues in supporting the motion and congratulating anyone who has in anyway been involved in the Games—in many respects, the entire population of Australia and the international visitors to our country. Many people deserve our congratulations, and I will touch on some of those, but the Sydney Olympics period was a spectacular time for Sydney and Australia. The Games were very memorable, with many significant moments. It was a unique time in our history and I am sure we will all recall it with great affection.

I commend all Australian athletes. They all did their very best. Many recorded personal bests. Those in the teams events excelled themselves. They did us proud. Some won Gold medals, some did not. But I think we all went away knowing that our athletes gave their all and, really, that is the most that we should expect of them. As honourable members have already said, there were many outstanding moments and great memories that we will all recall from the Sydney Games. They included the win of Cathy Freeman in the 400 metre final as well as in the lead-up races; the women's beach volleyball; the women's water polo, where we won gold in that last fraction of a second, one of the most remarkable moments of the events that I watched; and the many swimming events, particularly the final of the 4 x 100 men's relay.

We got medals and gold medals in events from which they would not have been expected, including taekwondo, shooting, archery and sailing, to name but a few. Certainly, it was an enormous result for us as a country and nation to rank fourth in the medal count. That, of course, should not be regarded as the only measure of success, but it certainly is indicative of our level of achievement. It is something that we all feel very proud about.

Much has been said about the volunteers, whose efforts cannot be overstated. They made the Games for the participants and the spectators and those who simply came across them as they went to and from the sites at which they performed their roles. The volunteers were cheerful and positive in rendering assistance, and in doing so they contributed significantly to the atmosphere that makes for great memories. I am delighted that there is broad agreement that our volunteers should be recognised with medallions in addition to the parade in which they took part last week. I trust that in one way or another that will be facilitated rapidly.

I wish to acknowledge two volunteers from my area: Paul Couvret, who has given much to the community and was a volunteer for the entire period of the Olympic Games, and Brad Burden, a younger man who also participated as a volunteer. Both got great joy from being involved in the Games and will take away great memories. They are but two of the many hundreds of volunteers from my area alone who gave substantially of their time to make the Games the success that they were. In respect of the SOCOG staff, clearly there have been awkward times, but they had a very long-term job to do, involving an enormous amount of planning. They do not always receive the plaudits that they deserve, but to successfully stage an event of the magnitude of the Olympic Games requires an enormous amount of work. To all of those who performed those roles, my thanks and congratulations.

Clearly, several governments, including the Greiner, Fahey and Carr governments, have contributed to the staging of the Games. They all took up the responsibility that goes with organising the Games and they were a great success. Thanks go to local councils and to the Federal Government, which contributed substantially in every way to making the Games a success. Thanks go also to all those in local communities right across Australia who were involved in a voluntary capacity in the Games and, in particular, in the torch relay. The entire Australian population supported the torch relay and the Games in every way. All that has been done in the past decade culminated in the success of the Games.

As Premier Nick Greiner was cautious about making a bid. He wanted to ensure that we had an organised plan. He deserves credit for all that he did. John Fahey then took up responsibility for the Games. Bruce Baird, as the Minister responsible for the Olympics, was successful in putting together the bid. Rod McGeoch played a significant role in the lead-up to the Games. Honourable members should not forget that he and Bruce Baird put a great deal of time into making that bid a success. John Valder raised money from members of the corporate community, who were very generous. That bid would not have been successful without his contribution. Many other people deserve our thanks. I refer to people like Gough Whitlam, who played a significant role in gathering the support of nations throughout Africa.

Honourable members will recall that morning in September 1993 when Juan Antonio Samaranch announced that Sydney had won the bid. The entire continent leapt for joy and did not come down to earth until last Sunday week. An amazing feeling of euphoria and great anticipation developed over that seven-year period. One memory which I have about the winning of the bid—and I am sure many others have the same memory—is

John Fahey grabbing Rod McGeoch's arm and leaping into the air. That picture is indelibly etched in my memory. It is interesting to look back now and to recall how close we came to not winning the bid. If one vote had been cast the other way, history would have been so different. It just goes to show how fate can be kind or unkind. Sydney benefited as a result of Beijing's misfortune.

The Sydney 2000 Olympics were great Games. Everyone respects and appreciates the spirit they engendered. They demonstrated that competition and participation are important and that sportsmanship is appreciated. The athletes, whether or not they won medals, all gave of their best. We appreciate that and respect them for that. The facilities at Homebush Bay were second to none. They will be a great legacy to this State and to future generations. They will obviously require alteration, but I am delighted that the commitment was made to provide us with good, long-term facilities. They will be of great use in our sporting culture for decades to come. Credit and thanks should go to the organisers of the Games: to SOCOG; members of the SOCOG board; the Minister, the Hon. Michael Knight; to people who served on the board with the Minister—for example, Sandy Hollway, Bob Leece and David Richmond; and to Mal Hemmerling and Gary Pemberton, former executives of the board of SOCOG.

The success of the Sydney Games would not have been possible without difficult decisions. I am sure that sometimes less than optimal decisions had to be made, and that changed the course of the Games. Obviously SOCOG kept its focus on the outcome of the Games. It was not overly distracted by any awkward moments over the past 12 months or so and it succeeded in delivering a successful Games. We should be thankful for that. The torch relay was a great event. It gave many Australians, between one-third and one-half, a chance to see the torch in their areas. A number of people carried the torch through St Ives on the Wednesday before the opening of the Olympics; it was carried through Frenchs Forest on the day of the opening ceremony. Adam Johnson, a young man in a wheelchair, had an opportunity to carry the torch along Warringah Road. That was a great moment for him and something which he had been looking forward to for a long time.

It is worthwhile commenting on the opening ceremony. It was a brilliant demonstration of Australian culture and of our background. Most Australians would be comfortable and delighted with the significant emphasis that was placed on Aboriginal cultural history. Whatever reconciliation might mean, I think most, if not all, Australians are proud that we have a diverse cultural history and that Aboriginal cultural history is a significant part of it. That history was showcased to the world and acknowledged, something about which all Australians should feel proud.

I was fortunate enough to be able to take my family to a number of events. We saw some of the less high-profile events. We saw hockey for the first time. It was quite extraordinary to see live the skills that are involved in that game. I found it amazing. I saw the Australian women's handball team play Norway. Australia was quite competitive up until half-time. However, the Norwegians are the world champions. It is a remarkable sport. It would be interesting to see how successful Australians were at it if they picked it up, given that it is a dominant sport in Europe. The Australian volleyball team, which played hard, received great support. That was one of the things which characterised all the sports that I observed. Australia was not that competitive, but the members of the team gave their all.

I recall one minor incident that was significant to me. As I had a spare ticket I went to the ticket sales line to see whether anyone was interested in it. I said to the person at the sales line that the game following the one that I was watching involved Russia. A gentleman came forward and said, "I am interested in the ticket. How much is it?" I said, "I am just giving it away." He said, "Thank you very much. I am from Moscow, Russia, and I want to see Russia play." He was delighted to have a chance to see his own team play volleyball. I trust that he had a good visit and that his time in Sydney was well-spent. One other incident encapsulates what sport and the Olympics are about. I saw a number of athletic events.

During the 3,000 metre steeplechase, which was an unusual race so far as I was concerned, one competitor started to drop behind the pack after the first lap. He progressively fell back further and further behind until he was lapped in the final lap. But for every one of those 7½ laps he got a special cheer. When the lead runners in the pack went past various parts of the stadium they got a great cheer, but when this runner came along—and he was clearly struggling at the time, standing on the jumps as he was going over and stepping into the water jump—he got a far greater cheer from the crowd than all the others.

It was a good example of how the spectators at all venues encouraged athletes such as Eric the Eel, as well as all other athletes. Not everyone can win. That example is typical of the spirit of sport which we embrace as a nation. The runner actually came last by some distance, but he did not come last in the hearts of spectators.

The Olympic transport facilities were remarkable. There are some lessons to be learned if we are to make public transport more attractive. If public transport runs on time, if it is comfortable and it gets people to their destinations rapidly, it will have greater prospects for the future than it currently has. Everyone who travelled on public transport was in great spirits. The atmosphere was terrific, as it was for the whole of the Games.

As other honourable members have said, we all took great pride in Australia and Sydney being showcased, and the profile of Sydney around the world has substantially increased. It gives us great pride looking back knowing we no longer have anything to prove as a nation. We now have great confidence in our ability as a nation to run events or to do anything. Despite being a small nation of only 19 million we no longer have to prove to the rest of the world that we are able to match it with them. We have done it, we no longer have to demonstrate that. As a nation we have matured in many respects and developed a greater self-confidence as a result of the Games. They were great Olympics, and will bring great memories. Obviously the Paralympics will round that off, and I add my best wishes to the Paralympians in their coming events. In short, well done everybody. They have been great Games, a great event and a great moment for our State and country.

Mr WOODS (Clarence—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [12.02 p.m.]: We all agree the Olympic Games have been enormously successful for Sydney and New South Wales. Regional New South Wales has played a major role in that success. Athletes from country New South Wales alone won more gold than Canada, the Ukraine or Spain. That is more gold medals than Canada's total of three, Ukraine's three and Spain's three. Our country athletes also achieved a higher total than Indonesia, Mexico or Austria. That is a total of 11 medals—four gold, four silver and three bronze for individuals and members of teams from regional New South Wales. This result can only be described as a tour de force on the part of our country athletes.

Our medal winners came from all corners of the State, from the Riverina, the North Coast, the Hunter and the Western Division. The sports they competed in were basketball, equestrian, hockey, shooting, softball and swimming. Many of our athletes made finals and recorded new personal best times in a number of sports. I record my congratulations to the whole Australian Olympic team, particularly to Grafton's own Olympic medalist, Brent Livermore, who was part of the bronze medal winning men's hockey team and is recognised as one of the most important members of that team. Brent was born and raised in Grafton and has set a fine example for the young people of our region. His membership of the team gave the people of the Clarence a closer sense of involvement with the Games.

The Clarence also fielded its fair share of volunteers and workers at the Games. We had volunteers in the opening and closing ceremonies, driving buses and working in a variety of capacities. One of those volunteers was Maureen Castle. Maureen is one of our dedicated nurses at the Maclean hospital. She gave up her holidays to work as a volunteer at the Olympics village. Her natural public speaking skills and level headedness put her in good stead for working with athletes and officials. She told the *Daily Examiner*, Grafton's local paper, on 5 September what prompted her to sign on to the biggest peacetime even this country has ever seen. She said:

When I first heard that Sydney was hosting the Olympics I said I want to be involved. I either want to be in it or attend.

She went on to say:

We've been told that what most of the athletes will remember most about Australia is the people. It is all about giving the visiting athletes a real taste of Aussie hospitality.

With people like Maureen and others from my electorate, along with volunteers from across Australia, there is no doubt our visitors went home with glowing reports about our hospitality. It is hard to measure what the long-term economic impact will be from the Games. No doubt it will be positive and highly beneficial to Australia, New South Wales and Sydney. But we already have seen some of the economic benefits reaped by country New South Wales, with pre-Games training and Olympic contracts. In my electorate the economic benefit of the Olympics has been worth \$800,000. This figure is based on preliminary estimates by the Department of State and Regional Development that show pre-Games training provided Grafton and Maclean with an Olympics-related windfall of around \$400,000. Grafton businesses also won Olympic supply contracts worth a total \$400,000 to the regional economy.

Six international rowing teams used the Clarence River for their pre-Games training camps. The teams and their officials were extremely impressed with the Clarence, and they provided a mini-boost for the local economy. In fact, I am advised the United States team was so impressed they are talking about coming back to

the Clarence. The US rowing team officials have made inquiries about running their summer training camps in Maclean to prepare for future world rowing championships. This has obviously created a great deal of exposure for the Clarence River as a world-class rowing venue. Many champions have come from that area.

The Clarence River is one of the few rivers in the world that offers rowers a 2,000 metre straight course, as well as numerous protected areas that enable training to go ahead regardless of weather conditions. More than 150 members of the US, Spanish, Russian, Irish, Norwegian, Estonian and South African rowing teams trained on the Clarence River in the lead-up to the Olympics. The teams were unanimous in their praise for the location, the facilities and particularly the way in which the local people welcomed them. I was at a reception for the Americans and I told them that they had to be careful that the hospitality did not detract from their performance at the Olympics. I have no doubt that although people in the Clarence would have been shouting the standard "Aussie! Aussie! Aussie! Oi! Oi! Oi!" during competition at the Penrith Lakes, there were cheers for the Americans, Brits, Irish, Spanish and other nationalities.

Many team members are vowing to come back to the Clarence Valley for their holidays and to spread the word about what a great place the Clarence is to visit. I am sure this happened in the other areas where other teams visited, stayed and trained. This is on top of the overseas media coverage the teams generated. So while the income boost from the training is a great bonus, the real value is in the tremendous international profile it created, not just for Sydney but for many other areas across regional New South Wales. Income was generated from providing food and accommodation, car hire, individual spending as well as equipment replacement and repairs. Total visitor nights spent in the Clarence during the pre-Games training period by the athletes, their coaches and officials exceeded 2,400. I note that the athletes also were able to take time out to meet local people. A great picture appeared in the *Lower Clarence Review* on 8 September of the US team at a reception given by the local Aboriginal community of Maclean. The caption reads:

Maclean shire's Aboriginal communities danced up a storm for the US rowers at Yamba. A dinner featuring kangaroo and pippies was prepared for the rowers by Aboriginal community members eager to show off their traditional foods.

After experiencing what many described as a taste sensation, the team was treated to a lively performance by Aboriginal dance troupe members.

The Americans were in awe of the fantastic attitude people have displayed towards them and will long remember this special performance.

Some locals even went further to make the visitors welcome. The Irish team of five enjoyed the services of medical and physiotherapy specialists in the Clarence, including Dr Derek Palmer, who himself is Irish, as are quite a number of other Clarence residents. The *Daily Examiner* reported on 8 September that physiotherapy needs were handled by Jane-Anne Burns of Oliver Street Physiotherapy, whilst the Irish enjoyed massages by Trish Dawson and Associates Remedial Massage.

There was another spin-off for the Clarence. Whilst the Olympics saw Olympic record crowds at venues and live sites across Sydney, many Sydneysiders made an exodus to other locations during the school holidays. The local paper reported on 8 September that the Calypso Caravan Park and the Blue Dolphin Holiday Resort had a third of their bookings set aside for the Sydney escapees. Leanne Jarvis, manager of the Calypso Caravan Park, said:

It's amazing how many people from that area—Sydney—have known about Yamba for years and come here for some solitude.

Liz Kime, Yamba and District Chamber of Commerce President, agreed that the extra week of holidays was good economic news for Yamba. The Games also boosted business for two local Grafton companies which won a total of four Games contracts. Koppers Logs won three contracts, worth around \$300,000 to supply foundation piles for the Homebush site, and Tom's Sawmills won a contract, worth approximately \$100,000, to supply railway sleepers for the Homebush Bay rail link and timber for landscaping at Olympic sites.

Grafton also played host to a regional Olympic live site for the closing ceremony of the Games, with hundreds of people turning out to enjoy the festivities and fireworks. The Olympic Games are a great credit to the organisers and the athletes who participated in them. The dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers shone the most. Without the volunteers we may not have been credited by the IOC leader with having the best Games ever. I am glad that the people of my electorate of Clarence played their part and, in playing that part, immensely enjoyed the experience.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.10 p.m.]: The excitement that was generated in my electorate of Burrinjuck in the lead-up to the Olympics was quite intense. Ever since that fateful day in 1993 when John Fahey made that elated leap into midair as Sydney was announced the winner, we have been waiting with

anxious anticipation as to what the Olympics would mean to country areas. Would it mean growth in tourism? Would it mean extra sales for business? Would it be a coup for retailers in our areas? We are still waiting to see some of the benefits of the Olympics, but we were simply so excited that the event was coming and when it finally came it was a very exciting period for everyone across the State.

But the lead-up to the Games was not without some controversy, especially in the early days. The public relations exercise in the lead-up left a little to be desired. To recap the memories, it started about a year ago with information that trains would be taken off the tracks and replaced with buses between Goulburn and the Southern Highlands, which had many people worried that this may be the beginning of reducing train services in country areas such as Goulburn. I listened to the Minister for Transport's statement yesterday in relation to this, and from all indications it would seem that that will not be the case, which is great news for us all.

The free park and ride facility was a bonus for the Goulburn area, which falls within my electorate of Burrinjuck. The free park and ride facilities started at Goulburn as the outermost point of travel into Sydney. At one stage during the Games it was suggested that people drive all the way to MacArthur and use the park and ride facility there, so the park and ride facility could have been a little better utilised. However, we were pleased that Goulburn was chosen as the beginning of the free trip to Sydney for Olympic ticket holders. It was commendable to have that commence in Goulburn.

After all the meetings and media releases from the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority, we finally approached the day that the Olympic torch relay was heading our way. It eventually reached the town of Tallong on the border of the Burrinjuck electorate, and I stood with councillors Inda Evans and Maureen Eddy, and with Richard and Jacqui Clark, waiting for the torch to arrive. The atmosphere was intense. The torch was running late. The local school was selling cakes and coffee and everyone was in a fantastic mood. Then the torch came into sight. I think having the torch come through town was in many ways more exciting than the Olympics themselves for people in country areas.

The torch runners in the Goulburn region included John McCormack, a former Olympian and a life member of both the Crookwell and New South Wales hockey associations; Lisa Lieschke, a former Olympian who represented Australia in synchronised swimming in 1988 and who has lived in Goulburn for the past eight years; Des Spackman, who represented Australia in hockey; Jonathan Coogan, who has shown remarkable courage and determination during his life and is a very popular and well-known young man in the area is a quadriplegic and is unable to speak; Ken Robson, who has been associated with cricket in the Goulburn district for 60 years; Fiona Drakos, who represented Goulburn in the Miss Australia Award and who was crowned Miss New South Wales Fundraiser; Maureen Wharton, who is very well known for her extensive community work; Tim Lawson, who was the Lions Club Youth of the Year for the Goulburn district; Graeme Northey, my favourite car salesman who has been involved with many sporting bodies in Goulburn, including basketball, cricket and cycling associations; and Fred Cooper, who is a member of the Goulburn Rugby League Association and has been President of the Goulburn District Racing Club for the past 10 years.

No torch run would be complete without the well-known local former postie, Wendel Rosewarne, and his dog Monty. Before his retirement Wendell rode the streets of Goulburn with Monty sitting in front in the bicycle basket. Wendell knows everyone. Indeed, I am delighted to say that he was recently announced achiever of the year at Goulburn's Lilac Festival, of which I am a patron. He also worked as a volunteer at the Games. One day I went to Olympic Park with friends to watch the 1500 metre race of Kieren Perkins and Grant Hackett on the big screen and I was met by Wendell sitting up a ladder at the entrance to the park saying, "I'm sorry but all the places near the big screen are full and people walking in now will not be able to get in to see the race." I said, "Hello, Wendell, how nice to see you here." Wendell is everywhere; he is an institution in Goulburn. The amount of time he gives to his community is extraordinary. I have not mentioned all the people who participated in the torch relay team in Goulburn but I have mentioned a fair few of them.

The local police and other police who came to Tallong and Goulburn were fantastic. They were very friendly and approachable, which made the general public feel comfortable, particularly those who are not necessarily used to crowds. After the successful visit to Tallong the Olympic torch made its way along the route to Goulburn. Some 5,000 people turned out at Victoria Park in Goulburn to witness the lighting of the community cauldron, and I was pleased to be amongst those people. After the torch made its way to Goulburn it travelled on to Canberra, where it stayed for several days before heading into the snow country.

Once the Olympic opening ceremony commenced Jack, Georgia and I were glued to the television watching the wonderful riders on horseback and the brilliant opening ceremony that so many honourable

members have talked about in this debate. The children who performed as part of Sing 2000 did an absolutely fantastic job. Indeed, several children who participated came from my electorate, including Natalie Prevedello, who sang and danced in the opening ceremony. I take this opportunity also to mention Theodora Margetis, who performed the Olympic hymn as part of the Millennium Choir of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia at the opening ceremony. She was very much looking forward to that event and she did a terrific job.

There were many volunteers. They were not backwards in coming forward for the Olympics. Many of them travelled for hours each day from my electorate to the Olympic sites. John Thistleton, who is the editor of my local newspaper, worked as a volunteer in the media unit. Kellie Medway of Goulburn worked as an information technology volunteer and was responsible for the print server in the sports information centre. She had to provide the correct event results to the media within 12 minutes. There are too many volunteers from the Goulburn district and from Burrinjuck to mention all of them here.

We also had our share of Olympians. Honourable members have heard of Michael Diamond, whose name is now synonymous with Goulburn. We are proud that Michael Diamond is associated with Goulburn. He brought home gold in the trap shooting for Australia and for Goulburn. Michael moved from Sydney to Goulburn during his early teens and teamed up with the local Goulburn gun club. That is where that association springs from. Lynton, a well-known equestrian centre in the Goulburn district, hosted the equestrians during their preparations for the Olympics. And a very successful Olympics it was for them as well. Who could help but be proud of an electorate that has contributed so much to the best Olympics the world has ever seen?

One aspect of the Games on which there was much comment was the Olympic rings on the Harbour Bridge. Those rings were built by Kermac Engineering in Goulburn. Ken Fazakerly, who originally thought the job was too small for his company, was given the contract for something which won the hearts of those in Sydney, New South Wales and, indeed, the world. Recently I received a letter from Angela Storrer, President of the Goulburn Chamber of Commerce, who is eager to see the rings returned to Goulburn because of the tourism potential. This proposal seems to have been met with favouritism in the Goulburn district. It would be terrific if the rings were restored and somehow mounted in the Goulburn area as a potential tourist attraction for the future. That would also be appropriate.

Another firm that was involved with the Olympics was the firm Signs 'R Us. This Goulburn company erected giant photographs of three prominent Australian sports people as part of an official Olympic contract. People may have seen around town the large photographs of Cathy Freeman, Lleyton Hewitt and Lauren Jackson. The photographs are made of one-way vision vinyl film and constructed with two-metre by 1.2-metre panels. Signs 'R Us worked around the clock and all work was completed on time. Craig Maddren, the proprietor of the company, stated to my electorate's local newspaper, the *Goulburn Post*, that at one stage he worked for 47 hours straight without a break to get the contract signed, sealed and delivered on time. This shows the impact that the Olympics had on Goulburn and also the desire of Goulburn companies to ensure that they are recognised as some of the best firms in the country and indeed in the world.

Another aspect of the Olympics that people will be aware of is the effort that people made to ensure that people with disabilities had access to the Games. I thank the members of Michael Knight's office for their help in getting Bethany Tout, a young girl from my electorate who is in a wheelchair, into the Olympics. Bethany and her family bought tickets to see Cathy Freeman's event. At the time that they purchased the tickets Bethany was not in a wheelchair, but Michael Knight's office helped to secure the area so that Bethany was able to have a good view. She is a very ill little girl who has been goal setting in relation to her critical illness. Each goal that she achieves makes her doctors that little bit happier, so we were extremely pleased that she was able to get to that event to see Cathy Freeman's race. The Paralympics will be the next big event to hit New South Wales. A lot of children will travel from my electorate to Sydney to watch the Paralympics, including students at Yass Public School. The students are excited about coming to Sydney and seeing the Paralympics, and we hope that they have a successful trip.

In summary, regional New South Wales waited anxiously for the Olympics to come about. We are still waiting anxiously to get the results. Those results have not yet been realised, and possibly expectations were very high. However, I was heartened to hear the comments of the Minister for the Olympics in relation to bed stays and tourism as expected spin-offs for regional New South Wales. I certainly hope that this comes about. Regional New South Wales needs the extra business, so any benefit will be a great bonus for us. Business in regional New South Wales, in particular retail business, has been doing it hard over the last couple of years. Any tourism that the Government can send into regional areas will be appreciated by the businesses that are expecting some profits as a result of the Games. We waited a long time for the Games to come about, then they

came and they were fantastic, and now we cannot wait for the spin-offs. Once again I congratulate all governments that have been involved with staging these terrific Games. Let us hope that we can get the results that we are all eagerly awaiting.

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [12.23 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Premier. I also concur with the sentiments expressed by previous speakers in thanking individuals and organisations for their efforts in ensuring the enormous success of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. I remember taking my children to the lighting of the cauldron at Cronulla, which took place during the week preceding the opening ceremony of the Olympics. We parked probably 2½ kilometres away from Tonkin Oval where the ceremony was about to take place. There was a great feeling of excitement in the Woolooware-Cronulla community as we walked with masses of people who had also parked their cars considerable distances from Tonkin Oval.

When I first saw Tonkin Oval, it was a complete mass of people, who were there to celebrate the imminent Olympic Games and also to see Susie Maroney, a great Sutherland shire resident, ready to light that cauldron. It was certainly an exciting moment for the many thousands of people who were crammed on the oval and also those standing on the balconies of the many units around the area. There was an enormous cheer as Susie Maroney came through a passageway that had been made through the people on Tonkin Oval and then went up to light the cauldron. In fact, the crowd was so large, the best way to view it was on the big screen. It was magnificent to be there and it was a great community atmosphere a week or so before the opening ceremony.

The next morning, the Tuesday morning of that week, I again loaded the younger members of my family into the car at 6.30 so that we could be on Woniara Road at Hurstville to watch the torch relay progress through the Hurstville district. We specifically chose the spot on Woniara Road because one of Australia's great athletes, Mr Alby Thomas, who is now the President of the St George Amateur Athletics Club, took the torch at the Salisbury Street intersection on Woniara Road. While we waited for Alby to receive the torch, there was again an enormous community spirit. The whole of Woniara Road was lined with people at 6.30 in the morning waiting for the moment the torch was to be passed to Alby. Many members of Alby's family were there, and I am sure they travelled from far and wide to join him on this special occasion. Many members of the St George Amateur Athletics Club were also there to share in that moment. There was an enormous cheer as the bus arrived and Alby took his place ready to receive his torch and for it to be lit. As the bus moved further up the street, there were waves from the people who were also moving to their chosen venues.

There was a great cheer at about 6.45 as Alby took the torch and ran past us. I then moved my family further up the street, through the back of Hurstville. I did not take the opportunity to attend the little ceremony that Hurstville City Council had organised for when the torch reached Westfield in Hurstville because we had walked across to the other side of Hurstville on Forest Road at Wright Street, where another great Australian and former Olympian, Brian Booth, was to receive the torch. Alby Thomas had attended the Melbourne Games in 1956, as well as the Rome Games in 1960 and the Tokyo Games in 1964 as a 5,000 and 10,000 metre runner. Brian Booth had participated in the 1956 Olympics as a hockey player. Brian was standing there at the corner of Wright Street, also with all his family. Brian is a former president and current patron of the St George District Cricket Club and, I repeat, a great Australian.

My family and I took the opportunity to stand with many hundreds of others along Forest Road who waited to see Brian have his torch lit and continue the torch relay along Forest Road towards Bexley. Again there was an enormous cheer from all those in attendance when this great Australian received the torch and moved along past Hurstville primary school. People could not help but be involved in the euphoria of this moment for both Alby and Brian. It was certainly a great privilege for my wife, my three youngest children and me to have the opportunity to participate in the event early on that Tuesday morning.

The next day I had to stand in a queue at Tumbalong Park to obtain my tickets for the event for which I had booked, which was the women's basketball, having decided to take the family to one special Olympic event. My wife will attest to the fact that if there is one thing I hate it is standing in a queue. In fact, my wife hates taking me shopping anywhere because I get so frustrated with queues. However, it was not too bad standing for two hours that morning because, again, there was a great community spirit. Like many others in that queue, I took the opportunity to talk with the people around me and we certainly shared a great excitement as we waited for the Olympic Games to come to Sydney later that week.

The opening ceremony took place on Friday of that week. As a family, and in the spirit of that community atmosphere, we had organised to have many of our friends come over to watch the opening

ceremony together. But prior to hosting our friends, I left my wife to do the organising as I went to Olds Park, where the Georges River combined churches had organised a special community demonstration of their excitement for the opening ceremony by putting on a community event, including the erection of a large screen. I was amazed at the thousands of people who had turned out to Olds Park that day. I congratulate the Georges River combined churches and also thank their sponsors, who ensured that the event was financially secure. In particular I thank the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, the Illawarra Catholic Club and Hurstville City Council. The financial support from those organisations made sure that the event for those many thousands of people was a success.

I went home to watch the opening ceremony with the many friends who had come to our house that evening. We had chairs set up everywhere. When the national anthem was played, all the children who were upstairs came downstairs to join their parents, and everybody in my lounge room and dining room spontaneously sang the national anthem. I thought that in many ways that symbolised what the Olympic Games are all about—bringing people together either at an international level, at a national level, at a State level, at Circular Quay, or indeed at a neighbourhood level to share the moment. The Olympic Games were a celebration of the community.

As a family, we were able to attend only one Olympic event because that was all we could afford. We took the opportunity to watch the Australian women's basketball team. Again we organised the whole family and travelled to Roselands, where we met some friends. We all caught a bus from Roselands and again the organisation involved in assisting us to travel to the Games was superb. We were fortunate to have a great bus service from Roselands. I congratulate two local bus companies that were involved in regional bus services: Punchbowl Bus Company, under the leadership of Mr Steve Scott, and the Peakhurst Bus Company, under Mr Lachie Saint. Those companies certainly made a great contribution to the whole regional bus network that worked so efficiently throughout the Olympic Games.

When we arrived at the Olympic precinct, we walked quite happily, together with many others, towards the venue. In fact, we walked past the dome where the women's basketball match was to take place and moved down to the Olympic Expo area, where we had dinner. We had dutifully packed our ham and chicken sandwiches, drinks and chips and sat down with many thousands of other people to watch the big screen. We were all very excited because that night we watched Susie O'Neill swim in the 200 metres women's butterfly. For a brief moment we were all disappointed because Susie did not win the gold medal that everyone thought she would win. But, spontaneously, after that second of disappointment, everybody stood and applauded.

We were not at the swimming pool: we were just among a large group of people, most of whom we did not know. Everyone spontaneously applauded, not only for Misty Hyman, who swam a magnificent race to win that event, but also for Susie O'Neill, Petria Thomas and all those who were involved. Again, that says something about the community of which we are all a part. On that night, everywhere we looked we saw volunteers giving directions, getting people excited and keeping people in the right mood. Much has been said during this debate, and rightly so, about the enormous contribution that was made by the volunteers.

The commerce community of Beverly Hills, the shopkeepers, had to make sacrifices to ensure that the Olympic Games worked effectively. The Beverly Hills shopping centre is situated on King Georges Road, which was a clearway from 5.00 a.m. until 12 midnight. That caused some difficulties for the shopkeepers of Beverly Hills, and I thank them publicly for their contribution in ensuring the success of the Games. The clearway made the smooth flow of traffic possible. I thank the owners of the businesses in Beverly Hills for the sacrifices they made and for their involvement.

Something else that comes to mind when discussing the Olympic Games is the advertising that I saw on television. Although I attended the Games only once, I spent a lot of time watching the events on television. My wife suggested that I must have been exhausted by the end of the Games from watching so much television. A series of advertisements will remain indelibly in my mind—and I heard one of them on the radio this morning while I was driving to the office. Those advertisements call for people to celebrate humanity. Some of the stories that are told in those advertisements sum up what the Olympic Games were all about.

The honourable member for Blacktown referred to the great Haile Gebreselassie and his tremendous run in the 10,000 metre race and the last 200 metres, when he ran stride for stride against Paul Tergat. That was a celebration of humanity because it required an enormous effort. One athlete has been quoted as saying that his country did not send him to start an event, but to finish the event. That statement sums up what the Olympic Games should be about: participation.

The world is an enormous place. To make it to the Olympic Games is a fantastic achievement. To make it to an Olympic semi-final or final is also a fantastic achievement. As Australians, we have learnt to appreciate the individuals and teams simply for their participation in the Olympic Games. With that thought in mind, it is appropriate to mention that the Paralympics will begin next Wednesday. We talk about people participating, giving of themselves and celebrating humanity. The Paralympics are another vsignificant way of celebrating humanity.

Last Saturday night I was at home with my family and watched a program hosted by Ray Martin on Paralympians. One cannot help but be inspired by those individuals and their achievements. Most important were their attitudes and the fact that they felt fortunate that a disability had given them the opportunity to take another path in life. That positive attitude is certainly a great bonus to them as individuals, but for those of us who see them and hear the words which sum up their positive attitudes, it is nothing but inspiring. I am certain that when we see the Paralympians, either at the events or on television, we will again engender that Olympic spirit. We will again celebrate humanity. We will again feel invigorated and enlivened. Most importantly, we will feel inspired.

I take this opportunity to congratulate everyone from the Minister for the Olympics, Michael Knight, to the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games [SOCOG] and all the Olympic organisations, the athletes and the volunteers. I congratulate everybody who had something to do with the Olympic Games. But most importantly, I congratulate everybody who was in Sydney and who gave us the greatest feeling of community spirit that we have ever experienced.

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [12.38 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I add my congratulations to all those who were involved in the delivery of an outstanding Olympic Games—the best ever. One of the great reasons behind the success of the Games was the fact that it was such a bipartisan effort. It was always to be so, and it was always to involve a component of environmental remediation and repair so that the holding of the Olympic Games would enhance our environment and leave it in a better state than it was before the Games commenced. In relation to many of those issues, Australians have a lot to be proud of.

It is important to remember some of the reasons for the success of the bid. First we must remember the great vision that Nick Greiner and Bruce Baird brought to the decision to make Sydney bid for the Games in the first place. Nick Greiner visited the Seoul Olympic Games to understand exactly what the impact would be on the city and to start to develop relationships. On 11 December 1990 the feasibility study that led to the Olympic Games bid was released. On 11 December it was said that the Sydney bid for the year 2000 Games was both winnable and financially viable, according to a comprehensive government report. That was the starting point.

In February 1991 the Sydney Olympic Games bid committee was first formed. I shall take a moment to recognise the people who formed the original committee. Those people included. Bob Hawke, Nick Greiner, Alderman Jeremy Bingham, John Coates, Bruce Baird, Phil Coles, Kevin Gosper, Sir Peter Abeles, Sallyanne Atkinson, John Brown, Bob Carr, Mike Cleary, Ken Cowley, Greg Daniels, John Devitt, Michael Easson, Dawn Fraser, Ted Harris, Mr G. Henke, Dr John Hewson, Renata Kaldor, Ros Kelly, Graham Lovett, Mr P. Montgomery, Sir Eric Neal, John Newcombe, Mrs M O'Shea, Kerry Packer, Charlie Perkins, Mr Schmidt, Bob Rowland Smith, David Smithers, Ron Walker, Nick Whitlam, Geoff Wild and Dick Woolcott. The make-up of the committee indicated the bipartisanship of the Games.

Some others who deserve a mention once again comprised a bipartisan group of people, not all of whom were on that bid committee but some of whom had other important roles. Those people included Dick Humphry, Robert Webster, Andrew Cappie-Wood, Paul Chesterton, Ken Baxter, Donald McDonald, Rod McGeoch, who made an enormous effort in delivering the successful bid, George Souris, John Valder, who did excellent work managing the corporate fundraising for the Games, Ian Armstrong, Keith Kocken, Max Moore-Wilton, and Stepan Kerkyasharian, who also played a pivotal role in co-ordinating the ethnic groups in New South Wales to maximise our efforts in telling our story to all those countries of origin who have active and supportive communities in New South Wales.

Kathryn Greiner deserves enormous credit for her role as patron of the volunteer groups in New South Wales at the time and also as the wife of the then Premier. She played an enormous role in making sure that Sydney told its story around the world. I also pay special tribute to John Fahey, my predecessor as the member for Southern Highlands, who successfully led the bid to its conclusion. Honourable members all remember that fantastic leap in Monaco when Sydney was announced as the winner of the Games. Closer to home, the Southern Highlands Olympic Committee [SHOC], which was formed soon after the bid was won, deserves

credit for its work. Its first job was to raise funds for the Australian team to be sent to the Atlanta Games. SHOC held many successful functions locally, led by the President, Dr Nigel Menogue and Clive Lee, who succeeded him. SHOC locally organised bids that went around the world advertising the availability of our excellent Southern Highlands sporting facilities and indeed our community infrastructure for pre-Games training opportunities in the Southern Highlands.

We were also happy to involve the people of Goulburn in that opportunity to make sure that if any teams from around the world wanted to find convenient training locations close to Sydney they could take up those opportunities. Many people did so. In fact, the French African boxing team was in the Southern Highlands before the Games. SHOC also used its skills and practised those skills in crowd control and logistics at a number of other community events in the Southern Highlands—events that were unrelated to the Olympics—and they were welcomed by participants in many of the community events leading up to the Games.

A most successful torch relay celebration was held at the Bradman Oval. I congratulate Gary Barnsley, Richard Mulvaney and Ian Craig of the Bradman Museum and SHOC volunteers on an outstanding event that evening. I also thank Greg Watson, Mayor of Shoalhaven, for inviting me to the wonderful Shoalhaven event at Nowra. The local schools were involved and enjoyed some of the cultural events. It was the first opportunity for many people to see foreign athletes; for example, the Belarus rowing team. Talking to those men and women from other countries brought home to us all how close the Olympic Games experience was for all of us.

The *Goulburn Post* and some local citizens, including Angie Zantis, worked with me on a submission to have the torch relay route through Goulburn. We took that submission to Simon Baulderstone, of SOCOG, well in advance of the Games, to make the case that both Bowral and Goulburn should be on the torch relay route. All the sports clubs in Goulburn, and John Sharp and John Fahey got together and sent letters of support. There was a lot of support for the submission. I ask the Minister for the Olympics to retrieve the document from the files of SOCOG so that it can be returned to Goulburn, perhaps to remain in the Goulburn library. It is an extremely important cultural document for the people of Goulburn in the future.

I will now refer to some participants from the Southern Highlands, including the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly areas, who made a huge difference to the running of the Games. First of all, police from our local area commands who were sent to the Games during that period gained an enormous amount from that experience. Members of the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service worked as volunteers in various jobs at the Games and around the city. One of our local editors, Grant Newton, from the *Southern Highland News* spent his time during the Games in one of the media centres. Yesterday when I spoke to him he said it was a very good experience to work with international as well as local journalists. Many local volunteers from the Southern Highlands took the opportunity to make the most of the Games.

The Armstrong family, from Mittagong, is close to my family. Alicia Armstrong works for us as our nanny. Her mother, Julie, is a nurse at Bowral hospital. David Armstrong is a local building contractor. Alicia's sister, Nicky Lee, is still at high school. They all volunteered to work at the Olympic Games. Alicia worked at the velodrome and Nicky Lee, David and Julie worked at the stadium. They, as well as all the volunteers around New South Wales, will be very pleased to have their efforts recognised with the special volunteer medal as proposed by the Leader of the Opposition a few days ago, which I am pleased the Premier will make a reality.

My parents, who live at Avalon, provided accommodation for visitors from the United States of America, a woman called Becca Skoggin and her four-year-old daughter, Grace. Becca is the wife of a coach of one of the American diving teams. She stayed at Avalon with my mum and dad. When she arrived from America at midnight with her four-year-old child, whatever arrangements had been made somehow did not go quite right. An Olympic volunteer found them, picked them up, put them in a car, drove them from Sydney ((Kingsford Smith)) AAirport to Avalon and then drove that car back to the car pool, which I believe was at Randwick, and then went home.

That is an example of the type of personal commitments made by many of our volunteers. I wish I knew the name of that volunteer so that I could thank her. That type of thing happened on a daily basis around town. Locally we were very proud to have Fiona Nixon, who works with Jamie Creer, who was the supplier of all the presentation flower bouquets to medal winners. Fiona worked hard to design and create the presentation bouquet and then spent two weeks living and working in Sydney while her husband, Ralph, looked after their children in Moss Vale. She thoroughly enjoyed that experience. We really put Australian wildflowers on the map as a commercial reality and as an icon of Australia.

Another person who deserves recognition is Robert Coulsen, from Berrima Coaches. He made enormous efforts to make the local bus services work. I think the success of the local transport system can be

brought back to Robert Colson. We thank him for that. But most important, of course, are the athletes. My area is very proud to be able to say that Michelle Jones, who won the first Australian medal, a silver medal, in the triathlon, is a student of Picton High School. Her sister is also a very accomplished triathlete. Michael Diamond, whom I met in Goulburn after his Atlanta success, did us all proud with his gold medal in shooting. Lisa Paolini is a local woman who participated in the 20-kilometre walk, in which she made an outstanding effort.

One of the nice things about the Sydney Games was the spirit in which they were conducted, something that a number of honourable members have spoken about in this debate. We should realise how important and valuable are our own Australian characteristics. I read an article by an American journalist who commented on the success of the torch relay around New South Wales. She said that the people of Australia and New South Wales have a sense of community and neighbourliness that perhaps has been lost in the United States of America. She said it was sad that America no longer has those qualities—the neighbourhood contacts that we take for granted in our community.

An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that a woman who was travelling on a train at 11.30 at night, along with all the other people coming back from an event at the stadium, told the journalist how nice it was to be on a train that was clean, reliable and safe at 11.30 at night, and to be able to speak to fellow citizens, but above all to feel safe and secure. That should be an objective for us all—to make sure that it remains part of our life and part of our expectation, whether or not we have Olympic Games or other major events.

Together with many others, I think that Roy and H.G.'s *The Dream* went a long way towards encapsulating for Australians much of what we enjoyed about the Games. Certainly, they enlarged my understanding, in unexpected ways, about Greco-Roman wrestling and water polo. I am sure we are all very grateful to Roy and H.G. for their perspective. I think they said to the world more about the Australian spirit and the Australian character than perhaps many of the more academic articles that will ever be written about the Games.

We all look forward to the Paralympics. Tomorrow I will be at Moss Vale at 7.00 a.m. for the lighting of the Paralympic torch. Paralympic teams are training in the Southern Highlands, again to the great credit of SHOC, and in particular to people such as Cynthia Parker, Jane and Alistar McLennan and Ray Smee. I will join SHOC volunteers and other local people on a bus trip from the Southern Highlands to the closing ceremony of the Paralympic Games, which I looking forward to very much.

Finally, I congratulate all the volunteers, all the organisers in SOCOG and all of the related government agencies, together with all members of the Government and the Opposition on what has been a spectacular bipartisan project. But most of all I would like to thank the athletes, who are of course pivotal to all of this. We all admire their courageousness in so many of their performances. We certainly appreciate the gold medal performances, but some of the other performances will probably rate high in our memories and remain with us for a long time.

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Corrective Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [12.53 p.m.]: The speeches that have been delivered by honourable members of this House during this debate I am sure reflect very accurately the feelings that residents of Sydney, New South Wales and Australia have about the Games. It was a most extraordinary event, and one that will remain with us all for the rest of our lives. But in the several minutes left before this debate must be adjourned I would like to say something particularly from my role as Minister for Emergency Services.

On 20 September millions of Australians sat glued to the television watching Simon Fairweather make history by winning Australia's first Olympic gold medal in archery. At the same time, far from any television sets, big screens or even radios, over 100 volunteer firefighters were battling to extinguish a major grassfire that was threatening the Olympic shooting range at Cecil Park. This was just one of a dozen fires that flared up in the Sydney metropolitan area that had the potential to impact on the Olympics that day. The swift and comprehensive response by firefighters meant that Sydney skies remained smoke-free for the Games. The volunteers and salaried firefighters can be proud of their efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity today to acknowledge that special effort put in by emergency service workers. Throughout the Olympics volunteers across the State remained on call to cover storm and flood incidents and attend to the many bushfires that have been raging across New South Wales. Our volunteer firefighters not only worked tirelessly to keep Sydney safe and smoke-free during the period of the Olympic Games; they also put on their overalls and helmets and took on fires that were, and indeed still are, burning right across the State in what has turned out to be a very early start to the bushfire season.

On that day—which we call super Saturday—the nation stopped to watch the battle between Grant Hackett and Kieren Perkins in the pool and the fastest men and women on earth race on the track. But in northern New South Wales—in places such as Guyra, Grafton and Manilla—hundreds of firefighters were attacking fires that have been raging since the beginning of September. While many of us were enjoying the excitement of Olympic competition, volunteers were working in hot and gruelling conditions, often for 12 and 14 hours on end. They often left the fire ground with blistered feet and heat exhaustion, to rest and return to do it all again the next day. We owe them a very great deal of thanks.

There has been a wonderful public outpouring of gratitude towards volunteers during the Olympics. And those plaudits are well deserved. I am delighted that the Olympics have helped bring to the fore the priceless contribution made by volunteers to our community, because day in and day out emergency service workers from the Rural Fire Service, State and Emergency Service, Volunteer Rescue Association, Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard freely give up their time to protect their communities in times of emergency. The community relies on their commitment for protection in times of fire, flood, storm and other emergencies. All those volunteers and their families deserve our thanks and support.

When the call came for volunteers to help out at the Olympics, as usual our emergency service volunteers were among the first to put up their hands. I think it is not so well known that more than 1,500 volunteers from the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service joined the effort to make the biggest peacetime event in the world such a memorable occasion for all involved. With their dedication to community service, our emergency service workers exemplify the volunteering spirit.

Volunteers came from all parts of the State to assist the Olympics, travelling from places such as Albury, Ballina, Wagga Wagga, Tallaganda and Yarrawlumla, to join in the Olympic effort. Volunteers put in thousands of hours in a range of roles, including security and crowd control, as well as firefighting duties at the Games venues. I am aware that a number of emergency service volunteers plan to be back in Sydney to help out during the Paralympics. I repeat that the contribution of emergency service volunteers was an extremely valuable part of the Olympic Games. And, of course, their contribution to keeping the community safe all year round—a contribution that all our citizens now, because of the Olympics, may better appreciate—deserves our highest praise and thanks.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Stoner.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Mills) left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Precedence of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion, by leave, by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That at the sitting of the House on Thursday 12 October 2000 standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow for the interruption of proceedings at 10.30 a.m. for:

- (1) Paralympic competitors Ms Julianne Adams and Mr Hamish MacDonald to address the House; and
- (2) the Premier then to move a motion in support of the Paralympics.

PETITIONS

North Head Quarantine Station

Petition praying that the head lease proposal for North Head Quarantine Station be opposed, received from **Mr Barr**.

McDonald's Moore Park Restaurant

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

North Wallarah Peninsula Development

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

State Taxes

Petition praying that the Carr Government establish a public inquiry into State taxes, with the objective of reducing the tax burden and creating a sustainable environment for employment and investment in New South Wales, received from **Mr Debnam**.

Kings Cross Policing

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

Redfern, Darlington and Chippendale Policing

Petition praying for increased police presence in the Redfern, Darlington and Chippendale areas, received from **Ms Moore**.

Paddington Policing

Petition praying that the House prevent the closure of Paddington Police Station and praying for increased police presence in the Paddington area, received from **Ms Moore**.

Surry Hills Policing

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

East Sydney and Darlinghurst Policing

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

Orange Police Station Upgrade

Petition praying that consideration be given to the upgrading of Orange police station from category three to category two, received from **Mr R. W. Turner**.

Manly Hospital Paediatric Services

Petition expressing concern at the decision of the Northern Sydney Area Health Service to discontinue paediatric services at Manly Hospital and praying that full services at Manly Hospital be maintained, received from **Mr Barr**.

Coffs Harbour Health Services Funding

Petition praying for increased funding for health services in the Coffs Harbour area and a reduction in surgery waiting lists, received from **Mr Fraser**.

Wallsend After Hours Primary Care Service

Petition praying that assistance be provided to enable the continuation of after hours primary care services to residents of Wallsend and surrounding districts, received from **Mr Mills**.

Genetically Modified Food

Petition praying that the House take action to prohibit the sale and distribution of food containing genetically modified organisms, received from **Ms Moore**.

Macksville Hospital Funding

Petition praying that sufficient recurrent funding be allocated to Macksville and District Hospital to enable restoration of hospital services to the level that existed prior to cutbacks instituted by the Mid North Coast Area Health Service, received from **Mr Stoner**.

Non-government Schools Funding

Petitions praying that the Government reimburse the \$5 million in funding that has been withdrawn from non-government schools and reverse its decision to withdraw a further \$13.5 billion in funding in 2001, received from **Mrs Chikarovski, Mr Debnam, Mr Hartcher, Mr Hazzard, Mr Newell, Mr O'Doherty, Mr O'Farrell and Mrs Skinner**.

Yass Public School Special Support Unit

Petition praying that the Government reverse its decision to close the special support unit at Yass Public School and that it guarantee the continued existence of the unit to permit educational security for students, parents and staff, received from **Ms Hodgkinson**.

Muswellbrook South Public School Capital Works Funding

Petition praying that the Carr Government provide capital works funding for Muswellbrook South Public School in the 2001-02 State budget, received from **Mr Souris**.

Pittwater Road, Narrabeen, Speed Limit

Petition praying that a speed limit of 60 kilometres per hour be introduced on Pittwater Road, Narrabeen, received from **Mr Brogden**.

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**.

South Dowling Street Traffic Management

Petition praying that the Roads and Traffic Authority investigate all possible traffic management options and implements measures to restore residential amenity and safety to South Dowling Street between Flinders and Oxford streets, 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**.

Surry Hills Bus Services

Petition praying for an urgent increase in the reliability and adequacy of Surry Hills bus services, received from **Ms Moore**.

Redfern Bus Services

Petition praying for an urgent increase in the reliability and adequacy of Redfern bus services, received from **Ms Moore**.

Surry Hills Clearway Restrictions

Petition praying that the clearway restrictions on Albion, Fitzroy and Foveaux streets, Surry Hills, introduced by the Roads and Traffic Authority, be removed, received from **Ms Moore**.

Oxford Street Pedestrian Crossing

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

Windsor Road Upgrading

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

Warrell Creek Pacific Highway Realignment

Petition opposing the Roads and Traffic Authority's design and access arrangements for the realignment of the Pacific Highway at Warrell Creek and praying that the House rejects the authority's proposal and provides proper access to nearby properties, received from **Mr Stoner**.

Kempsey and Macksville Pacific Highway Upgrade

Petition praying that the House improve safety on the Pacific Highway and fast-track the proposed bypassing of Kempsey and Macksville, received from **Mr Stoner**.

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**.

Export of Puppies to Asia

Petition praying for opposition to the export of puppies to Asia, received from **Mr Amery**.

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**.

National Parks Entry Fees

Petitions praying that the proposal to introduce a \$6 entry fee per car per day into national parks be rejected, particularly in Bundjalung National Park and Iluka Nature Reserve, received from **Mr Fraser, Mr George, Ms Hodgkinson, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Piccoli, Mr Souris, Mr J. H. Turner, Mr R. W. Turner and Mr Webb**.

Fire Brigade Funding

Petition praying that the House introduces a fair and equitable way to fund the Fire Brigade and incorporates the surcharge on rates and taxes of landlords and property owners so that the cost is shared across the community, received from **Mr McGrane**.

White City Site Rezoning Proposal

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

Byron Shire Local Government

Petition praying that existing Byron shire boundaries be retained and that the powers of the Byron Shire Council not be diminished, received from **Mr D. L. Page**.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a delegation from the Government of the Republic of Macedonia led by Minister Naumov, who accompanied by His Eminence Bishop Peter and others. We welcome them to New South Wales Parliament.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

[During notices of motions for urgent consideration]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Northern Tablelands has sought the call to give notice of a motion for urgent consideration. The standing orders provide that no more than two such notices shall be accepted at any one sitting of the House. If the House divides following question time and one of the motions of which notice has been given is not accorded precedence, I will give favourable consideration to giving the call to the honourable member at that time.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

PARALYMPIC GAMES TRANSPORT

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is to the Premier. In the light of his commitment to ensure that the Paralympics are as hugely successful as the Olympics, why has the Government decided not to provide direct bus links to Homebush on six of the eleven days of the Paralympics, including the days on which he has encouraged senior citizens to attend, which will mean that spectators, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, will be forced to change buses or trains up to three times to get to venues?

Mr CARR: The public transport arrangements for the Paralympics will fully match the volume of people going to the Paralympics.

INNER CITY AND EASTERN SUBURBS LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Mrs GRUSOVIN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Local Government. What is the Government's response to calls for a comprehensive review of the local government structure in inner-city Sydney and the eastern suburbs?

Mr WOODS: Honourable members will be interested to know that this morning the Governor, his Excellency the Hon. Gordon Samuels, officially approved a formal inquiry into the local government structure of the inner-city and the eastern suburbs. The inquiry will involve eight councils: Botany, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Randwick, City of Sydney, South Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra. It will examine current structures to ascertain whether they provide good council services for residents and ratepayers. I have received numerous requests to examine the local government structure in those areas. Those requests include three separate petitions signed by more than 1,100 people.

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

Mr WOODS: In addition, Waverley Council, Randwick council and the Council of the City of Sydney have lodged formal requests. Those requests deal with a broad range of issues such as the treatment of Bondi Junction. I have also received dozens of letters from business people and families on this issue. This demonstrates to me that there is a great deal of interest and enthusiasm for a serious public examination of this kind.

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

Mr WOODS: In fact, this is the first time in more than a quarter of a century that a major review will be undertaken into the structure of local government in those areas. In 1973 the Barnett report followed an inquiry which looked at the boundaries in Sydney city and the eastern suburbs. Later inquiries conducted by judges Goran and Fisher focused primarily on the boundaries of the city of Sydney. Honourable members would agree that Sydney has changed substantially in that quarter of a century. We now live in a completely different city to that in which we lived in the early 1970s.

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

Mr WOODS: For example, the population density of some parts of Waverley is equal to that in some parts of Singapore. There are more than half a million residents in these local government areas combined. It is a dense area with many development, infrastructure and service delivery demands. I believe that a review of this type is not only appropriate but also timely. This morning I recommended to the Governor, and he accepted, the appointment of Professor Kevin Sproats to conduct the inquiry. Professor Sproats is a Professor of Local and Regional Governance at the University of Western Sydney and Director of the Western Sydney Research Institute. His report will be submitted to the Governor by 31 March 2001.

The official terms of reference for the inquiry are: first, to evaluate the structure of local government in the areas of Botany Bay, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Randwick, South Sydney, Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra; second, to report on whether the current structures of these areas support the provision of efficient local government services and facilities; third, if the current structures are found not to support such provision, to recommend what changes should be made to enhance the capacity of the councils of those areas to meet the current and future needs of their communities; and, fourth, in formulating any such recommendation, to take into account any relevant factors referred to in section 263 part 3 of the Local Government Act, which include financial advantages and disadvantages, community of interest and geographic cohesion.

Shortly, advertisements will appear in the media inviting submissions. The submission period will close on Monday 18 December. All submissions will be made public on the Internet. Submissions that have already been received will also be considered. Public hearings will be held in February next year, with a report due on 31 March. The process will allow all stakeholders, whether they be residents, ratepayers, local businesses, councils or families, to have equal input into the review. The Government will give serious consideration to the report and to the findings in it. It will be an important, transparent and serious review, and I encourage all those who have an interest to participate.

ILLEGAL FIRE PROSECUTIONS

Mr SOURIS: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier demand that Rural Fire Service Commissioner Phil Koperberg justify his allegation that farmers, as well as firebugs, are responsible for bushfires and request him to supply details of how many farmers are being prosecuted for starting illegal fires in the recent outbreaks?

Mr CARR: No.

NEW SOUTH WALES HEALTH COUNCIL

Mr McMANUS: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Health. What is the latest information on the work of the New South Wales Health Council?

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

Mr KNOWLES: Honourable members will recall that in March this year the Government announced its response to the New South Wales Health Council report and the Sinclair report into the health needs of small rural communities. Since that time, in addition to additional funding and the funding certainty provided by the redistribution of health dollars on a more equitable basis under the resource distribution formula, the Government, with the terrific support of more than 500 clinicians, nurses and hospital managers, has been steadily working away at the many recommendations on clinical reform embodied in those reports. Those individuals working in our hospital system have been looking at everything from better management of chronic conditions—

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

Mr KNOWLES: As I said, more than 500 nurses, doctors, specialists and hospital managers from throughout the State have come together to work on everything from chronic care conditions like heart and lung disease through to the way we go about better streamlining and networking our intensive care system. That is good news because they have their hands on the reform process. They are driving the changes to make our health system better and to ensure that we get more productive use of and better value from the large amounts of taxpayers' money—one-quarter of the State's budget—that are put into New South Wales Health. Today I can report that one area of reform is already producing good results. It is in the area of what is known in the system as day-of-surgery admissions, that is, people who are admitted to hospital on the same day as their operation is performed.

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

Mr KNOWLES: Historically, surgeons were more likely to admit patients the day before their operations for monitoring, tests and investigations. However, current best practice and international evidence suggests that that is not only unnecessary, it is potentially more detrimental because, frankly, the longer people stay in hospital anywhere in the world the more susceptible they are to cross-infection and all the sorts of illnesses that can result from being in hospital, as well as the added stress of being away from family, home and all the comforts they are more used to. All the international surveys show that people prefer to be at home and to make their hospital visits as short as possible.

So day-of-surgery admissions are not only good for the patients in that sense; obviously they make better use of available beds, improve clinical quality and increase the system's capacity to perform more surgery with the same resources. For example, the lists of surgeons who perform gall bladder operations are split 50:50 between those who still book in their patients the day before the operation and those who book in their patients on the day of surgery. What is interesting about the lists is that surgeons who use the day-of-surgery techniques get through their lists faster and perform more gall bladder operations than those who book in their patients the day before, simply because they are geared to a higher throughput. And the clinical outcomes, the quality results and the safety of patients are either the same, or indeed better, on the day-of-surgery list, again because of issues relating to the minimisation of cross-infections. The former Minister for Health is nodding his head; he knows a lot about this matter from his medical practice.

Because of that evidence and because of the growing body of international support for day of surgery, earlier this year the Health Council recommended that all our hospitals move 80 per cent of all surgical procedures to day of surgery. We did not recommend 100 per cent obviously because in some cases the people are elderly and may need to travel as distance and, therefore, simply may not be suitable for day-of-surgery procedures. But overwhelmingly, from the Mayo Clinic to country hospitals in New South Wales, day of surgery is recognised, based on all the evidence-based medicine and all the quality protocols, as a legitimate form of medical procedure. At the time back in March some people said that this could not be done—and one of them is sitting opposite. The good news is that it is being done. We are beginning to make real improvements in the way we go about conducting—

Mrs Skinner: Don't mislead the House. That is not what I said.

Mr KNOWLES: What did she say? Did honourable members read in yesterday's *Hansard* the blinder of a question the honourable member for North Shore asked the Premier? The honourable member asked the Premier:

... how does he explain the theft of body parts from five deceased people from hospitals in New South Wales, which he admitted earlier today?

The honourable member asserted that the Premier is now admitting dead people to hospitals so that their body parts can be stolen.

Mrs Skinner: Point of order: My question was not as the Minister read it out. I asked whether, in light of the Premier previously in question time telling this House that hospitals were in a fantastic state—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for North Shore will resume her seat.

Mrs Skinner: That is why I asked the question of the Premier.

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

Mrs Skinner: So the Minister has been revealed as a liar.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for North Shore to order for the second time. If a member continues to press a point of order after I have ruled that there is no point of order and asked the member to be seated, I will immediately place that member on three calls to order. On this occasion, however, I have called the honourable member for North Shore to order twice. The Minister may continue.

Mr KNOWLES: The policy-free zone opposite said it could not be done, but we are here to do it. I am pleased to report that the response from clinicians, nurses and hospital managers to our day-of-surgery initiative, the 80 per cent target, has been very good. I will give some examples. In January this year Shoalhaven hospital, on the South Coast, had a day-of-surgery rate of 20 per cent—in other words, two out of every 10 operations were day-of-surgery. Today, the figure is 80 per cent. That represents a clinician-led major change in just a few short months. For the same period, Cowra District Hospital has moved from 38 per cent, or four out of 10, to 90 per cent day-of-surgery. The Opposition has not noticed the change. There has been no difference in medical quality but there has been an increase in capacity. Nepean Hospital has moved from 66 per cent to 82 per cent. Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, one of the biggest teaching hospitals in the State, is well on the way to its 80 per cent target, having moved from 37 per cent day-of-surgery to 68 per cent day-of-surgery just a few months ago. They are terrific results from those hospitals, and the list goes on and on.

In fact, more than 50 of the State's 200-odd hospitals are exceeding the 80 per cent day-of-surgery target. Port Macquarie Base Hospital now has a 91 per cent day-of-surgery rate; Tweed hospital, 90 per cent; Fairfield Hospital, 90 per cent; Ryde hospital, 90 per cent; Narrabri Base Hospital, 84 per cent; Queanbeyan hospital, 100 per cent—a terrific result by the surgeons at that hospital; Newcastle Mater hospital, 84 per cent, and Maitland Hospital, 97 per cent. Those figures are impressive, but what they demonstrate is that the people who said that this could not happen, that all one could ever do about improving surgery was to simply throw more money at it, were wrong.

Moving away from the old practice of people booking a day in advance and occupying a bed and the surgeon operating the next day, to making these dramatic changes at a clinical level, demonstrates a major freeing up of beds and better use of resources. A 10 per cent increase in day-of-surgery admission rates is the equivalent of freeing up about 11,000 bed days. That is equivalent to an additional \$4.5 million in the system or about 2,000 additional hospital admissions. In simple terms, it provides more capacity for the same amount of money and, based on all the international literature, better quality care.

Mr O'Doherty: Waiting times are still going up.

Mr KNOWLES: No, they are not. Are members opposite seriously suggesting that if they ever reached this side of the Chamber they would wind back day-of-surgery admission rates, that they would not proceed with these reforms? The clinicians who will read this in *Hansard* will be very interested to note that the honourable member for North Shore has no interest in these clinical reforms, despite the fact that all these changes are not being driven by Government directive but are being driven by clinician initiatives? Five-hundred clinicians are working on all manner of things from improved services in our intensive care units, right through to chronic and recurring conditions and day-of-surgery procedures, yet the honourable member for North Shore says, "We will scrap all that. We don't want to know about that."

These figures demonstrate why so many clinicians, health economists and commentators on health say that this is no longer just about money, it is about how one goes about spending the money and what one does with the money when one gets it. Things like day of surgery, chronic care and establishing clinical networks are all about the implementation of the Menadue and Sinclair recommendations, making sure that those strong policy recommendations are put in place to ensure that the State's budget allocation of \$2 billion over the next three years represents an equitable distribution to areas that have been underfunded for generations, and that that money is wisely spent. That is what this is about. The improved day-of-surgery rates are a great start. I congratulate the clinicians who have been involved in these reforms, which are the first of many good reforms for New South Wales Health.

REGNERUS ALOYISSIUS MULDER

Mr TINK: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to appeal against a bond being given to Regnerus Aloyissius Mulder in the Newcastle District Court after Mulder was found guilty of seriously assaulting two police officers, one of whom is still under the care of specialists for nose and eye injuries, while the other is still undergoing rehabilitation eight months after the vicious attack?

Mr DEBUS: I will seek a report on the matter raised by the honourable member.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr GAUDRY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy. What is the latest information on the Government's program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr YEADON: Many honourable members will be aware that the honourable member for Newcastle is a committed environmentalist. This Government has continued to demonstrate support for renewable energy technology and its use. We have established and maintained a clear national leadership on greenhouse issues with comprehensive policies and programs. This Government was the first to stipulate greenhouse gas reduction initiatives requiring retailers to set emission targets and formulate and put into practice strategies for renewable energy. New South Wales was also the first State to set up an organisation such as the Sustainable Energy Development Authority [SEDA], which in part facilitates public awareness, provides rebates for families to install energy-saving equipment, and works with the private sector to embrace reductions in energy consumption.

Organisations such as SEDA have now been established in other States and by the Federal Government. Many of SEDA's programs are also being rolled out nationally. I take this opportunity to commend SEDA and the personnel who started it for the tremendous job they have done over the last few years not only with regard to their own programs but also in informing the private sector and encouraging the private sector to embrace this area, which is very much a burgeoning area of economic activity.

This Government was the first in Australia to pursue carbon trading in a serious way. All of these efforts are targeted to address the threat of the greenhouse effect. According to the CSIRO, that threat has potential to see in our State double the number of droughts that we have experienced historically as well as double the number of wet summers.

However, the New South Wales Government is way out in front in dealing with the greenhouse gas issue and will certainly mitigate against the CSIRO predictions. A simple measure that members can apply in relation to how far New South Wales is advanced is to look at moves in the Federal Parliament at present to bring in mandatory renewable energy targets. I am sure members will be delighted to know that even before that legislation has passed through the Federal Parliament, New South Wales meets those targets.

Not only that, but with projects currently committed and under construction New South Wales will meet its targets up to the year 2005. This Government has also provided a record amount of funding for renewable investment programs administered by SEDA. There are eight innovative and diverse pioneering projects using solar, wind, hydro, green waste and even sewage resources that can now proceed in New South Wales, thanks to targeted Government support of \$4.2 million. These eight new projects use naturally occurring and inexhaustible energy sources to create more jobs and to boost regional economies while responding to the threat of global warming.

Two of these small hydro projects will be located in the Murray irrigation area in southern New South Wales and will be constructed and owned by Pacific Hydro. They will produce enough power to supply 1,650 homes with their energy needs for the next 15 to 20 years. Two organic waste-to-energy projects will be located in western Sydney and will also receive approximately \$2 million from this program. A waste company, Rethmann Australia, will turn 25,000 tonnes of waste that was previously dumped in landfills into an innovative fuel substitute for power stations or boilers. Rethmann's production of fuel pellets has the potential to save up to 10,550 tonnes of coal being burnt each year. At Camellia in western Sydney near Parramatta, Earthpower Technologies is constructing an extensive biowaste facility to process food and to produce green energy from methane gas and organic fertiliser. At least eight direct jobs will be created by that project as well as 20 indirect jobs through biomass collection/transport and fertiliser marketing.

Funding has also been made available for showcase projects that collect methane gas from existing landfill sites. AGL will be installing landfill gas extraction systems at Shoalhaven and Wagga Wagga. The west Nowra and Gregadoo waste management centre will undoubtedly encourage others to make use of landfills across the State. This Government is also capturing part of the \$26 million international wind power industry. The Government is assisting start-ups by developing a wind atlas of New South Wales which will be used by electricity generators, retailers and anyone else who is interested in owning and operating a wind turbine or wind farm. Today's funding will see at least one New South Wales farmer being able to earn an income from harnessing wind to make electricity.

A property on the Jenolan Caves Road at Hampton will be the site for the newest wind energy project in New South Wales—the Hampton wind energy park. This project is a trailblazer. It is a two-turbine unit and it

will be of much help in establishing viability for other wind farms from the Blue Mountains to Lithgow. All these projects build on this Government's proven track record. New South Wales is home to more than a third of the nation's total renewable generation, which is worth approximately \$4.9 billion and employs up to 5,000 people. In day-to-day terms, these projects will reduce gas emissions by 150,000 tonnes per annum—which is the same as taking approximately 33,000 cars off the State's roads. This is the third round of Government investment. Already projects worth \$12.4 million have been funded and have resulted in private sector investment worth in excess of \$80 million.

I think it is a very important point that while the Government is spending a considerable amount in this area of development, it is obtaining an enormous return on its investment from the private sector as a result of that activity. New South Wales is the national leader. This State has more than a third of Australia's total annual generation of renewable energy and the projects that will follow will secure that claim for years to come. These projects are but a few of this State's credentials. Across my colleagues' portfolios, hundreds of projects are making significant environmental contributions.

The New South Wales renewable energy industry is set to play a vital role in the global response to the greenhouse threat. At the same time this State is pursuing strong profitable applications to cash in on international markets that are emerging in this area—markets which are worth billions and billions of dollars.

OLYMPIC GAMES PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Mr ARMSTRONG: My question is directed to the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs. How much of the Government's regional development budget was spent by his department on Olympic-related promotional material manufactured overseas—such as the pin that I now show to the Chamber, which was made in the People's Republic of China—rather than by New South Wales companies?

Mr WOODS: I do not like to state the obvious, as honourable members would know, but the commitment of this Government to regional New South Wales is enormous.

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

Mr WOODS: We will turn every stone to deliver services, to deliver jobs, to purchase in country New South Wales, to purchase in New South Wales and to purchase in Australia.

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

Mr WOODS: Of course, the Government also has a duty and a responsibility to the taxpayers of this State.

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

Mr WOODS: As all honourable members would be aware, this Government works under a budget and all organisations are required to purchase cheaply and well. We will continue to deliver on our commitments to country New South Wales, to New South Wales and to Australia. By any measure, whether it is relative to Australia or internationally, this State is doing extremely well. Whether the measure is investment, number of jobs created, or comparison of ourselves to others, this State is doing extremely well. This State is leading the nation. New South Wales is the powerhouse of the nation.

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

Mr WOODS: That is why New South Wales has the highest jobs growth rate, the highest economic growth and the highest investment rate in so many areas of development.

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

Mr WOODS: That high rate of progress will continue.

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

Mr WOODS: For members opposite to suggest that every single purchase that this Government makes should be from Australia would be to support the other side of the equation, that is, that other countries should not purchase from us. That is a ridiculous assessment and a ridiculous proposition which does not reflect well on

the Coalition. This Government is all about raising the profile of this nation and this State and about placing New South Wales as a leader in international trade. I remind the honourable member for Lachlan, who asked the question, that Australia's major primary industries find their markets not in Australia but overseas.

DAIRY INDUSTRY DEREGULATION

Mr NEWELL: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Agriculture. What is the Government's response to recent statements by the Coalition on dairy deregulation?

Mr AMERY: I commend the honourable member for Tweed for his continued interest in the dairy industry. Like me, the honourable member has been reading the National Party web site. I was going to ask the Minister for Transport not to laugh, but I suppose he should laugh because Government members are the only people who read the National Party web site. Why shouldn't he? It is cheaper than *MAD* magazine but has twice as many laughs. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour and the honourable member for Ballina repeated what was published on the web site. I could not believe it yesterday when the honourable member for Lismore, who is often regarded as one of the more intelligent members in this place, gave notice of a motion about the dairy industry and called on the State Government to waive stamp duty on the dairy industry assistance package to dairy farmers because the Queensland Government has waived the stamp duty—

Mr George: Point of order: If we had been at work instead of having a few weeks off for the Olympics I would have been able to ask the question much earlier.

Mr AMERY: I withdraw that reference to the honourable member being intelligent. If we charged him with being intelligent I am sure he would be found not guilty. The Queensland Government has waived stamp duty for dairy farmers receiving the dairy assistance package in Queensland. The National Party has fought very hard to follow the Victorian Government, which has also waived stamp duty for dairy farmers on the dairy industry assistance package in that State. As quick as National Party members can be, they jumped up and said that the New South Wales Government should follow the lead of Queensland and Victoria and waive stamp duty being paid by dairy farmers in this State.

The Leader of the National Party raised this matter, put it on the web site and sustained the campaign during the Olympic period despite my press statements in response. Despite the fact that the Queensland and Victorian governments have waived stamp duty I inform the House categorically that I have no intention of waiving stamp duty in New South Wales to those dairy farmers who receive the assistance package. That is because stamp duty does not apply to the dairy industry in New South Wales. On that theme the Minister for Roads will not waive the toll on the Temora road to Stockinbingal and the New South Wales Government will not build a new hospital in Cootamundra basically because there is a hospital in Cootamundra, and because there is no toll on the Temora road to Stockinbingal. I do not know from where the National Party gets these policies but quite clearly whilst it may seem humorous it really struck a lot of concern and fear into the hearts of dairy farmers who are going through a very difficult period of time. At this time when the dairy assistance package is going through prices have been offered by milk processors that are much lower than the regulated period.

All of these things are happening to dairy farmers at the moment and this lot that calls themselves country representatives say that we should waive fees that do not exist on dairy farmers. That is the sort of level of debate of the National Party in this State. The State Government has never had any plans to take stamp duty from farmers eligible for the package. It was not only that misinformation but the honourable member for Coffs Harbour even costed the policy and suggested a figure of \$540,000. Dairy farmers thought they were in for another half a million dollars! He said it would cost \$540,000 exactly, and that the State Government was going to make a windfall from it. What more could be said? I say to dairy farmers of New South Wales that this is not a Government initiative. It does not have to be waived because it never existed. Dairy farmers have been told lies by various members of the National Party representing the dairy electorates in this State. I hope that message gets back through Country Labor members to those dairy farmers in the electorates. They are having a hard enough time without having to put up with a political party that used to purport to represent country New South Wales.

LOCAL COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

Dr KERNOHAN: My question is directed to Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs. Does the Minister's decision to force the amalgamation of

Drummoyne and Concord councils confirm that he has now abandoned his stated commitment of no compulsory amalgamation and is now accelerating his objective of slashing the number of councils in New South Wales from 172 to just 50?

Mr WOODS: The Government has a policy of no forced amalgamations. Like all other merger proposals the Concord/Drummoyne amalgamation proposal went through a rigorous public inquiry process. The only difference between that merger and those that occurred previously is that four councillors from one council tried to frustrate the process by failing to attend a duly convened meeting and therefore prevented a quorum. If one or all of those four councillors had attended those meetings the vote for an amalgamation would have passed. I know that because I got a letter from the mayors of three supporting councils advising me that they would have voted in favour of the merger.

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

Mr WOODS: I simply made what was a commonsense decision. This is a voluntary proposal, supported by both councils.

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

Mr WOODS: I was not prepared to have all the work that had been done hijacked by a minority of councillors standing in a car park refusing to enter the council chambers. By boycotting the meetings they did not just let down themselves, they let down all ratepayers and residents who elected them. After all, there are nearly 1,200 councillors in this State who are elected every four years at a cost of approximately \$17 million. Why elect them and pay them if they are not prepared to go to meetings and make decisions? The Governor has now proclaimed the City of Canada Bay council, reducing the number of councillors from 18 to nine, which will result in substantial savings for the ratepayers. Today I announced an inquiry into the City of Sydney. I repeat again that the Government has a policy of no forced amalgamations. It has set up a framework for an independent inquiry. When the report is delivered to the Government at the end of March next year the Government will give serious consideration to its findings and its recommendations.

Dr KERNOHAN: I ask a supplementary question. When the Minister has the results of that review will he guarantee that there will be no amalgamations without asking the people involved?

Mr WOODS: I have already answered that question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I rule that that is a supplementary question as it arose from an answer given by the Minister.

Mr WOODS: I believe the question has already been answered but I repeat that the Government has a policy of no forced amalgamations.

SYDNEY MEDIA CENTRE

Mr BLACK: My question without notice is to the Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Tourism. What has been the response to the Sydney Media centre during the Olympic Games?

Ms NORI: I commend the honourable member for his interest in matters relating to tourism. In planning for the Olympic Games, it was well recognised that thousands of non-accredited media would be coming to Sydney before and during the Olympic Games. These are journalists who were not accredited to cover sports stories. They were here to do human interest stories, profiles, destination stories, stories about our culture and lifestyle, and stories about investment opportunities here in Australia. As Atlanta found to its cost, if those journalists are not looked after by being given good facilities from which to operate, if they are not provided with assistance in delivering interesting stories, the result is a deluge of media coverage critical of the city itself and critical of the Olympics preparations.

We were absolutely determined that this would not happen in Sydney. The resulting strategy put in place was the Sydney Media Centre at Darling Harbour. The media centre was run as a joint venture by State and Commonwealth agencies working in partnership. Those agencies were Tourism New South Wales, the Department of State and Regional Development, the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Tourism Commission and the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. I should point out that the media centre was an Australian innovation.

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

Ms NORI: No previous Olympics host city had run such a service for the non-accredited media. I am pleased to say that this was the brainchild of Tourism New South Wales. I would also point out that Salt Lake City is planning a media centre based on our model. The whole strategy succeeded beyond our greatest hopes. The media centre registered a total of 5,011 journalists—which was at the top end of our expectations—and recorded 55,276 visits by journalists looking for non-sports information on New South Wales and Australia generally.

The centre averaged 1,783 entries a day, the busiest day being 14 September, with journalists making 2,653 visits. Journalists registered from places as diverse as Tokyo, New York, London, Beijing, Taipei, Atlanta and Stockholm. The breakdown was as follows: Europe, 819; North America, 488; Asia, 288; United Kingdom, 191; Central and South America, 139; Japan, 155; Africa and the Middle East, 113. Every day we are finding out more about the massive amount of overwhelming positive coverage that has resulted overseas.

It is important to understand that this has not happened by accident. Much of this had its genesis in the daily briefings, story leads, itineraries, pictorials and footage provided for journalists by Tourism New South Wales, the Department of State and Regional Development and the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. If journalists could not get out to regional New South Wales, we gave them footage, pictorials and story leads so that they could file a professional story. And, of course, the Australian Tourist Commission seized the chance to promote the whole of Australia, which meant that all Australians benefited from the activities at the media centre, with other Federal briefings also taking place.

Tourism New South Wales provided stories on, and in some cases sent journalists to, places such as Broken Hill, Ophir, Bathurst, Orange, Armidale, the Hunter and Wollongong. We were able to provide a depth and breadth of information that looks set to change the way the world looks at Australia, and at our State in particular. The media centre gave us a great chance to present our regional produce. Yes, our food and wine are attractive to tourists but, more importantly, there are further exports waiting to happen.

There were three main promotions of Sydney and regional New South Wales. Each day we showcased a region of New South Wales, where Tourism New South Wales handed out postcards and gifts particular to that region, and all of those were from Australia. The first was a daily "Faces and Flavours of New South Wales" promotion by the Department of State and Regional Development. It featured more than 100 regional food and wine producers, inviting journalists to take part in more than 70 activities, including regional tours, market tours, product tastings, and production and processing plant tours. Briefing sessions were organised by Tourism New South Wales, and those sessions brought together a number of prominent people, experts in the field, who contribute knowledge and a personal perspective. I would like to thank those people. They did a great job.

The briefings explored our city and State from all angles. I will name a few of those briefings: Cultural Sydney and New South Wales; Sydney—The City That Knows How to Celebrate; the Best of Regional New South Wales; New South Wales—The Nature State; and The Vision for New South Wales beyond the Games. I was also given the opportunity to promote New South Wales through contacts made at the centre. They were: on television, in Singapore, Malaysia, China, Denmark, Germany, Italy, United States of America, France and Saudi Arabia; on radio, in Italy and Switzerland; and, of course in newspaper articles.

I would like to pay tribute to my agency, Tourism New South Wales, which came up with the original concept for the media centre and worked hard to make it happen, and to its Chief Executive, Tony Thirlwell, who became chair of the media centre. Thanks also are due, of course, to key sponsors such as Telstra, Kodak and Foster's, who provided in-kind support at the centre. Congratulations to the staff from our State agencies who worked long and tiring hours at the media centre—on weekends, at night, you name it—to make it work the way it was meant to. Feedback from the journalists was absolutely fantastic. They had not expected such a wonderful facility.

The tourism and business benefits from the success and goodwill generated by the media centre and overall media strategy will be long term. Money could not buy the sort of positive media coverage received by New South Wales during the past few weeks. Stories about regional New South Wales appeared in the international media in the lead-up to the Olympic Games, and I am pleased to say they are still appearing. Just a few examples, the tip of the iceberg, were a United Kingdom *Guardian* article on the Olympic Arts Festival; a United States *Sports Illustrated* 17-page article; an hour special on Korean television on "I want to go to Australia"; a 14-page feature in German travel *Outdoor Magazine*; a two-page article in a French magazine on

how perceptions of Australia will now change, which is quite critical; a 16-page touring article in the United States *Time Magazine*; a two-page article in the *Miami Herald* on surfing in Byron Bay; a full page on the Hunter in the *Chicago Tribune*; a two-page spread in the *New York Times* on Port Stephens and Sydney; not to mention the mass NBC and CNN coverage and a mass coverage on BBC TV.

It was especially pleasing to see strong interest in stories on the Royal Flying Doctor Service out of Broken Hill, the Ophir gold project, nightclubbing in Port Macquarie, Aboriginal children in Bourke and the *Living Outback* generally. There was something for everyone! There is no doubt that this will give us a springboard to further promote New South Wales to the world, not only as a tourist destination but as a very real investment option. That is an opportunity that the Government will make the most of during the next 12 months. I am pleased to say that there has been a lot of determination and enthusiasm throughout the State to deliver on those opportunities. I know that we will all be working together on this task. While Olympic sports events may have dominated, the world's media really have begun a love affair with Sydney and the regions that should see major benefits for New South Wales in the post-2000 period. The Sydney Media Centre was quite a clever idea. It is a great strategy to deliver these benefits, and it really worked. Congratulations to all involved.

Questions without notice concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

New Zealand Apple Imports

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [3.18 p.m.]: I ask the House to give priority to the motion of which I have given notice today. I attempted to put forward this motion yesterday, but the lengthy debate on the Olympics was of higher priority on the day. I understand that the Federal Government is in the process of receiving from the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service a report which, according to industry sources, will recommend the allowance of the import of apples from New Zealand. This is causing great fear and concern within the apple industry in this State, particularly given the possibility of the import of the fire blight pear disease in apples and pears. I ask the House to give my motion preference over the motion put forward by the Opposition because the proposal put forward in my motion is causing great concern within our industry and in the media, particularly as there is a lack of information coming from the national Government.

Fitness Centre Closures

Mr OAKESHOTT (Port Macquarie) [3.21 p.m.]: Healthlands Australia, a company in New South Wales, is involved in a significant way in the fitness industry in clear defiance of the direction of the Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation in a statement given to this House on 8 August 2000, and in clear defiance of the direction that the Premier wants to take post-Olympics by encouraging more people to become involved in an active lifestyle. This company is offering fitness centre memberships of more than 12 months at places such as Carlingford shopping centre in clear defiance of what was said in this House by the Minister. It is important that I quote what was said by the Minister less than two months ago—on 8 August 2000. He talked tough and he talked big when he said:

Today I announce that the Government will take action to end these unfair losses. The Government will introduce legislation to reduce the risk to fitness centre members of severe financial loss when centres close down. That will be achieved by making it illegal to ask for, or to accept, fitness centre membership prepayments covering a period of more than 12 months.

Fifteen months after the industry body Fitness New South Wales warned that this would happen, Healthlands Australia will go into voluntary administration this week. It will hold a creditors' meeting today, with up to 13,000 creditors attending that meeting. Potentially, this company is about to go into insolvency, which will jeopardise the memberships of up to 30,000 people in this city. If the words of the Premier and the Government about promoting sport after the Olympic Games and encouraging people to adopt a healthy lifestyle are to be taken seriously, the Government has an opportunity in debate today to implement action rather than words. The Government and the Minister can pull a rogue company into line. The Government can throw the book at Healthlands Australia and stop it from issuing memberships of more than 12 months, which is what the Minister, less than two months ago, said he had done in his speech to this House.

The Minister has not done that. This company, which is active, is still offering memberships. If the eight centres in New South Wales close it will have a significant impact on the fitness centre industry not only in Sydney but also in New South Wales. This is a rogue company. For just under two years, the industry body

Fitness New South Wales has been warning the Government about this \$2 South African shelf company and its aggressive marketing program in Sydney. People who have left the company have made statements to the effect that it was chasing membership. The company is reported to have said, "It is like clubbing seals. It is that easy"—a term that has been used and quoted in newspapers as being the way in which this company chases membership. Rod Mitchell, the Chief Executive Officer of the company was quoted by Candace Sutton a couple of months ago as saying, unbelievably, "Getting memberships is like clubbing seals. It is that easy." He also said: "Sometimes you have to have a baseball bat handy when dealing with unmotivated sales staff."

This issue is about consumers; it is about people who want to join gymnasiums, who want to get involved in an active lifestyle. This Government must have a go and pull this company into line. Unfortunately, what we are seeing at the moment is continued delay on the part of this Government to act. It perceives this company as being a multimillion dollar South African company that is improving fitness centre operations in New South Wales and in Sydney. This company is not improving fitness centre operations; it is jeopardising them. This is a test for the Government in this post-Olympics environment. If we are, in a bipartisan way, to promote healthy and active lifestyles in New South Wales this is an opportunity for the Government to pull into line a company which is clearly abusing its privileges.

As I said earlier, the company is offering memberships of more than 12 months to centres which have already been opened, in breach of the voluntary code of practice which was supposed to have become mandatory. The Minister has talked big, but yet again he has failed to deliver. We have had enough of talking big and delivering little. Less than a month ago the Special Minister of State, the Hon. J. J. Della Bosca, was to open a Bond Street branch of this company. This Government must look after consumers. [*Time expired.*]

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

NEW ZEALAND APPLE IMPORTS

Urgent Motion

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [3.26 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that New Zealand is a haven for the debilitating fire blight apple and pear disease;
- (2) calls on the Federal Government to protect New South Wales jobs and immediately respond to reports that New Zealand apples will be allowed into Australia; and
- (3) supports the Australian Apple and Pear Growers Association, their families and workers who fear fire blight will devastate their industry.

This State's apple and pear industry is worth an estimated \$73.2 million at the farm gate. The national industry is worth about \$350 million. This industry is under serious threat because the Federal Government's quarantine body, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service [AQIS], has made a decision, although it will not admit it, to allow the importation of apples and pears from New Zealand. The respected rural newspaper, the *Weekly Times*, which is based in Victoria, revealed that, on 6 September, a decision to allow the importation had been made. When the Federal Government denied the claim, the *Weekly Times* stood firmly by the information it obtained from an AQIS document. This morning there were further reports that the quarantine body would recommend lifting the ban on imports.

The apple and pear industry is sure that AQIS has made its decision and the Federal Government is reluctant to admit it or even confirm or deny it. New Zealand is riddled with the extremely infectious and debilitating disease fire blight. This House must call on the Federal Government to protect New South Wales jobs and immediately respond to reports that New Zealand apples will be allowed into Australia. This House must support the members of the Australian Apple and Pear Growers Association, their families and workers who hold a legitimate fear that the industry will be devastated by fire blight. The importance of the apple and pear industry to the New South Wales economy and the regional centres which produce apples and pears, such as Orange, Batlow, Bilpin, New England, Bathurst, Forbes and Menindee, cannot be emphasised enough.

Apple and pear producers are under constant price and cost pressures and have made considerable investments to remain competitive. In recent months I have highlighted to the House the fact that from time to

time many of this State's apple producers have received lower prices for their product than it costs them to produce it. In May this year I drew to the attention of the House the fact that some apple growers were being offered as little as 32¢ a kilogram for their apples when they cost as much as \$1 a kilogram to produce. New South Wales Agriculture has done a lot of good work in assisting the industry to increase productivity. The last thing it needs is to have the rug pulled out from under it by AQIS's possible decision or recommendation being adopted by the Federal Government.

If these producers are to remain viable in the future it is critical that any production risks and their associated costs are minimised. Growers are investing in new apple varieties, such as pink lady, which have proved to be popular with consumers, but they are also susceptible to fire blight in overseas countries. If the domestic industry is exposed to this most serious disease there is little doubt that its spread could not be contained. Fire blight is transmitted by insects. Infected blossoms and new shoots die quickly following infection. No flowers are pollinated and, therefore, no fruit is produced and tree growth is stunted. The following year's crop is also reduced, even though no fire blight infection occurs the following spring. Disease control is almost non-existent. The only chemical used with varying degrees of success is a chemical known as streptomycin, which is not registered for use in Australia.

The only acceptable outcome for the apple and pear industry in New South Wales, and Australia for that matter, is that New Zealand apples are not allowed to enter this country. That is the only way we can be sure that we are doing as much as we can to protect the domestic industry from this very real threat. With AQIS hiding behind the façade that it is considering the New Zealand application to import its apples into Australia, one has to ask why anyone would even consider exposing our industry to such a threat. The fact is that AQIS has made its decision based on a revised proposal from New Zealand, since an earlier application was rejected.

Why was that earlier application rejected by AQIS? Because of the risk that the fruit could bring in fire blight. We all know fire blight presents an unacceptable risk to our industry, so why has the Federal Government not killed off claims that it has approved the New Zealand application? Why has it taken it so long to come clean and admit it? The application was lodged in February 1999 yet AQIS has continued to delay the release of the importation risk analysis on apples. Is it because a Federal election is looming? Yesterday the national apple and pear industry announced that it would be targeting 27 Federal seats in a political lobbying campaign designed to prevent New Zealand apples entering Australia. For this reason we can reasonably assume that although AQIS has been at the point of releasing the import risk analysis several times, we will not get a decision until after the next Federal election. Why? Because letting New Zealand apples into this country would be plain stupid. It would devastate farming families and their communities.

For quite some time now State governments around this country have been complaining that the Federal Government has not consulted with the States on these types of issues. The Federal Government and AQIS think they are a law unto themselves when it comes to quarantine. Last month they consented to consult with us more. We will wait and watch with much interest on that score. In fact, there is already evidence that the Commonwealth will consult with us more. For example, I note that listed on the agenda of the next Council of Australian Governments meeting is a paper reinforcing the Commonwealth's obligation, as a World Trade Organisation [WTO] signatory, to ensure that the States and Territories observe the WTO's trade decisions. This paper highlights that the Commonwealth must take reasonable measures to ensure observance of the WTO obligations if a State or Territory violates the agreement.

Could this be a warning to the States in advance of the official announcement that AQIS will allow the importation of New Zealand apples? Could this be a warning from the Federal Government that States should quietly abide by any such decision? Most people in the industry think so. We will not quietly abide by this decision. On the contrary, we will make as much noise as possible to ensure that the Federal Government gets the message loudly and clearly: We will not abide by any decision that exposes our valuable industry to the dire threat of fire blight.

It would appear that the Federal Government is aware that AQIS has come under an enormous amount of criticism of late. Only last week the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia announced that it is removing the responsibility for these types of decisions from AQIS and giving it to another body. This specially formed body is called Biosecurity Australia. That is an acknowledgment that the Federal Government is worried that AQIS is right out of touch with reality. It is making some highly questionable decisions which fail to protect our industries from the threats posed by diseases that are rife in many other countries. AQIS and the Federal Government must be loudly reminded that they have a duty to protect our animal and plant industries from preventable disease. They have the means to do it—by imposing the appropriate restrictions.

In the past year fire blight has struck Italy's Po Valley and Michigan in the United States of America. It has been endemic in New Zealand for years. That situation has not changed, and New Zealand's latest application to import apples into Australia does not contain any new evidence to suggest that the Australian industry will not be decimated. I ask the House to support this motion, as a matter of urgency. Support from members from both sides of the House would send a message to the Federal Government that any proposals put up by AQIS to allow the import of apples from New Zealand would be rejected.

The Agricultural Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand [ARMCANZ] is now following up the situation and trying to involve the States in a collective way in management decisions that are being made to allow the import of various products from countries that have diseases that are not prevalent in this country. I take on board the comments made by Ministers in other States, particularly Victoria and Tasmania, who have been fighting with the Federal Government over the import of various products that could have decimated industries within their States. In conclusion, I again ask the House for urgent support for this motion to send that message to Canberra, hopefully to get some response from Federal Government about this decision that has been applied for by the New Zealand authorities.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [3.34 p.m.]: I support the motion to keep fire blight out of New South Wales and Australia. As the Minister mentioned, fire blight is a devastating disease. It can kill entire orchards of apples and pears within weeks. It is widely regarded as the foot and mouth disease of the horticulture industry. I speak to this motion as a very concerned local member. My electorate of Burrinjuck includes the village of Batlow, which is widely regarded as one of the premier apple growing areas in the State, if not the country. It has a great reputation. Over the years it has had excellent marketing and even though other areas in New South Wales and Victoria grow more apples, Batlow could easily be regarded as one of the most famous, because of its marketing strategies. Anyone in Batlow would be extremely concerned about the risk to their main product.

It has been shown that fire blight can get rid of up to one-third of a crop. Fire blight symptoms are brown or black blight and sunken cankers. It kills blossoms, flower stems, fruit, leaves, branches and trees. It causes a long-term reduction in the bearing capacity of trees by killing their fruit spurs. It destroys the wood that bears the fruit the following season. The disease originated more than two centuries ago in the United States of America, and it has spread around the world ever since. It is endemic in many countries, including New Zealand, but is not found in Australia so far. This is great news. A story circulated some time ago about a case of fire blight in the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne but it was found not to be the case. A nationwide survey found absolutely no evidence of fire blight. I hope that situation continues. Fire blight would be an absolute disaster for my electorate and for the State and country.

The Minister mentioned Biosecurity Australia, a division of the Department of Agriculture, as the body that is to release a review which he said was originally to come from AQIS. He actually said in the first part of his speech that AQIS was releasing the review, but in the last minute or so he referred to Biosecurity Australia. In order not to defame AQIS in any way, the Minister should have got it right from the beginning. He should have been talking about Biosecurity Australia rather than AQIS, if that is his information. Should Biosecurity Australia release a review in the negative, against what we want—and, as recent newspaper reports state, that is imminent—I have heard that there will be 60 days in which to review the draft. I have been told that any submissions made in relation to that review will have to contain scientific evidence.

I strongly recommend that anybody who has an interest in the apple or pear industry in Australia, or in New South Wales specifically, should put forward his or her submissions should a report be released in the future against our wishes. As I said, there must be a scientific basis for any submission. There are many scientific reasons for not allowing the importation of apples from New Zealand, so I would not have any problems putting together my submission if I should need to, but I encourage the Minister, or any other members of Parliament who feel strongly about this, to put their money where their mouth is and put forward a submission. I will encourage as many people in the industry as possible to make submissions, should it come to that. I am not sure whether it will come to that, but we have to be prepared. AQIS is responsible for border patrols and meat inspections and the like, and Biosecurity Australia will be responsible for examining such things as risk assessment.

As I said before, Batlow lies within my electorate. This is an enormous issue in Batlow, and has been going on for many years. In fact, in the past New Zealand has put forward two submissions asking Australia if it can export apples to Australia, and each time we have said no. This time it appears that New Zealand has worded the question differently, asking under what conditions Australia will allow the importation of apples.

The question was phrased differently, and perhaps therefore the answer will be different to the two previous answers given by the Commonwealth. The apple industry has had it fairly tough recently. As the Minister said, apple prices were sitting at about 32¢ a kilogram, which is very tough on apple farmers. Indeed, in my area some farmers were knocking over their apple trees, so disgusted were they with the prices they were receiving for their apples. It simply was not worthwhile growing apples. The importation of New Zealand apples would simply be an extra blow for apple growers that we cannot afford.

In relation to my electorate, on 17 October I will be leading a delegation of people to meet the Minister for Agriculture, who has kindly agreed to meet us. The delegation will include Johnson Bowden representing J. A. and B. M. Bowden and Sons Pty Ltd and Fruits of Batlow Pty Ltd, which are apple growers. Mr Bowden is also the New South Wales representative on the National Fire Blight Task Force. I will be bringing Dick Sedgwick, an apple grower representing the New South Wales Apple and Pear Growers; Darryl Ashdown, a local apple grower representing New South Wales Farmers; Gene Vanzella, a local apple grower representing Tumut Shire Council; and Ian Cathels representing the growers and packers Ardrossan Orchards, Batlow. I thank the Minister for giving me the opportunity to bring people from my electorate to discuss this matter further with him. I have already received several submissions on this matter. The most recent submission came from Ian Dorothy and James Oag from Batlow. In a letter to me they state:

The apple growers of Australia are very concerned about the possible introduction of Fireblight, a disease for which there is NO cure.

They then mention a little of what fire blight does. The letter further states:

The one available defence is to spray with antibiotics—

I assume they are referring to something like streptomycin, to which the Minister referred—

which are currently not approved for use in Australia. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that imported fruit has not been subjected to these chemicals. Our industry is proud of the success achieved in response to public pressure to reduce chemical use wherever possible. It would be a backward step to be forced to apply another chemical.

In countries where fire blight has become entrenched, entire orcharding districts have been wiped out. Should this happen in Australia, the economic consequences would be devastating for the rural communities where the apple and pear industry is the main source of employment.

I could not agree more strongly. That is simply one example of the feeling in my electorate about this terrible blight on the Australian apple and pear industry. A socioeconomic study of the potential impact of fire blight on the Australian apple and pear industry concluded that the estimated economic cost to Australia was almost \$1 billion over six years and that thousands of jobs would be lost; that, based on a 50 per cent reduction in crops, one grower in three could be bankrupted; and that the pear industry could collapse entirely after fire blight infestation. At best, only the largest and most efficient growers would survive, and only if significantly higher pear prices were to prevail. At worst, the pear industry would cease to exist on a commercial basis.

We have talked about the devastation of fire blight and what it could mean for Australia, for New South Wales and, indeed, for my electorate. I cannot emphasise strongly enough my opposition to any importation of New Zealand apples. I have said it before, I will say it again and I will continue to say it until the cows come home. Should the Commonwealth Government or Biosecurity Australia, which is releasing a draft assessment, propose to allow New Zealand apples into New South Wales under a very strict regime, will the Minister for Agriculture, as a member of the Agricultural Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand, be able to prevent New Zealand apples from entering New South Wales? I should like to hear the Minister's response to that question. Surely many other people would also like an answer to that question, given the Minister's words to date on the issue and his apparent objection to such importation.

Mr MARTIN (Bathurst) [3.44 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Minister, and I welcome the contribution of the honourable member for Burrinjuck. Nearly one year ago in this Chamber I spoke of the dangers that New Zealand apples posed to our local industry. That was the start of Country Labor's year-long campaign to protect New South Wales apple growers. The apple industry contributes about \$73 million a year to the New South Wales economy and employs about 5,000 people both directly and indirectly. My Country Labor colleagues may also recall that at that time members opposite said that the Prime Minister John Howard and his deputy, John Anderson, would never allow New Zealand apples into Australia.

Now we hear that the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service [AQIS] will impose only minimal quarantine conditions on New Zealand exporters. That decision is all the more remarkable when one considers

that it comes only two years after an application to import New Zealand apples was rejected out of hand. To put it simply, the decision means that apples from New Zealand farms affected by the debilitating fire blight disease will flood into Australia. It puts at risk the whole of the State's apple and pear industries. There are some 300 commercial apple growers across New South Wales in areas such as Bathurst, Batlow, Orange, Mendinee, Forbes, Camden, Bilpin and the New England region. New South Wales growers are rightly outraged. Also, they are rightly questioning the reason behind the Federal Government's massive backflip. Orrvale apple and pear grower Andrew Prentice said of the decision to allow New Zealand apples into Australia:

I feel disgusted they would even contemplate risking our industry by bringing New Zealand apples.

The honourable member for Burrinjuck outlined how real that risk is. Ardmona apple and pear producer Ian Bolitho said:

I feel betrayed. If the disease comes in, this region (Goulburn Valley) is going to be decimated and I don't know what we are going to do. It appears AQIS and the Federal Government wanted to decimate their own apple and pear industry in favour of helping New Zealand's cause.

Since Country Labor raised the issue last year the Howard-Anderson Government has been telling apple growers that they have nothing to fear and that no decision on New Zealand apples would be made without their full consultation. Valiantly, they are still trying to keep up this charade. Only last month a number of Federal National Party MPs were reaffirming that position, despite widespread criticism from growers about the potential to import the devastating fire blight disease.

Make no mistake: The Federal Government has deliberately misled country families over the importation of New Zealand apples. While it has continued to deny that a final decision has been made, AQIS documents reveal otherwise. The *Weekly Times* of 20 September 2000 made a startling revelation after obtaining secret AQIS documents. The *Weekly Times* reported that despite claims to the contrary the Federal Government had completed its quarantine analysis more than two months ago. The headlines in the *Weekly Times* said it all: "New Zealand apples get the nod", "Apple decision a done deal" and "Growers vow to fight to the death". However, the feelings of New South Wales apple growers towards the Federal Government's secret apple decision were best summed up by my Country Labor colleague Tony Kelly in a media release entitled "The Federal Government's secret apple decision—rotten to the core".

Make no mistake: The Federal Government is going easy on the New Zealanders due to its strong free-trade-at-all-costs agenda. Country families, growers and their workers deserve better than that. At the very least the Federal Government should have the guts to say that it has already made its decision. It should allow apple growers to plan for the future, not offer them false hope. If the Federal Government intends to kill off the Australian apple industry it should have the courage to look growers in the eye when it does so. As we did last year, Country Labor calls on the Federal Government to reverse immediately its decision to give in principle support to allowing New Zealand apples into Australia. I commend the Minister's motion to the House.

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [3.49 p.m.]: I support this urgent motion. I agree with other speakers who have pointed out how urgent and vital the motion is to the apple and pear industries. The honourable member for Burrinjuck referred to the importance of the pome and stone fruit industry to her electorate. That industry is equally important to the Orange electorate. In fact, Orange is the largest apple-growing area within Australia. I concede that Batlow perhaps markets itself a little better than the growers around Orange do. At present apple growers in Orange are taking steps to correct that state of affairs. However, they certainly do not need something else to push them into the ground at a time when they are struggling.

As has been mentioned, due to overproduction and the importation of cheap concentrate from South American countries and China, the juice industry has been devastated by low import prices and as a consequence—and perhaps because of bad marketing—growers have been forced to put second-quality fruit onto the market when they would much prefer to juice it. However, because juice prices are so low they are tempted to try to seek better prices elsewhere. We must also acknowledge the enormous difficulties faced by AQIS in coming to a decision, whatever that decision might be. AQIS is under enormous pressures regarding our trade overseas, and regarding being taken to court if it makes a decision based purely and simply on trying to stop a product coming into Australia without due diligence and disease factors being backed up by scientific evidence.

I should like to list a couple of examples of AQIS having supported Australian industry. Industry would like to import genetic stock et cetera, but AQIS has said no. Since 1993-94 AQIS has removed technical barriers to 275 new commodity-market combinations for export, to help Australian markets export products. It has

improved conditions for export access in 96 cases and has maintained markets in 257 cases in which our exports have been threatened by disease in Australia or by actions in importing countries. One that comes to mind is endosulfan in the cattle industry. Equally, the notion that AQIS is hell-bent on allowing a flood of imports under an inappropriately conservative approach is also wrong. Since 1993-94 AQIS has taken 167 decisions on proposals to revise importation protocol conditions. Of those, 46, or 28 per cent, were products sought by Australian industry interests, but AQIS said no, and 77, or 46 per cent, were for new genetic material sought by Australian industry, but AQIS said no.

They are but a few examples of AQIS having done the very best it can for Australian markets and having stopped products coming in that may jeopardise Australian agriculture. In only 13 cases in seven years has AQIS admitted products that are in direct competition with Australian production. Pork and salmon are two of the most topical recent examples. In six cases, or four per cent, AQIS allowed products that are counter-seasonal to Australian production to enter, in other words, products that are out of season in Australia but in season in the Northern Hemisphere. Cherries, grapes and oranges are only three products that come to mind.

We need to have that balance of trade and to be able to allow as many products as possible into Australia, provided that the balance is tipped in our favour. Something like four times the amount of agricultural products are exported out of this country as are allowed in as imports. They are only some of the difficulties faced by the Federal Government. One would hope that the Federal Government would take the submissions in hand as far as the apple and pear industries are concerned. We must not allow our apple and pear exports to be jeopardised. Whatever decision is made by the Federal Government, Biosecurity Australia and AQIS, we know that we have 60 days to appeal if the decision is adverse. I am sure that the industry will strongly support the submissions and will fight for its future.

Mr BLACK (Murray-Darling) [3.54 p.m.]: I am delighted to support the Minister for Agriculture in relation to this matter. As the honourable member for Bathurst said, this is not the first time that Country Labor has raised this issue. Whilst there are lots of little bad apples in the National Party barrel, in relation to this matter there is most certainly one big bad apple in that barrel, and his name is Warren Truss. He is the bloke who thinks it is a good idea to bring faulty and flawed pineapples and bananas into Australia; he thinks it is all right to have flying pigs from Canada and Denmark; and he even thinks it is all right to have flying salmon going down to Tasmania.

One of the interesting responses that Country Labor received was from the Federal member for Parkes, Tony Lawler. Tony Lawler said in response to the local media, "You don't have to worry about it, because it is only a decision in principle to bring in these apples. AQIS might have a role, but trust the Federal Department of Agriculture because it will ensure that the apples that come in will not carry fire blight with them." New Zealand apple growers have been trying to crack the Australian market since the 1950s. Now it appears that they have finally got their way at the expense of local growers, thanks to the Federal Government. Despite the presence of fire blight, New Zealand growers have been given the green light. Fire blight is a disease not currently found in Australia and is extremely dangerous to apple and pear orchards. It is a fast-spreading disease, transmitted by insects, and infected blossoms and new shoots die quickly following infection.

Already the New Zealand pear industry has been wiped out by this disease. Now it threatens Australia's entire fruit processing industry. A single infection of fire blight can result in a loss of as much as 20 per cent of apples and 50 per cent of pears. Once fire blight hits, disease control is almost non-existent. As an island nation, Australia has a unique advantage. Unlike countries with land borders, we are relatively free of disease. Growers say fire blight could ruin the industry and cost Australia as much as \$1 billion over six years. Apples are worth about \$73 million a year to the New South Wales economy, and create employment for nearly 5,000 people.

It is a given fact that the current Federal Government has a mania for competition policy, but surely its first responsibility must be to look after our farmers and their workers who rely on this valuable industry. Apple growers, Country Labor and rural Independents all agree that the Federal Government and its agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, must ensure that New Zealand apples affected by fire blight do not get into Australia. Mr Truss must stand up for our growers. Their interests come first—not New Zealand's interest or competition policy.

In August the Australian Apple and Pear Growers Association launched a national fire blight campaign. The national fire blight task force was formed with grower and processor representatives. New South Wales growers have already pledged a minimum of \$100 each to help fund the campaign. If Mr Truss allows New Zealand apples into Australia, I challenge him to come to Menindee, look the growers in the eye and explain himself. At Menindee we grow magnificent pink ladies at a \$2 premium.

Apples and other fruit grown in the Menindee area are important to the region. They contribute nearly \$0.5 million a year to the local economy and employ about 50 people. To someone like Warren Truss, 50 jobs is a drop in the ocean, but to families in the Western Division that represents 50 pay packets going directly into homes and local businesses. With savings in water to be achieved, Menindee growers plan to expand and in the next five years the industry is expected to grow by a factor of eight, that is, to \$4 million a year. I appeal to the Federal Government not to put this industry and related jobs at risk just because it has a strong free trade agenda.

Last Friday in Broken Hill apples retailed at 99¢ a kilogram. Country Labor has met with growers. We have also met with representatives of Coles, Franklins and Woolworths to discuss the pricing of apples in New South Wales markets. The bottom line is that growers tell us they need \$2.40, landed in Sydney, to cut square. The prices now being paid to growers are extremely lousy. It is a nonsense to let apples come in and compete in a market that is already having great problems. Today I ask: Where is the honourable member for Murrumbidgee? The honourable member for Murrumbidgee is absent from the Chamber. He wants to live in Victoria. He wants to take good New South Wales fruit-growing areas away from New South Wales and give them to Victoria. I would like to hear his views on this subject.

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [3.59 p.m.], in reply: First I thank the honourable member for Burrinjuck, who led for the Opposition in this debate. I also thank the honourable member for Orange, and the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the honourable member for Bathurst, who both supported the Government. All those honourable members supported the motion. All members who contributed to the debate put forward various views on why the Federal Government should reject the importation of New Zealand apples into Australia. Some of the issues that have been raised by all participants in the debate have been repeated in other debates. Orchardists have been making representations to the Federal Government and the Federal Government has been either accepting or rejecting the recommendations to allow various products to come into Australia.

The honourable member for Murray-Darling referred to the importation of salmon to Tasmania, which is a contentious issue on the agenda of virtually every meeting of the Agricultural Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand [ARMCANZ]. There has also been a great deal of friction between national governments and the Tasmanian Government over attempts by the Tasmanian Government to outlaw the importation of salmon to that State in spite of the Federal Government wanting to import it into Australia. That leads me to the issue that was raised by the honourable member for Burrinjuck. She asked hypothetically: If the Federal Government were to allow the importation of apples into Australia, could any State prevent that product from being sold? I draw the honourable member's attention to a comment I made in my introductory speech in relation to this matter:

I note the fact that listed on the agenda of the next Council of Australian Governments meeting is a paper reinforcing the Commonwealth's obligation, as a World Trade Organisation signatory, to ensure the states and territories observe the WTO's trade decisions.

This paper highlights that the Commonwealth must take reasonable measures to ensure observance of the WTO obligations if a State or territory violates the agreement.

It might also be of assistance to the honourable member for Burrinjuck for me to emphasise that it would be difficult for New South Wales to take unilateral action. This State has a close relationship with the apple industry in Victoria and a lot of stock is carried and a lot of trade is engaged in across the States' border. It would be difficult even at a practical level to take unilateral action.

The best way to respond to the issue raised by the honourable member for Burrinjuck, which no doubt will be raised by the delegation of representatives of the apple and pear industry and the honourable member, is to point out that in 1994 the then State Government signed a memorandum of understanding [MOU]. I do not mention that as a criticism but rather as a historical fact. The MOU was the result of an agreement between the then State Government and the Commonwealth Government to abide by World Trade Organisation [WTO] obligations. The agreement obliges the Commonwealth to override any State's efforts to act unilaterally.

I may seek constitutional advice in relation to that matter but it is difficult for a State to go it alone, should the national Government allow importation of a product through a WTO arrangement. That matter will be tested and, I believe, pursued in the resolution of the conflict that presently exists between the Commonwealth Government and the Tasmanian Government in relation to salmon importation. That will be a test case of these matters. I will be discussing these matters further with representatives of the apple and pear industry when I meet the delegation led by the honourable member for Burrinjuck to express their concerns.

Obviously, the honourable member for Burrinjuck, in common with the honourable member for Bathurst, the honourable member for Orange and the honourable member for Murray-Darling, will be making a strong case on behalf of industries that are an important part of her electorate. Batlow is situated in the electorate of Burrinjuck and Menindee could be described as a relatively new player in the industry although the area has been involved in the apple industry for some years. Those towns have great potential to expand their horticultural industries. The Western Division is becoming a key player in the expansion of horticultural industries and the apple industry is very much a part of that. The people from Menindee are joining the chorus of opposition from people who come from Orange and Batlow.

The possibility of States being able to block or somehow influence the decisions made by the national Government are continually being debated at the ARMCANZ meetings. The national Government is trying to involve State Governments more and more, although at this stage I have not seen any evidence of close co-operation at the ministerial level. As only a few seconds of my speaking time remain, I conclude again by thanking all honourable members who participated in the debate. The message of this debate should be noted. A message should be sent to the Federal Government that all honourable members from all political parties represented in New South Wales have one view: New Zealand apples should not be allowed into this country.

Motion agreed to.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.05 p.m.]: I speak on a matter of public importance for women of New South Wales and their families. October is national Breast Cancer Awareness month. Breast cancer is the most common cancer that is diagnosed in women and is a major public health concern for New South Wales women and their families. Every day in New South Wales as many as nine women discover that they have breast cancer. It is a sobering thought that one in 11 New South Wales women will develop breast cancer before the age of 75.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women. That means that at least two women in New South Wales will die each day from this illness. Breast cancer takes otherwise healthy women completely by surprise. The initially overwhelming nature of breast cancer is made clear by the national breast health survey, which shows that 38 per cent of women who found breast changes either waited three months before seeing their general practitioner [GP] or did not have the changes investigated at all. More can be done to support women and to encourage them to access the medical services that are available to them across New South Wales.

The health of women is a top priority for the New South Wales Government. We are committed to providing high-quality and innovative women's health services and to increasing women's confidence in, and the use of, health services. New ways of thinking about how to improve women's health are necessary. To meet that challenge, in June this year New South Wales Health released a strategic framework to advance the health of women. That framework is the first document of its kind in Australia. It is the result of four years of consultation with non-government organisations, women of all ages, women's health co-ordinators and women from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

How will this framework make a difference to women who suspect or know that they have breast cancer? The framework offers guidelines for health professionals to help them make sure that their practice is patient centred. It commits the Government to offering New South Wales women a co-ordinated network of specialist women's health services in hospitals and in community-based women's health centres. An important part of a women's health services network is Breast Screen New South Wales, which is a free mammographic screening offered to all New South Wales women over 40 years of age. It is funded by the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments. Breast Screen New South Wales carried out 280,829 mammography screenings in 1999-2000. In fact, nearly 12,000 more women were screened in that period than in the previous year.

Approximately 155,000 of the screenings were for women in the high-risk target group, that is, 50 to 69 years. For women aged between 50 and 69 years, early detection on a mammogram could reduce deaths from breast cancer by as much as 30 per cent. That is why Breast Screen New South Wales sends all New South Wales women who over the age of 50 an invitation to have a free mammogram. The Government supports this

active recruitment of women who do not have any signs of breast cancer to participate in screening. Breast Screen New South Wales is highly accessible with 10 statewide screening and assessment services and 14 fixed and mobile units. That gives women a choice of 200 screening locations across New South Wales.

In New South Wales 30 per cent of women screened live in rural areas of the State. In the past women in Broken Hill had to fly to Dubbo for assessment after screening. During 2000 Breast Screen New South Wales is piloting a new service that combines screening and assessment. The aim of the pilot is for local women to be able to stay in their town and access screening, assessment and treatment. Access is an important way of encouraging women's participation in screening and early intervention. Until we know how to prevent breast cancer, early detection is the most effective protection. Early detection increases the range of treatment options available to women. An increased range of treatment options means more choice for women. Women's health in New South Wales is based on a philosophical commitment to informed participation and choice.

We know that choice and control of health decisions are important for women living with breast cancer. One of the most important times to be able to exercise choice is at the time of diagnosis of breast cancer. To help women choose the most suitable form of specialist treatment, the Breast Cancer Action Group and the New South Wales Breast Cancer Research Institute have received a \$40,000 Government grant to develop a directory of treatment and services for women with breast cancer. In the future women, with their general practitioners, will be able to consult the free directory to locate specialist practitioners or to find which services are available in their own community. Women and general practitioners will be able to more easily identify professionals and support services in the breast cancer field. Women will have information about the nearest services to reduce travel time and make accessing health services easier. The directory will also help general practitioners who may only ever see one case of breast cancer to treat and support their patient as effectively as possible.

The directory aims to give women more choice about which services they use. That helps women feel in control of their own health. Where breast cancer is concerned, information really is powerful. The directory was suggested by women who have survived breast cancer. We are fortunate that a number of women who have survived breast cancer are willing to share their expertise and advice with agencies such as the Breast Cancer Action Group of New South Wales. This is one of the rare issues in this State that binds together the community, the Opposition and the Government because there is no point-scoring in relation to breast cancer. It affects family members one way or the other, no matter which way they vote, or whether they are elected representatives or people in the community. We have all known family members or others who have suffered from breast cancer. That is an appalling circumstance but I reassure the House that the Government, the Coalition and the community take the same stand.

I am impressed by strategies used by the New South Wales Breast Cancer Research Institute, based at Westmead, to help women make informed choices. Women based in rural locations receive test results from the institute by a teleconference involving the woman, her general practitioner and specialists from the institute. This is part of the patient-centred model of excellence that the research institute is developing at the request of the New South Wales Government. The model of excellence uses a team approach. A woman attending the New South Wales Breast Cancer Research Institute knows that a multidisciplinary team of specialists will discuss her case. She will be offered a range of treatment solutions based on her personal, family and geographic situation. It is important that a woman and her family feel confident that all aspects of her case have been considered before she makes an informed choice.

Women can also be confident of accessing first-class technology for diagnosis, treatment and post-operative care. In keeping with shifts in health practice, a holistic approach is a trademark of the institute. Rural women are offered email support services. Women accessing the centre in person can take advantage of weekly yoga and meditation services. This is one example of a patient-centred, team approach to the management of breast cancer. Another example is the research focus of the Needs Assessment and Health Outcomes Unit in the Central Sydney Area Health Service. General practitioners in the Central Sydney Area Health Service were surveyed to identify their satisfaction with breast cancer services.

Improved communication between general practitioners and specialists improves health outcomes for women living with breast cancer. General practitioners continue to be the first port of call for women seeking advice. The study identified ways of supporting and co-ordinating communication between general practitioners and specialists. Breast cancer and its treatment needs to be discussed freely and accurately in the community. Gone are the days when people felt that they could not talk about this topic to anyone, and thank God women have talked about it. Today in the public gallery there are women who have greatly assisted in forging openness about breast cancer. Women who reach puberty early, enter menopause late or have no children are entitled to know that they have an increased risk of breast cancer.

In nine out of 10 cases a woman will be the first in her family diagnosed with breast cancer. It is worrying that people think that breast cancer is hereditary and if their mother or grandmother did not have it they will be free and clear. When women first realise that that is not the case, that is the first time they get really concerned about it. Sadly, every year the honourable member for North Shore and I talk about it here, but it will be a happy day when we do not have to do that. This matter will always be considered with a bipartisan approach. I commend the matter of public importance to the House.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [4.15 p.m.]: I join with the Minister for Women in identifying breast cancer as a matter of public importance. It is interesting to read our speeches from previous years. The statistics have not changed very much. I do not know whether that is because there has been little change or because the data has not been updated. Breast cancer affects about one in 11 women. More than 9,550 Australian women—approximately 3,300 in New South Wales—are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Women aged between 50 and 69 who have had a breast screening every two years can reduce the chance of dying from breast cancer by at least 30 per cent. As the Minister said, October is breast cancer awareness month, as it has been for a number of years.

The Minister and I, and certainly most of our fellow female members of Parliament, together with a number of men, will attend activities and functions in support of breast cancer research because we all agree that it is a major illness for women and a cause that deserves our support. I am extremely proud that the former Coalition Government and particularly the then Minister for Health Ron Phillips did a great deal of work in establishing breast screen programs not only in our major metropolitan hospitals and centres but at the Westmead institute. I had the privilege of attending the announcement of the opening of that institute when Ron Phillips was the Minister and I was but a humble backbencher. There has not been a great leap forward since then—but who knows, given time! As the Minister said, it is now universally supported that early detection through screening and intervention is the greatest preventative measure that one can take.

On a slightly more contentious note, it saddens me greatly that since I spoke in this Parliament last year about this matter I have received a number of letters from women, particularly in rural New South Wales, who say that they have been turned away when they have followed up their regular appointments for breast screening. I will raise a couple of these matters with the Minister and I urge the Minister to take them up with her colleague, the Minister for Health. The first is an email message that I received on 14 December 1999 from a woman in Tamworth. She said that she lived in Tamworth, where breast screening for the State's north-west is located. She said that the need for regular checkups especially for women over 50 years of age is highlighted in local television advertisements. She said that she first had a breast screening in December 1993 and follow-ups in 1995 and 1997. Then she said:

The reminder letter for 1999 hadn't come, so I rang yesterday for an appointment. I was informed,

1. No more appointments are being made for 1999.
2. It was unknown when appointments would be made again.
3. Reminder notices weren't sent because of the backlog.
4. When they catch up, reminder notices for November, December and whenever, would be sent.

The woman had said she received no further information. In July I wrote a letter to the Minister for Health. I have not had a reply from the Minister. I wrote on behalf of a Grafton woman who had contacted me. I quote from my letter to the Minister:

She advises that she received a letter requesting that she make an appointment for the "NSW Breast Scan Van" visit to Grafton. When she telephoned to make an appointment, she was advised that there were none available in Grafton and that she would have to make another appointment in another town.

She raises the question as to why the letter was sent to her in the first place if there were not sufficient appointment times available, and the likelihood that she'd be reducing the number of appointments available for women in the second town should she take the advice.

Further concern was raised as to the advertising on the side of the vans.

In my letter I ask the Minister:

What is the point of advertising that number to call to make an appointment if there are none available for women who've received letters? How is the person on the street going to be treated?

These are very serious concerns for women, particularly for those in rural New South Wales. I am delighted to know that women are taking seriously the messages they hear about the need to have regular screenings, that

early detection and intervention is the way to prevent development of the disease. It is, therefore, very worrying to hear of cases like this of women who cannot get access to that treatment. A moment ago I was talking to my colleague the honourable member for Wagga Wagga. He informed me that he visited Ivanhoe just recently. The very remoteness of such communities often results in people having great difficulty accessing this type of service. As I know there is no breast cancer screening service in Ivanhoe, it is all the more important for mobile vans to get to those women in remote communities.

I ask the Minister for Women, in the spirit of women working together, to urge the Minister for Health to make it easier for women to access breast cancer screening and treatment. If the problem is a lack of funding—as would appear to be so from some of the cases coming to my attention—then this matter should be of high priority. A ministerial directive should be given on it because, as everyone knows, this is a terribly important service for women throughout New South Wales, not just women in country towns.

I want to repeat some of the results of the national breast health survey of 1996 in relation to mammographic screening: 93 per cent of women had heard of the national mammographic screening program; knowledge was slightly better in rural, rather than urban, areas—perhaps explaining why rural-based women are writing to me to ask me to assist them to get access to this important screening program; 85 per cent of respondents knew the recommended ages for starting screening; and 60 per cent knew that two-yearly screening is recommended. That is demonstrated by the correspondence that women in the country have sent to me.

It is no good that women aged 50 to 69 years know that they need to have breast cancer screening every two years if they are told when they try to make an appointment that no appointment time is available. We must work together to make that screening possible. Once it is determined that a woman needs treatment for breast cancer, it is important that appropriate services are in place for them. I note the presence in the public gallery of Sally Crossing, whom I have met on previous occasions at breast cancer breakfasts.

I received, and re-read recently, a copy of a speech that she made, I think last year, on the need for breast cancer trained nurses to be available as part of multidisciplinary teams working in outer areas. That is a very important aspect of treatment once a woman is diagnosed as having the disease. I ask the Minister for Women to raise this matter with her colleague the Minister For Health because I think that women, by getting together, are likely to get action in that regard. I join the Minister in saying that I would like to think that there will come a time when she and I will not need to raise this issue in this place as a matter of public importance because we will have been so successful in having the matter so well aired that that will be no longer necessary.

Ms BEAMER (Mulgoa) [4.25 p.m.]: I speak on a matter of significant importance to the women of New South Wales—breast cancer—and how the New South Wales Government is working with the community to build supportive and powerful environments to raise awareness of breast cancer. Women with breast cancer sometimes forgo treatment to minimise disruption to their family and community. As we heard earlier from the Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Women, nearly 40 per cent of Australian women delay seeking treatment once they notice a breast change. Putting themselves second can be the by-product of family and community members not understanding the implications of breast changes or a diagnosis of breast cancer.

Early detection is currently the best strategy for reducing mortality from breast cancer. Women are more likely to take part in screening programs if they understand the importance of breast cancer, their own risk and the value of early detection. I am sure that the instances brought to the attention of the Minister by the Opposition spokesperson on health will be passed on to the Minister for Health. We were speaking earlier about the bipartisan way in which this House has always dealt with this matter. I pay tribute to the former member for Badgerys Creek, Anne Cohen, who spoke at great length both in this Chamber and in the community about this issue in order to raise awareness of breast cancer among people in western Sydney and, indeed, throughout New South Wales.

Family and community members can play an important role in alerting women to the risk and encouraging them to seek medical advice. Educating family members and communities is also a cost effective way of supporting women living with breast cancer. This approach is known in the health field as building supportive environments. Supportive environments are ones in which women's health issues are discussed and acted upon in culturally appropriate ways. An exciting issue in building a supportive environment is the Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture program.

The New South Wales Government is providing \$100,000 to the Macquarie Area Health Service and Aboriginal communities in far western New South Wales to build into the community the capacity to deal with

women's health issues. Based on a successful Northern Territory model, Aboriginal communities in Gilgandra and Coonamble will nominate women to be trained as "strong women". The strong women will identify health priorities for women in their community and communicate those to a team of health professionals.

An interdisciplinary team of health professionals will develop solutions and then consult the strong women, asking, "Will this solution work?" The strong women will also educate indigenous women on a range of issues such as nutrition, breast cancer and drug use. Nutrition, drug use and community support impact on a woman's ability to manage breast cancer. This "community up" rather than "top down" approach fits well with an Aboriginal view of health. It recognises that Aboriginal communities prefer to focus collectively on women, their family and their community. It is a positive way for women to support each other, particularly in communities with a history of low preventative screening levels. The Strong Women program, if successful, will be expanded to eight western New South Wales towns by 2006. Aboriginal health officers are excited by the sense of community control that this program offers to Aboriginal women. I applaud this strategy.

I also bring to the attention of honourable members another program aimed at increasing the capacity of the family and the community to deal with breast cancer. The New South Wales Cancer Council and the New South Wales Carers Association are working to support women living with breast cancer. Children of women with breast cancer from across New South Wales are brought together in telephone counselling groups. Two trained facilitators run weekly telephone discussions based on a semi-structured list of discussion topics. I believe that this, along with the Living with Cancer program for youth, will assist the children and families of those living with breast cancer to help their mothers or wives to come to terms with and to be better able to deal with their problems.

Recently I watched a program on *Four Corners* which talked about living with cancer. What a profound issue! It dealt with the way in which women and their families coped after such a traumatic occurrence. Recently a family member was diagnosed with bowel cancer and a close family friend is suffering her second bout of breast cancer. My family has dealt with this problem in one way and her family has dealt with the problem in another way. We need innovative solutions and medical solutions to deal with this breast cancer problem.

Mrs LO PO'(Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.30 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for North Shore and the honourable member for Mulgoa for their comments. People must be constantly made aware of the dangers of breast cancer. The honourable member for North Shore agrees with my views on this matter, and I agree with her views. However, it will be a great day when we no longer have to debate this issue. Then the honourable member for Mulgoa, who happens to be slightly younger than I am, will not have to speak in debate in this Chamber to draw attention to this terrible scourge of cancer amongst women.

Today I discovered something that made me very pleased. We are getting better at preventing breast cancer. Over lunch I was talking with colleagues about Sally Cross, to whom reference was made earlier. Because of our intervention and early detection strategies, there seem to be fewer deaths as a result of breast cancer. We are still losing women but we are getting better at preventing breast cancer. We have implemented early detection programs and women are talking about them. There is no longer a shyness by women in discussing these issues. I have attended dinners at which people have told me that they have cancer and that they are getting treatment.

I felt that I had been given permission to talk about their problems so I asked them how they found out about it and whether they were the first members in their families to be diagnosed with breast cancer. There was frank discussion about those women's approach to cancer—something that would not have happened 10, 15 or 20 years ago. People were closeted about their illness and did not expose it. Women who might have benefited from that exchange of information were precluded from it as they were defensive when talking about their diseases. It was socially unacceptable to talk about diseases in public. I am pleased that we have such a supportive community group. We must put in place a seamless operation—the community, in partnership with the Government and the Coalition. Everyone in this Chamber will be pleased when we no longer have to talk about this issue.

Discussion concluded.

SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Dr KERNOHAN (Camden) [4.35 p.m.]: The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games were not my first taste of the Olympics. I was fortunate enough to visit Melbourne for the 1956 Olympic Games. Because my university timetable came out late the only tickets I could get were for rowing, fencing, water polo, basketball and the minor heats on athletics day. It was a fascinating time for a 17-year-old. Since then I have watched with great interest every Olympics on television, although generally I am not a mad watcher of television sports. Therefore I was elated when, as a new member of Parliament, I heard of the Government's proposal to bid for the 2000 Olympics. I offered my services to the then Minister for the Olympics, Bruce Baird, to help entertain visitors and do whatever I could towards helping Sydney to get the bid. When the time came for the bid team to go to Monaco in 1993, I paid my own way to be there as an official supporter, as I believed Australia in general was in the doldrums and needed something to work for, and to which it could look forward. It was a wonderful week and one I will always remember, particularly the elation when Sydney was announced as the winner.

To ensure that I had tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies and the major athletic events, I became Stadium Australia gold member No. 289 when people were asked to support the Olympics by investing in Stadium Australia. I have been a supporter of the Sydney Olympics for a long while. It was with some trepidation that I viewed the Government's proposal to achieve these Olympics. However, I commend the genius decision to run the torch relay around Australia to awaken the enthusiasm of the Olympics in the whole population. I give everlasting thanks to the local committee which selected me as a community torch bearer based on my service to the community prior to becoming a local member.

It was an experience I will always remember, and it is one of the greatest honours that has ever been awarded to me. It will be a memorable moment of my life, and I believe that every other torch bearer will feel the same about their experiences. Ultimately, I attended both major ceremonies, the soccer final and 11 athletic sessions at Stadium Australia. I also spent three days at the equestrian centre, seeing the three-day cross country and jumping and the individual show jumping heats. I also attended the finals of team synchronised swimming and artistic gymnastics.

Mrs Lo Po': You needed a holiday.

Dr KERNOHAN: I did. I would like to have attended a greater variety of sports, but I gave up trying to get tickets. Nevertheless, I had the joy of seeing gold medals presented to Cathy Freeman and our three-day event equestrian team of Andrew Hoy, Matt Ryan, Stuart Tinney and Phillip Dutton, and I saw the silver winning performances of long jumper Jai Taurima and pole vaulter Tatiana Grigorieva. At this stage of the debate I believe that all individuals and groups have been specifically nominated and congratulated on their contribution to the Games. It may seem superfluous for me to add my congratulations and thanks to every person involved in any way in making the Olympic Games the great success they were, but I will anyway.

As yet, I do not believe that enough recognition has been given to the design, engineering and technological genius seen in the opening and closing ceremonies, in particular the lighting of the Olympic cauldron under water, its transport to the top of the stadium, and the two magnificent—for want of a better word—transformer stages. The extensive use of wires to fly performers and props was something never seen before in Australia. Special tribute should also be paid to the artistic creators, costume designers and choreographers of the various ceremony sequences, particularly those at the opening ceremony. The flowering after the bushfire was magnificent in all respects. I want to thank some local companies not yet mentioned. I congratulate Nepean Engineering of Narellan and Funnells Electrical of Camden on constructing and lighting the giant Olympic rings in Martin Place. It is great to know that Camden's firms are able to compete with the big boys for such jobs.

To date I have not heard any mention of the greatest fireworks display Sydney, or indeed the world, has ever seen—at least the longest. Probably few know that Foti International Fireworks, who co-ordinated the display, has been based at Leppington in the Camden electorate for many years. The Fotis also provided the fireworks display—apart from the co-ordination—for the opening and closing ceremonies, the Oceania section on the harbour and the river of lightning. Sam and Carmel Foti have been personal friends of mine for more than 20 years and I am glad that the Foti family—brothers Sam and Vince, and Sam's sons Fortunato, Tino and Robert—have at last been recognised in their home city of Sydney for their expertise in their chosen trade.

Their company won the world championship fireworks display in Stockholm in 1993 and has more international awards for fireworks displays than any other Australian company. I congratulate the Fotis on their

contribution, Syd Howard International on their even better than usual superb display on Sydney Harbour Bridge, plus the four international companies that contributed to the harbour display. The fireworks were a wonderful climax to a wonderful period in Sydney's history, and were available to millions of Sydneysiders free of charge.

I commend this motion and commend everybody involved with the Sydney Olympics. They did not disappoint me in any way, and that is saying something because I believe I would be one of the greatest critics. As I said, the Games were such a success in so many ways they more than fulfilled my expectations and I know the long-term effect in tourism for Sydney and Australia will be immense. The Sydney 2000 Olympics have shown the world that we can match any nation, not only in sporting ability but also in organisation and technology, while surpassing most of them in friendliness.

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [4.43 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I, like so many other members in this place, support the Premier's motion. It is fair to say, and it should be acknowledged, that in the weeks and months leading up to the Olympics there was quite a spectrum of expectation amongst the general community about the success or otherwise of the Games. It ranged from those who either quietly or loudly expressed their reservations through to those who had an incredible blind faith and excitement that everything would be wonderful. Clearly, the event itself exceeded all expectations. The Olympics were a long time coming and they are now gone, but they are certainly not forgotten, as we have proved in this Chamber over the past two days.

Yesterday the honourable member for Cronulla recalled the night on which Juan Antonio Samaranch announced that Sydney had won the bid. It was one of those occasions about which people will ask, "Do you remember where you were when you heard?" I certainly remember where I was that night, because I was only days away from the birth of my first child and, like many people in that situation, I could not sleep. I got up and turned on the television—not through any great expectation about the Olympics but through another great expectation—just in time to hear him utter those words. It was quite a shock.

Mr R. W. Turner: "It's a boy!"

Ms MEGARRITY: No, that was three days later, and perhaps I should have named him Sydney. I mention this circumstance because it has given me an incredible perspective on the time it has taken to plan the Games when I think that for every day of Liam's life hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of men and women were planning the event that took place during those two weeks. Four years after the announcement I had another interesting perspective. In the predawn hours of another September morning I heard a radio announcer tell us that it was three years to the day until the opening of the Sydney Olympics. At this stage I was in labour with my second child, Glyn, so my mind was on more pressing matters. I did not dwell on the fact that there were three years to go. In short, I could suggest that my two boys are my own little "milestones" in the planning of the Games.

In more recent times, as a member of this place, I have had the opportunity to look at closer quarters at the planning, at the trials and tribulations and at the immense pressure on the people charged with that task. Even with the best planning and intentions things can always go wrong, often for reasons beyond anyone's control. The honourable member for Canterbury mentioned earlier today that three of his concerns were weather, terrorism and transport. Who could have foreseen the natural event of the bogong moths invading the stadium? In January this year my confidence was increasing because I went to the Bankstown City Council's Australia Day ceremonies at the excellent Dunc Gray Velodrome.

The venue was not just complete but, like so many other venues that I could see from the roadway—the equestrian centre at Horsley Park, and the baseball and softball venue at Aquilina Reserve—it had successful test events. As I said, things were really coming together and all that planning seem to be paying off. However, like many Australians and many members who have spoken today and yesterday, it was the torch relay that figuratively ignited my excitement and enthusiasm. Unlike the honourable member for Miranda, who mentioned in this place that he was fortunate enough to have the torch pass twice through his electorate, I was not so lucky. It did not even make it into my electorate.

Mr Fraser: It went through Coffs Harbour.

Ms MEGARRITY: I'm sure, it went through Coffs Harbour. However, like so many others, including the Minister for Health, on 12 September I was present at the community cauldron at Liverpool. Thousands of people attended the event from far and wide. I could not help but think, as I drove from the event, that over the

years many local councils, and certainly ones I have been associated with, endeavoured to have community days, community events and environmental fairs, and they are lucky to get a couple of hundred people to turn out for those events. One little flame and they came in their thousands. It was inspirational, and it started the excitement in Sydney.

From the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony, each day of the Games brought me a personal highlight and a favourite moment. As in many businesses and offices, the television in my electorate office was on, and we noticed that constituents did tend to call or drop in between events so they could be at their televisions at the critical moments. When I was in the car I listened to the excellent coverage by 2BL, which managed to give updates on everything that was happening. In the post-Olympic period 2BL has devoted time to listeners ringing in with their favourite moments or stories about the people they met and what they did. That has been an interesting type of therapy for those who had post-Olympic blues and could not believe the party was over.

We shared the joys and the sorrows of the athletes, and, I am proud to say, not just the joys and sorrows of the Australians. No matter who won medals the crowd cheered them, and that great sportsmanship was pleasing to see. We may have preferred to see an Australian walking in front of us, but sometimes that was not to be. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned this morning, most of us in this place never got to the point where we could represent our country at that elite level, but in those tight finishes we probably swam, ran or jumped the last few metres with the Australian athletes just to give them an extra push. Winners are grinners, and we saw lots of smiles. We sang the anthem with great gusto, and no-one could ever accuse us of not knowing the words.

One of the real success stories of the Games, Ian Thorpe, is a reasonably new resident of my electorate. He now has two gold medals and a silver medal to his name. I am not suggesting that there is any direct relationship between him being my constituent and this achievement, but forgive me for being a little bit parochial. If I can claim him, I certainly will. I am sure his success had more to do with his talent and dedication, and the dedication of his family, as was the case with the families of so many other athletes who achieved great things.

Forgive me for being a little biased in also highlighting the achievements of, and paying tribute to, the Australian women's hockey, beach volleyball, water polo and basketball teams that competed so successfully. Many other women and men who competed achieved their personal bests and/or medals. Many honourable members have mentioned the advertisements run by the International Olympic Committee with the slogan "Celebrate Humanity", et cetera. One such advertisement referred to a person once saying, "People do not win silver, they lose gold", but added that the person who said that must never have won silver. That was obvious when one thinks about the Australian Ji Wallace in the trampoline competition. His excitement was infectious. I do not think he could have been happier, even if he had won gold. Indeed, he won silver in an event that was in the Olympics for the first time. As I said, his smile said it all.

Another highlight that must be mentioned is Cathy Freeman. As she walked onto the track and the commentator said, "The hopes of the nation are riding on her shoulders" I was worried that it would certainly slow her down. Probably like everyone else, I felt sheer relief when she won and sat down on the track. I did not feel at all emotional until she collected her medal, because it was sheer relief. What would have happened if she had not won for herself and for all of us? She is a young woman who says exactly what she means and means what she says. Interestingly, earlier this week when someone asked her whether she was interested in politics she said, "Yes, I am still interested in politics but I am not sure about politicians." Who could blame her for that cynicism when the artistic directors and performers at the opening and closing ceremonies delivered, at least symbolically, something for indigenous Australians that politicians at the highest level in this country have been unable to deliver?

This morning I was pleased to hear the Minister for the Olympics say that it was his decision that the torch should land at Uluru and that Nova Peris-Kneebone should be the first person to carry the torch in Australia. As I said, albeit symbolic, these important initiatives were well received by the community. Clubs New South Wales introduced another important initiative. People may not be aware that Clubs New South Wales had a ticketing initiative called Battlers Gold. I know it sounds like something that Roy and H. G. might have come up with, but Battlers Gold was devised by Clubs New South Wales to allow up to 2,000 disadvantaged and disabled families, children and their carers to have some of the best seats in the house in a corporate box at the Sydney 2000 Games.

Clubs New South Wales offered tickets to its member clubs at heavily discounted prices to put families and children into its corporate box. Full credit should be paid to Pat Rogan, a former member for East Hills in

this place, and the Chief Executive Officer of Clubs New South Wales, Mark Fitzgibbon, on devising this initiative, which was taken up by many clubs. The initiative certainly enabled people in the battlers category of life to enjoy what was indeed the greatest show on earth, and I know that many people appreciated that.

Unlike the marathon effort of the honourable member for Camden, who referred to all the events she attended, I experienced only one session of the Olympics live at Stadium Australia. My husband and I purchased tickets specifically for the athletics competition on the last Thursday evening because of the demonstration final of the women's 800 metre wheelchair race and the men's 1,500- meter wheelchair race. Of course, we enjoyed the other events as well, including Jai Taurima in the long jump. My husband is the coach of the highly successful West Sydney Razorbacks wheelchair basketball team, so it was with particular interest that we wanted to see those demonstration finals.

Yesterday in this place the Minister for the Olympics said that he is looking forward to the events and the fierce competition of the Paralympics. I also look forward to them. I hope that people take the Minister's advice and do not go to see the Paralympics out of sympathy or obligation but because they want to see some of the best athletes in the world competing in front of their home crowd. The crowd we were with on that Thursday evening realised that they were in for something special when they saw Louise Sauvage win the gold after coming from behind. It is a shame that that gold medal did not add to Australia's gold medal tally. However, we sang the national anthem with everyone else and our hearts filled with pride when Louise received her gold medal. Of course, our hearts sank when John McLean came out of his wheelchair during the 1,500 metre race.

Perhaps people do not realise that athletes with disabilities are still tough competitors. In fact, John McLean was an able-bodied triathlete prior to tragically being knocked over by a truck on the M4, which caused his paraplegia. Since that time he has swum the English channel. Also, he is the only wheelchair athlete to have completed the Hawaiian ironman competition under the time requirement. He completed the swimming, the cycling and the running under the time required for able-bodied athletes. He is quite a competitor, and I am sure he will come back even stronger despite what was a disappointing evening for him.

On that night I also began to fully appreciate the activities of the three groups of people who contributed to this event. First the police and other security personnel had a quiet and efficient presence as a result of years of training and planning. Secondly, today we have all talked about the volunteers. They must have been hot in their jackets but they kept the crowds singing as we tramped to the train to travel home. To put the number of people involved in the Games in perspective, the number of volunteers was more than the number of voters in my electorate.

Thirdly, I refer to the training, dedication and good humour of the transport workers, and the significant contribution of the office of the Minister for Transport. Everything was planned right down to the last detail. The train ride home from Olympic Park was quite a shock when all the people in the carriage were reliving their favourite moments in different accents. The normal protocol on a train is not to meet anyone's eye, let alone speak to other people. I remember feeling slightly sorry for a gentleman sitting behind me who spoke limited English. An Australian sitting next to him was determined, with the best of intentions, to have a great conversation with him when all he probably wanted to do was enjoy a quiet ride home. What I heard on the train was a microcosm of the celebration of humanity, an Olympic motto. As we all know, there were countless examples of that celebration.

Everyone stood and applauded when the North Korea and South Korea teams walked in under one banner. The dancing and waving of the excited athletes from East Timor did not erase the trauma they have experienced but it was very good to see them there. The same spirit of goodwill even flooded the media. The news and vision that many men and women contributed to the events took on a more positive note as the Olympics approached. Perhaps that is not characteristic of the reporting in the lead-up to the Games, but everything was on track.

Dare I say that even the hard-edged humour of the much-acclaimed *The Dream* with Roy and H.G. slightly softened as the nights went on. They sensed the mood and focused on more appropriate targets, such as the performances of our New Zealand neighbours, and made constant comparisons between the Sydney 2000 Games and the 1996 Atlanta (Toilet) Games. During the past two days the same goodwill has pervaded this Chamber with bipartisan acknowledgement of credit to all those involved in delivering the greatest Games ever. To its particular credit, the Carr Labor Government has concentrated on planning for the post-Olympic period to capitalise on the long-term economic opportunities provided by the Games. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 5 October the Premier said:

Isn't it good to be able to boast about Australia's economic achievements, sculpted by the reforms that came from both sides of politics since 1983? It's a new Australia that can do that. Yes, the best time in our history and now we have the inspiration to keep adding excellence.

As I said at the outset, the excellence of the Games far surpassed most of our expectations of these events and their impact on our communities and on the nation.

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [4.58 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to join not only my parliamentary colleagues but also everyone throughout Sydney and Australia in acknowledging the enormous success of the Sydney Olympics. I acknowledge that perhaps this is the last time in my lifetime that we will see the Olympics in Australia. It has been an enormous honour to host the Sydney Olympics, because only a few countries have hosted the Olympics more than once. We deserve to pat ourselves on the back for a great job. I congratulate all the athletes, whether they are gold medallists, silver medallists or bronze medallists, and I acknowledge all the athletes who represented Australia. As we know, it is an honour simply to represent Australia. Whether one wins or loses, the fact that one has gone so far as to represent one's country is an honour in itself.

I would like to acknowledge the Olympians from my local area who competed in the Olympics—Anna Windsor and Suzanne Balog. I also acknowledge the Paralympians who will compete in the Paralympics over the next couple of weeks—Kurt Fearnley, who is only 17, and Peter Worsley. I wish them all the very best in the coming Paralympics. As other honourable members have done on many occasions in this House, I also congratulate and thank the local volunteers for their efforts during the Olympics and, for some, perhaps for the second time during the Paralympics.

I congratulate the local police, who did an outstanding job given that quite a number of their fellow officers were down in Sydney. We really did not begrudge that. As far as I am aware, there were no additional instances of crime; we just had the usual weekend vandalism and break-ins. I am sure that the local police will be quite happy to have a bit of a break from the extra responsibilities they had during the Olympics. I also thank the local bus drivers who ran services to the Olympics. It was great to see the number of buses that went down virtually in convoy. Many buses from Orange, Cowra, Gunnedah, Dubbo or Gilgandra travelled down the Great Western Highway and returned the next day to resume their school runs.

I take this opportunity to extend special congratulations to the Ophir Gold 2000 Committee and the three councils of Orange, Cabonne and Blayney, which were part of that committee. I extend special thanks to Michael Milston, Jennifer Berrick and Carolyn Kind of Orange City Council for the way they held it all together; the committee members; and all those who put in countless hours over the years since 1997 in conducting fundraising, including raffles, dinners and competitions. I can still remember Rod McGeoch coming to Orange as a guest speaker. It seems a long time ago that Rod McGeoch was involved in the Olympics.

How did it come about that Ophir Gold became involved in the Olympics? In September 1993, when the President of the International Olympic Committee [IOC] announced that Sydney was to get the Games, on 15 October, 1993 I wrote to the then local member, Garry West, to put in an expression of interest on behalf of Orange District Tourism that we participate in the Games in that we donate the gold for the Olympic medals, providing that the gold came from the Orange district. Orange has the unique distinction of having the first payable gold in Australia, which was discovered in Ophir in 1851. We also have the unique distinction of having the second-largest working goldmine today at Cadia, some 20 kilometres south of Orange, that is, the Cadia Hill open cut goldmine. Last week the Premier gave the go-ahead for the Ridgeway mine, which is an underground mine.

We had very little to do with the 2000 Games until the Atlanta Games were over, and then our submission started in earnest. It was not until 1997 that SOCOG announced that the combined councils of Orange, Cabonne and Blayney were to be given the distinction of supplying the gold for the Olympic Games medals and the Paralympic Games medals. The gold comprises some 10.5 kilograms of 24 carat gold, which on today's prices is worth about \$200,000. That gold came not only from the Cadia Hill goldmine but also from Browns Creek, which at the time was another working mine. It also came from small donations from families who gave perhaps half an ounce or an ounce of gold which had been mined by a grandfather or great-grandfather in the past, as well as very small donations from people who had found gold at the Ophir goldfields. Gold is still being found there by amateurs and one or two miners who are mining the gold part time or as a hobby. One of those miners, to whom I shall refer later, is Mr Noel Rawlinson from the Gunado mine whose idea it was for the gold for Olympic medals to be sourced from the district.

We then had the responsibility of raising money. Council underwrote the cost in case we did not raise all the money that was necessary. As I said, various functions were held. Competitions were organised through

the schools, competitions were conducted in shopping centres, fundraising nights and auctions were held—anything we could do to raise that money. I must repeat that it was a donation. As far as SOCOG and the IOC are concerned, it is the first time that a district or community has donated something to the Olympics; donations are usually received in the form of sponsorships and so on. This is the first time that a community has made such a donation. We did it because we wanted the recognition and the honour of supplying that gold, but also so that we would receive recognition as a district and perhaps promote Orange as a tourist destination, not only during the Olympics but also post Olympics. It is a well-known fact that people are still going to Barcelona as a result of that city hosting the Games and that Atlanta has increased its tourism substantially as well. There is no reason why the Orange district should not achieve a similar increase in tourism.

I should like to list some of the media outlets that, as a result of Ophir Gold 2000 and the recognition that Orange has received, have come to Orange to film the district as well as Noel Rawlinson's Gunadoo mine at Ophir and the large Cadia Hill mine. Some of those media outlets include NBC Sports from New York, which came to Orange on three occasions, BBC television and Swiss television. I might add that the day after Bridgett McMahon, the first gold medallist in the 2000 Olympics, won her medal, Swiss television came to Orange and filmed Bridgett down in the mine where some of the gold came from, and that coverage was beamed straight back to Switzerland. It was fantastic to think that Swiss television was so spontaneous.

Similarly, Korean television heard about the gold medal win in Sydney and were in Orange the next day filming, and that coverage then went back to Korean television, perhaps as a fill-in during the Olympic Games. Danish television and German television also came to Orange and did the same. Journalists from Germany, Denmark, France and the United States of America also came to Orange. On Sydney television, Orange was featured on the *Great Outdoors* program twice, the *Today* show twice and the *11 a.m.* show twice, as well as on our local television stations, Prime television, WIN, and in the local print media. Orange appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and also the *Sun-Herald*, whose article went nationwide. It was also featured on 2GB and 5AA in South Australia. Orange was also featured in the *Open Road* magazine, *Australia Post*, *Wheels Australia*, *Bank Note News* and *Coin News* magazines, and *Lifestyle*, which is a Japanese publication.

Orange has received enormous publicity, although we would have liked more. We would have liked more recognition during the Olympic Games themselves. As far as I know, Orange received virtually no recognition from Channel 7 during the Olympics, which was a little disappointing. As I said, we received far more recognition from overseas media than we received from the local media. We also had the honour of the torch going through Orange and the central west. We, like everyone else, were amazed at the number of people who turned up and the feeling that the torch generated. Most of the people in Orange, who may not have been able to get down to the Olympics, were able to get that feeling through the torch going through their town, and it was certainly a great feeling when the torch went through Orange. It was a great achievement to have it go through so many parts of Australia, and I understand that for 80 per cent of the population of Australia the torch relay was no more than an hour away.

I congratulate the Olympians and the Paralympians who represent areas around Orange. My electorate had the honour of supplying the gold for the medals for both the Olympics and the Paralympics. As I said, the Sydney Olympics were the first time in the history of the modern Olympics that a community made such a commitment, and it was certainly an honour to be part of that commitment. I congratulate all those in the community who were involved. I thank the Orange City Council, the Cabonne Council and the Blayney Council for their support and Newcrest Mining for its major donation and involvement. All those efforts helped to make the Sydney bid successful. In conclusion, I wish all Australian Paralympians good luck, not only those from the Orange district but also those from all other areas in Australia. I hope that they are able to place around their necks some Ophir gold at the Paralympics that will be staged during the next two weeks.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Anderson.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills): Order! It being shortly before 5.15 p.m. business is interrupted for the taking of private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BATHURST PROPERTY VALUATIONS

Mr MARTIN (Bathurst) [5.11 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House problems associated with the land valuation system used by local government in New South Wales as a base for fixing local government

rates. I illustrate the point I am making by referring to the revaluation in 1999 of a property in the city of Bathurst. Approximately 12,000 assessments were made in the city of Bathurst in line with the policy of the Valuer-General. The outcome resulted in many fluctuations: part of the local council areas received reductions in valuations and other parts were significantly increased, some by well over 30 per cent. Because of rate-pegging legislation, there is a perception in the community that if the Government has set a figure—in this case it was 2.7 per cent—that is generally the percentage by which rates will rise. Many people feel comforted by that figure but, of course, when a new valuation takes place, great fluctuations can occur and people can get a rude shock when they subsequently receive their rate notices.

A considerable number of the constituents in the electorate of Bathurst received rate increases of as much as 30 per cent. In some cases, people with residential properties in the central Bathurst area pay combined rates of approximately \$4,000. Although that amount is all-inclusive and covers general rates, water, garbage removal and sewerage charges, when it is borne in mind that many of the people affected are retirees and that many of them own larger blocks with heritage-style houses, it is a substantial amount. Those properties are maintained as part of the lifestyle of Bathurst and they contribute to the fabric of Bathurst, which is this State's oldest inland city. Notwithstanding that the valuation system has highlighted great problems, I think it is time to pause and examine the valuation system. I can think of no better example than the revaluation to which I referred earlier that was carried out in the city of Bathurst.

When people receive their new valuation certificate, they are given a certain period within which to lodge an objection with the Valuer-General's Department. Unfortunately, because many people are lulled into a false sense of security by the figure set at 2.7 per cent or whatever it may be, many do not object because they accept that figure as the percentage by which their rates will increase. The case which has come to my attention concerns Mr Burke of Stewart Street, Bathurst, whose property, prior to revaluation, was assessed as being worth \$77,000. When Mr Burke received his valuation certificate, he noticed that the Valuer-General had made an assessment of \$110,000 which came as quite a shock to him. He objected through the formal processes and the valuation was reduced to \$62,500 by the Valuer-General.

Mr Burke then asked for an explanation of how the Valuer-General came to the previous figure. The officers of the department could not give him a reasonable explanation of how the figure of \$62,500 had been arrived at. Mr Burke took the matter to the Land and Environment Court. Many people are reluctant to do that because they think it will be expensive. It can be expensive because people may have to obtain legal advice and so on, but Mr Burke's father, who is a retired public servant, represented his son in the Land and Environment Court. He was able to get the valuation reduced to \$53,000 by the Land and Environment Court. One of the reasons Mr Burke wanted to pursue the matter was that in 1998, a year prior to the revaluation, the land content of the property had been valued by a bank at \$40,000.

In summary, the bank assessed the property to be valued at \$40,000; the Valuer-General originally assessed the property's value at \$110,000 and then reduced that valuation to \$62,500; by taking the matter to the Land and Environment Court, the valuation was reduced to \$53,000. Obviously, the reassessment process had a big impact on the rates payable on that property. That case highlights the difficulty that people are experiencing with the current valuation system. I take this opportunity to ask the Minister for Local Government to arrange for some breathing space between the time when the final valuations are sent to councils and the time when new rates are disseminated. I make that request because there are people in Bathurst, such as Mr Buddy Burke and Mr Ken North, who are retirees, who have taken the time to fight these valuations. When lay people are able to uncover inconsistencies, it is time to examine the system generally.

OVINE JOHNE'S DISEASE

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [5.16 p.m.]: Many of the facts surrounding ovine Johne's disease [OJD] and its impact on families have been traversed in this place. In the past I have spoken about its particular impact on families in Goulburn, Gunning and Tarago. It continues to concern me that despite the fact that Southern Tablelands farmers made a strong case in 1996 and in 1997, the blunt instrument of eradication was not only devastating to wool producers and studs alike but it was also unnecessary and unsound methodologically. It seems we find ourselves again having to challenge those same notions in a Federal committee and the Animal Health Australia organisation.

It was because of the merit-based arguments of local families and the shift in understanding across New South Wales that the flaws in the eradication strategy were realised and sense started to prevail in New South Wales, including the realisation that climate, animal management practices and soil chemistry play an important

role. Against that background, I express my concern about the uncertainties surrounding the trial, evaluation and possible future registration of vaccines for OJD in this State. In particular, I seek assurances from the Minister for Agriculture that he is fully informed of the circumstances surrounding those uncertainties. I seek also an understanding from him that he will make every reasonable effort to remove them and to expedite the validation and registration of a suitable vaccine or vaccines in this State.

In addition, it is important for honourable members to clearly understand that even the trialling of any vaccine has been very significantly delayed. The concerns that are being conveyed to me suggest that that delay is the result of some systemic malfunction rather than everyday bureaucratic lethargy. Given the impact that OJD is now having on this State's sheep and wool industry, I believe it is important to know whether these concerns have any foundation. The case has been put to me, particularly by some local farmers from the Southern Tablelands—and it is a case that has been clearly described in submissions to the current Federal Senate committee hearings—that from the outset, Federal veterinary authorities have incorrectly judged that although OJD is not an exotic disease in the normal sense of the term, its eradication ought to be pursued. I might add that eradication has been proposed without any offer of compensation being made, other than through a troubled scheme that was introduced in Victoria.

To my mind, it is fair to say that such a preconceived judgment about what is increasingly emerging as an endemic disorder in this State's sheep flock can be described as a worrying paradigm of the Federal veterinarian establishment that ought to be investigated. Given the overriding power vested in both the Federal veterinary committee and the new Animal Health Australia organisation, and given the way that what is now regarded as a significant endemic disease has been mistaken for an exotic disease which is capable of being eradicated, the concentration of such a specific colonisation of expertise may well be worthy of review. The current structure as I see it does not allow for the development of other disciplines to be involved in the solution.

We know that soil science and climate have an influence on infection rates and the rate of wasting in each animal, but we do not know why or how to harness that knowledge. We do not understand exactly why the impact of the disease is not uniform in all environments. At the very least the ambiguities surrounding consent for the trialling, registration and commercial use of vaccine need to be clearly and expeditiously resolved. If that requires the return of the responsibility for addressing endemic diseases as opposed to genuinely exotic disease to the States, we should seek that outcome if it is the very best result for our farmers and for our industry.

When I was first elected in this place and had the privilege of representing the Southern Tablelands and Goulburn I met a lot of people who were suffering the effects of what could be described as the ill-advised view of the Department of Agriculture that eradication was the best way to manage this disease. The effect on many of those Southern Tablelands families was that they became virtually lepers in their own community: they were quarantined, their properties lost their value, they could not trade and they were not eligible for a lot of other assistance. As a result many of them suffered immense emotional and psychological problems which cannot be underestimated. We have now seen through that. We know that eradication is not the best way to go and we are being a lot more intelligent about the way we approach the disease. Let us not have to relearn those same lessons. That is why I call on the Minister for Agriculture to listen to these farmers in the Southern Tablelands and to take up their cause. [*Time expired.*]

MAITLAND ELECTORATE ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [5.21 p.m.]: I raise a serious road safety issue on the New England Highway in the electorate of Maitland. The section of the New England Highway from Weakleys Drive which is the temporary F3 connection through to Maitland is part of the national highway network and, therefore, the funds required to deal with safety issues should be provided by the Federal Government. At the moment there are three sets of traffic lights within about 600 metres along that section of highway. One set is at Anderson Drive on the New England Highway, another is at the T-intersection of Weakleys Drive (the F3) and the other is at Thornton Road on the New England Highway, which is the entrance to the suburb of Thornton in the Maitland city municipality. That is also a point of entry to a large transport parking area and industrial estate which is currently being developed.

At the moment the traffic lights which protect the intersection at Weakleys Drive have a long right-hand slip lane. Driving from Maitland towards Sydney one goes into the slip lane after the traffic lights at Thornton Road and turns at Weakleys Drive to go to Sydney. Likewise, for those coming from Sydney or Newcastle who wish to go to Thornton there is a slip lane which commences at the Weakleys Drive intersection and turns right into Thornton Road. Both slip lanes are now totally inadequate for the volume of traffic using the New England Highway in that location. In both cases at peak times the traffic backs up over the traffic lights at the intersection of Thornton Road and over the traffic lights at the F3 on Weakleys Drive.

At one stage the Federal Government proposed an elevated or grade-separated intersection at the F3 intersection with the New England Highway which would, in fact, bridge that highway and join a link road to be constructed between Thornton Road and Anderson Drive. The funding for that project, which was provided by the previous Federal Government, has now been withdrawn by the present Government and there is no sign that the funding will again be put forward so that road safety in this area can be maintained and improved. The State Government has been left in part to construct the link road and in two budgets funds have been allocated to the planning program and the environmental studies required for the construction of the road.

Whilst the State has undertaken that task, the Federal Government has not financially addressed a significant road safety issue. My constituents and others travelling north and south from that point at the F3 temporary intersection run a severe risk of being involved in dangerous accidents. The speed limit has been restricted to 90 kilometres per hour and traffic continually runs over the traffic lights, as I have already said, into through traffic lanes, not slip lanes. The risks of rear-end collisions is, therefore, extreme. The matter has been raised a number of the times by the Maitland Traffic Committee and by Maitland City Council as being of grave concern.

I am concerned about this matter because it has been a problem for at least five years. I am concerned that if matters continue and traffic volumes increase in the same proportion as they have during the past five years there will not only be a serious accident but the road will become almost completely clogged. Traffic will be unable to move and function properly and will block the highway completely for considerable periods of time almost on a daily basis during the two peak periods. It will become a real disaster area during major holidays such as three-day long weekends, Christmas, New Year and Easter periods. I appeal to the Minister to continue his campaign to attempt to obtain funding from the Federal Government for the grade-separated intersection at this point. If he does not severe problems will arise. It is no use waiting until the accident level increases to a point that justifies the statistical return for money to be spent; the money should be spent now, and Federal Government co-operation. is needed. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs JUDY SAID AND MIDCOAST WATER

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes) [5.26 p.m.]: I raise problems affecting one of my constituents, Mrs Judy Said, following a surcharge of sewage entering her home after heavy rain on 8 March. The surcharge of sewage entered the house of Mrs Said through the toilet and drains, including the kitchen sink. It was about eight inches deep in the house. Mrs Said suffers an unfortunate form of cancer which creates ulcerations on her body, including her legs. With sewage coursing through her home her health was obviously in a severely endangered position. Naturally, her goods and chattels were destroyed in the surcharge. That is when her problems started.

Mrs Said contacted MidCoast Water, the authority that administers water and sewerage services in our area, and the site was inspected. There is an allegation—and I am not a third party to this matter—that an admission of liability was made at that time. However, from then on Mrs Said has had continual problems. The value of her goods and chattels is only about \$4,000; the premises were rented. She lives meagrely and it appears, although this cannot be verified, that when MidCoast Water contacted its insurer, it found it was liable for a \$10,000 upfront fee. Suddenly its response to the request to replace the goods was a suggestion that Mrs Said should have her chattels replaced with second-hand goods from the Salvation Army and she should then go on her way. That was obviously not satisfactory.

In April this year I wrote to the Minister for Land and Water Conservation, who quickly responded and said his jurisdiction was limited to responsibility for sewage treatment works. He referred the matter for consideration to the Minister for Local Government, who likewise said that this matter was not within his jurisdiction. In both instances they said it was a matter for MidCoast Water to resolve. I also involved the Great Lakes Council to try to have this matter resolved, bearing in mind I have had no correspondence from MidCoast Water on the issue. Though the council has been as helpful as it can be to try to resolve the matter, it has rejected a recommendation by MidCoast Water that the council pay a 50 per cent contribution to replacement of the furniture. This leaves Mrs Said in a very difficult position. She is not wealthy and is an extremely sick lady, not only with cancer but with other health problems. She is quite distressed about the matter. On a number of occasions she has rung my office and has been in tears over the matter.

It seems that this is one of those situations where a little person is being pushed from pillar to post. It is about time, quite frankly, that some quasi government organisations discharged their responsibilities to the community, whether under their community service obligations or as a direct acceptance of liability, as I believe

MidCoast Water should in this instance. MidCoast Water is a contentious organisation within the electorate, being born of two councils. There is some argument as to its credibility in the area. I think it would be an excellent gesture on the part of MidCoast Water if it attended to Mrs Said's matter in a compassionate way. It could quite easily make a payment without admission of liability.

MidCoast Water has recently hit the whole of the community with a service access fee. That will create extra funding for that organisation. I think it would be a mark of goodwill by MidCoast Water if it resolved this matter positively, bearing in mind that it is now six months since the matter arose and this lady is in dire need. I do not think it is satisfactory to say that this lady, who has lost her goods and chattels as a result of what happened, should come down to the Salvation Army so that the goods may be replaced with second-hand goods.

CESSNOCK BYPASS

Mr HICKEY (Cessnock) [5.31 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House again a transport issue: infrastructure in the Cessnock electorate or, to be more specific, the Kurri Kurri corridor. The Kurri Kurri corridor is a vital and integral part of the infrastructure needed to drive economic development not only for the electorate of Cessnock but also for the whole of the lower and upper Hunter. It is also in desperate need of Federal funding. The Federal Government claims that it has given a commitment to the project, but I feel that the couple of hundred thousand dollars to do the studies, the environmental impact statement, et cetera is a long way short of a commitment of funding.

The honourable member for Upper Hunter, the Leader of the National Party, made representations to the Federal Minister for Transport. The response was to blame the State for the lack of planning. The Federal Government said that it is committed to the project. However, it has not committed millions of dollars towards the project, which will cost \$242 million to complete. If the Federal Government is committed to the project, why has it not made provision in future budgets to provide the New South Wales Government with the more than \$242 million needed for the project? The Federal government should commit itself, as I have, to pursuing all measures that it possibly can to ensure that the Kurri Kurri corridor is built and that provisions are made for this to occur.

I reiterate what I have stated in the past: the concept of providing a bypass for the Cessnock electorate has gone on for far too long. The residents of Cessnock needed this bypass 20 years ago. Today, the residents are disillusioned with all governments that ignore calls for a bypass of Cessnock, known as the Kurri Kurri corridor. The Kurri Kurri corridor would benefit not only the Cessnock local government area but also Maitland and other areas in the Hunter. All parties who have held government, at both State and Federal levels, over the past 20 years must accept some of the responsibility for the tardiness of the progress of this project.

As I have stated, I have received support from all local government areas such as Singleton, Cessnock, Gloucester, Lake Macquarie, Merriwa, Newcastle, Muswellbrook, Murrurundi and Dungog. All councils agree that it is imperative that this corridor be built as soon as possible. The lack of interest at the Federal level is clear. The Hunter Federal Electoral Council made a submission to the Federal Government back in 1993 on the Kurri Kurri corridor. The submission contained the following extract:

The Federal Electoral Council is keen to ensure that the option chosen (for a heavy vehicle bypass) brings relief to those areas within the Cessnock Local Government Area which have played host to National Highway and Pacific Highway traffic since the opening of the F3 freeway to Freemans Waterhole in Easter of 1988.

That was 12 years ago, yet there has been no firm commitment from the Federal Government to the completion of the Kurri Kurri corridor. The Federal Electoral Council offered the following issues for consideration by the determining body in its deliberations: the effects on residents and townships; environmental effects; the cost; the economic efficiency of the route and optimal use; the economic benefits to the region; and that the choices should reflect the future traffic and economic needs of the region. It is now seven years on from the time that submission was made.

Does the Federal Government not think that we now owe the corridor to the people of the Federal electorate of Hunter and the State electorate of Cessnock? I believe that the Federal Government needs to ensure that the long-held dreams of the people of the Hunter, lower and upper, are realised and that a firm or firmer commitment must be given to this State by our Federal counterparts. Let us, as leaders of this great State, move forward and lobby our Federal counterparts until they commit to providing the resources required to complete this important piece of transport infrastructure for the Cessnock electorate.

HORNSBY RAILWAY STATION DEVELOPMENT

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [5.36 p.m.]: I indicate my great alarm at an answer I received from the Minister for Transport to a question that I placed on notice a few weeks ago. In that question I was seeking to find out what plans the Government had to provide additional parking at Hornsby railway station and also at Berowra railway station. Those stations already have an overflow of commuters using the parking facilities. In the case of Hornsby, it is not possible to get a parking space there after 7 o'clock in the morning. In the case of Berowra, people from the Central Coast and seemingly from all over the northern Sydney area converge on Berowra and park up and down the highway, as well as in the extremely poorly maintained and insecure small car park that is provided by CityRail at Berowra.

In my question I encouraged the Minister to think about a plan to develop the space over the Hornsby railway station, at a time when the Hornsby central business district is rapidly being developed because of the hundreds of millions of dollars ploughed in by Westfield and millions of dollars being invested by other developers in Hornsby. It is a time when the centre of Hornsby is taking off. It is a time when commercial development over the railway station at Hornsby would be a lucrative proposition for CityRail, enabling it to create a revenue stream that would enable provision of a bigger car parking space to meet the needs of those who want to park at Hornsby station. It would also generate enough revenue to provide a modern and secure car parking and transport interchange facility at Berowra.

I must say that since I raised this question with the Minister for Transport I have had discussions with the local council, in particular at a traffic management level, on the need to once again look at the whole interchange at Hornsby railway station. It needs redesigning. It no longer meets the needs of the many people who are using it. I am told that Hornsby is one of the major, if not indeed the major, and busiest intermodal transport interchanges anywhere in the Sydney metropolitan area. Yet those facilities are now in need of upgrading having been constructed by the Coalition Government in 1994-95. I raised the matter because of my concern that the Minister needs to be making good plans. The answer that has come back in the latest edition of *Questions and Answers* alarms me, because not only does it fail to give any commitment at all to increasing car parking at Hornsby railway station, but the Minister says the following:

In respect of expansion and improvements, the Hornsby area has been identified to be included in its—

The grammar seems to be wrong, because I think "its "means "the Government's"—

Parking Space Levy program in the longer term.

When Parliament recently passed legislation to extend the parking levy beyond the Sydney business district, to which the Coalition had limited it, to other centres such as Chatswood and Parramatta, I warned the House at the time that the Government's long-term plan, if not its short-term plan, was to extend the levy to places like Hornsby. Now when I read in the Minister's answer that that is exactly what the Government is planning to do, I want to tell the Minister at the earliest opportunity that my constituents will be most distressed to hear that. We should not have to pay a levy for the kinds of facilities that we ought to be receiving through taxation and, indeed, from the levies that my constituents already pay if they work in the city.

People must understand that this levy was put in place by the previous Government as a levy on people who park their cars in the city so that there was an incentive for them to park at regional centres like Hornsby and catch the train to work. The Carr Government is now proposing that those same loyal commuters who have been parking their cars at Hornsby, as required, to keep cars off the road, will have to pay a levy for that privilege. What is the implication? The Government will then want them to go somewhere else to park and catch a train to Hornsby and to the city. Clearly, this is a tax grab by the Carr Government—a government that has not provided facilities in my electorate which the commuters deserve.

I say again to the Government that it could develop, at no cost to it, the space over Hornsby railway station and use that to generate revenue to improve the interchange and the car parking facilities at Hornsby and at Berowra. I implore the Government to reverse its decision—a decision about which I was informed in the answer to my question to which I referred earlier—that it will extend the car parking space to Hornsby. I implore the Minister to immediately begin a feasibility study with a view in the short term to developing air space over Hornsby railway station.

EAST HILLS ELECTORATE RUBBISH DUMPING AND GRAFFITI

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [5.41 p.m.]: Today I draw to the attention of the House the increasing problem of rubbish dumping in my electorate, in particular, along Henry Lawson Drive, which is at the southern

boundary of my electorate; at Yeramba Lagoon; and at some sites on the East Hills railway line. I also express outrage at the continuing problem of graffiti in suburbs in the East Hills electorate—a problem that this Government tried to curb by enacting legislation. However, it is clear that graffiti crime is no longer a random act perpetrated by youth looking for a bit of excitement. In shopping centres and on suburban streets in Revesby, Padstow, Panania and East Hills organised graffiti gangs are at work.

As the new Act has increased punishments for convicted offenders I urge residents in my area to work in co-operation with local police, Bankstown City Council and local schools to help catch graffiti criminals. Graffitiists fail to understand that the vast sums of money spent on cleaning up their non-artistic excrement and paying huge insurance bills is money that could be spent on better education, sport and health facilities and in creating job opportunities. I hope that we are able to convict some of these recidivist scribblers and turn the antisocial tide. Last weekend members of Bankstown council and over 60 community activists visited Revesby to note the graffiti sites that can be cleaned up when offenders are put to work as a punishment. They also spent many hours cleaning up the Revesby area.

The community is serious about catching someone and making an example of him or her. This, in a sense, goes against my philosophical belief, but the community and I have had a gutful of seeing our area desecrated for no real reason. Recently I visited a site near Revesby railway station where paper, amongst other things, had been dumped. This included newspapers and fliers for supermarkets such as Kmart. When council took away the paper it found undelivered local newspapers, fliers advertising sales at stores and the like. However, it also found many other pieces of material to which I will refer in a minute. I raised this matter with the office of the Minister for Transport and the Rail Access Corporation cleaned up the area a few weeks ago.

I remind those people who dump this material and the corporations that print it that the fines were heavily increased by this Government in July 2000. Fines for aggravated littering have been increased to \$5,500 for corporations and \$3,300 for individuals. Old tyres, batteries, furniture, railway seats, cables and real estate signs had also been dumped at that site. Within a week the promotional advertising material was dumped again. I have asked the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Transport to do everything they can to find the offenders. There is a continuous rubbish dumping problem along Henry Lawson Drive. I am not talking merely about cigarette packets, cans and so on; much of the rubbish is industrial waste. At Yeramba Lagoon it is common to see a dumped car or a load of industrial rubbish.

The Carr Government and Bankstown council are spending thousands of dollars cleaning up the lagoon and building a walkway around the Georges River National Park. Recently it was exciting to see native water birds on the lagoon again. At weekends the small, concealed car park at Yeramba Lagoon attracts families and picnickers, which is excellent. However, during week nights all types of rubbish is dumped. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has to constantly clean up this rubbish including, amongst other things, used syringes. Just yesterday, on my way to Parliament House, I again saw dumped carpet and house furniture at this site. I will be speaking to Bankstown council and to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to see whether or not it is better to close off all vehicle access to the lagoon. It is something that I do not really want to do. People should be able to pull up in Lawson Drive and enjoy that part of Yeramba Lagoon.

An organisation called the Friends of Yeramba Lagoon spends a lot of its time trying to clean up this area. Years ago when the Premier was Minister for the Environment he walked around this area and saw what a great place it was. The little car park is becoming a place where cars and rubbish are dumped. The problem has got out of hand. I will also be contacting, amongst others, the Friends of Yeramba Lagoon to see what can be done to assist with this problem. I urge everyone who uses Henry Lawson Drive in the East Hills electorate to report any rubbish dumping to any of the various authorities. I urge also that the maximum fine be sought by the authorities. We have to catch somebody and make him or her a victim. Hopefully a major corporation will have to pay a large fine and the message will get through.

POST-OLYMPICS PROGRAMS

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [5.46 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to refer to the announcement by the Premier earlier this week of the \$20 billion to be spent in Sydney on post-Olympic private or government programs. I welcome that announcement and the Premier's announcement last week when he visited my electorate that he has approved of the Ridgeway mine development just outside Orange. The Premier also announced a \$1 billion injection of funding for rural roads. Today I asked the Premier when that money will be made available and on what projects it will be spent. I hope that it will be spent on new programs and not on programs that have already been announced in the budget. I hope also that that money is not part of tied or

untied grants already allocated to local government. I would like to see that \$1 billion spent on new programs to relieve some of the pressure on rural roads and the highways and regional roads that are controlled by the Roads and Traffic Authority.

Today I will refer to some of the damage that occurred to roads in my electorate over the winter period. I am thankful for the welcome rain that we have had, but in some areas it has been too much and it has caused considerable damage to highways, local roads and regional roads. This week I spoke to representatives from Cabonne council who told me that \$2 million worth of damage was caused over the winter period along the 2,100 kilometres of roads under their control. Orange City Council, which controls about 380 kilometres of road, has experienced about \$380,000 worth of damage. Cowra council estimates that over its 2,000 kilometre stretch of road some \$500,000 worth of damage has been caused. Blayney council estimates that, over its 800 kilometre stretch of road, \$550,000 worth of damage has been caused—approximately \$250,000 alone on the Neville Road, which is attributable in part to the heavy vehicles that helped with the construction of the wind farm project at Carcoar.

That is a fantastic project, but cranes weighing a couple of hundred tonnes have done enormous damage to local roads in that area. It is imperative that something be done about that section of Highway 237 between Orange and Grenfell. At Nashdale the council patches up the road but after two weeks the material that has been used is pushed to the side of the road. Council then uses a grader to level out the road. However, on foggy nights people think that the road is wider than it really is. Council had to put up reflective signs to warn people that the road is only a narrow, local road. It has been estimated that that two-kilometre section of road, which has important intersections at either end, will cost \$600,000 to upgrade.

Yet, Cabonne Council has been allocated only \$250,000 to repair that section and upgrade the intersection at either end. It is now faced with the dilemma: does it do a patch-up job for the \$250,000, upgrade the intersections and patch up the little bit in between, or does it do a small section, which will then make the inferior sections even more dangerous? This sort of thing is going on throughout New South Wales, where there are enormous stretches of road and not enough money.

I know the State Government blames the Federal Government and the Federal Government tells us that it has given money to the States and it is up to them how they spend the money, but the people driving on these inferior roads and who are putting their lives at risk everyday because of the larger distances people in rural areas have to travel are not interested in politics; all they want is some extra money. I welcome the announcement that the Premier is going to put \$1 billion extra into rural roads. I hope they are new projects and not a rehash of existing programs. I seek his announcement of when that money will be available, where it will be available and for what projects.

TECHNOBUILD ENGINEERING PTY LTD

Mr BROWN (Kiama) [5.51 p.m.]: Tonight I advise the House about a fair trading issue that is causing great concern to some of my constituents. These constituents came to see me a number of weeks ago regarding concerns about their homes, which have been built to an inferior standard. Over recent weeks I have been in regular contact with the Minister for Fair Trading about the activities of a Mr Mahmud Ali of Shellharbour and his company, Technobuild Engineering Pty Ltd. I understand that since I have been in contact with the Minister about five complaints have been made to the Department of Fair Trading regarding the work of Mr Ali.

I understand that inquiries carried out by the department reveal that Mr Ali has been advertising to carry out residential building work under the name Technobuild Engineering Pty Ltd. Mr Ali is a director of Technobuild and controls it in every sense of the word. However, the company is not licensed to do residential building work. Under the Home Building Act any company undertaking residential building work is required to be licensed. I am also advised that Technobuild has commenced work on at least 10 houses in the Illawarra region. I understand that in a potential contravention of the Home Building Act, in each case Mr Ali's individual licence number was used and it was represented to consumers that Technobuild was the holder of that licence.

The recent history of Technobuild, under the direction of Mr Ali, has been of inadequately supervised building work. Independent building reports reveal poor workmanship on at least five different building jobs. Problems include extensive problems with ant capping, framing, brickwork and drainage. I have seen one of these homes and pictures of others. I have seen the inferior workmanship on the ant capping, in the choice of brick and the lack of mortar in that brick. One House has two-coloured brickwork, with one colour to a certain height and, when that colour ran out, a new colour. The mortar between the bricks could be scratched off with a pen.

One of the big problems with the company is supervision. This builder, Mr Ali, claims on his Department of Fair Trading record that he has a particular supervisor. However, when that supervisor was contacted to confirm he was the supervisor of this job he wrote back saying that he has never visited the property and had never been told that he was the nominated supervisor for that property. He also stated that he has nothing to do with the problem. He admits he is a qualified supervisor but informs us that he was not the nominated supervisor for the company called Technobuild. He never was, and he never will be. In addition, he states that his name has been used illegally and without permission. The builder is claiming that this supervisor is supervising these properties yet the supervisor does not even know the builder, has never seen the properties, and claims the builder is doing work with very poor workmanship.

After the complaints I mentioned and an investigation, the Department of Fair Trading has cancelled Mr Ali's licence. The licence was cancelled effective from 1 September this year. However, I am concerned to ensure that homeowners and families building new homes in my community are aware of Mr Ali and his antics. Accordingly, I have asked the Minister for Fair Trading to take any further steps he can to ensure that Mr Ali cannot mislead any more consumers and to expedite any other action that can possibly be taken against Mr Ali. In Kiama, in the Illawarra region or around Australia there is nothing more sacred than the family home. People invest a lot of money and spend a lot of time working out particular designs for their homes. After shopping around, they contact a builder, and their house is built. In some cases they move into very dangerously built houses. I hope we do not get any more shonky builders such as Mr Ali in the Illawarra.

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [5.56 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Kiama for raising this important issue in the House today. He has been most active on behalf of his constituents who have been victims of Mr Ali. My message in response to the honourable member's concerns is clear: do not deal with Mr Mahmud Ali—an unlicensed builder—or his unlicensed company, Technobuild Engineering. Mr Ali, of Siska Circuit Shellharbour, has misled at least 10 consumers into believing that Technobuild Engineering is a licensed building company before they entered home building contracts with it. Many of these houses, mostly in Wollongong, Dapto, Figtree and Shellharbour, were built with inadequate supervision and very poor workmanship. That is why Fair Trading has begun a detailed investigation that could lead to very serious charges against Mr Ali under the Home Building Act.

While this investigation is being concluded I take this opportunity to formally warn the public about this man. Section 23 of the Home Building Act allows warnings to be issued about unlicensed builders, builders who do defective work or builders who do not properly supervise their work. Mahmud Ali is not fit to do home building business in this State. I thank the honourable member for Kiama for his work in this matter and for protecting families and consumers in his electorate. His dealings with this matter had been enthusiastic and thorough. Clearly, he is representing his constituents in the most honourable way in this House. I will continue to work with the honourable member for Kiama to ensure consumers who have dealt with Mr Ali get full assistance to fix their problems.

WILDERNESS AREA PROPOSALS

Mr TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.58 p.m.]: At present 17 wilderness areas are under consideration in the Northern Tablelands electorate. This is not creating wild excitement with many country people, who regard having a national park or a wilderness area on their boundaries as drawing the short straw. Lack of control of feral animals and noxious weeds within the parks, the lack of implemented fire management policies and the generally poor border fencing create management difficulties and deflate already low property values. What infuriates rural councils and landowners alike is the current loose arrangement that permits anyone anywhere to nominate a parcel of land as wilderness. Once it is nominated the process begins and the National Parks and Wildlife Service is obliged to make an assessment, regardless of how appropriate the nomination is. I maintain this is an anomaly in the Wilderness Act that creates unnecessary costs to government and delays and costs to country councils and communities.

While the Government has every right to make declarations of national parks, State forests, wilderness areas, State recreation areas and nature reserves, it also has some obligation to compensate councils for converting rateable land to unrateable. My Northern Tablelands electorate is a rich resource for the State because of the pristine nature of the natural environment, but in the interests of a fair go it should not have to pay through the nose for the privilege. In my electorate of 30,000 square kilometres, 8.2 per cent has been identified as wilderness and a further 3.9 per cent is under assessment. On the Northern Tablelands we already have some 37,700 hectares of national parks and 18,500 hectares of State forests, with an additional 1,400 hectares gazetted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service but not purchased.

Tenterfield Shire Council near the Queensland border is currently facing six proposals for wilderness protected areas, which will cost the council \$80,000 a year in loss of rates. This shire of 7,124 square kilometres with a rating base of \$1.8 million already includes nine State forests, four national parks and five nature reserves. In the past couple of years it lost \$50,000 annually when land leased by private land-holders from State Forests was resumed for softwood plantations, and it lost a further \$25,000 annually when the last round of national parks and reserves were declared. For ratepayers in Tenterfield, the inevitable cost is a downgrading and some cuts in services. In fact, they are paying rather more heavily than many others for the Government's environmental policies which benefit the whole State, and that is acknowledged.

It would make sense if Tenterfield and other councils in my area were compensated for this loss of rates, and if that compensation was legislated as part of future declarations of national parks, wilderness areas, State forests and nature reserves. For the benefit of honourable members, part 2 of the Wilderness Act 1987, which was updated on 15 July 1998, states that any person, body or organisation, including a statutory authority, may submit to the director a written proposal that an area of land be identified as a wilderness area. Then the assessment process I outlined earlier is commenced. Effectively, I could nominate the whole of the Sydney central business district as a wilderness area. However tempting or appropriate that might be, it would be a ludicrous and time-wasting exercise, and it would unnecessarily frustrate many people.

These nominations hang over the heads of landowners, force valuations down and override the provisions of council local environment plans. Clearly, it is costly to all concerned, and the legislation is far too loose to be fair. In making nominations, individuals or groups should have to put up a bond and be required to consult with councils and landowners as part of the nomination process. This would place an obligation on those who make nominations to formulate a convincing case, rather than operate on a loophole which allows for irresponsible nominations on a whim and a mass of indulgent ideology.

To demonstrate the level of anger over these anomalies in my electorate, recently I received a submission from members of the Torrington War Memorial and Recreation Reserve Trust who are totally opposed to the Binghi-Torrington wilderness proposal which is currently under consideration. I attended a meeting in that close-knit community, which was attended by virtually everyone in the area. People are extremely angry about being locked out of an area which has been used as a reserve for many years. They argue that the National Parks and Wildlife Service has spent large amounts of money on the Torrington State recreational reserve to allow better access and use of the natural attractions, but under the new proposal access will be denied. According to a National Parks and Wildlife Service report, the service has put fenced areas in place across tracks and fire trails to lock people out. Those who visit Torrington have been locked out of all the opportunities provided by that community. I urge the Government to consider taking corrective action in this regard as soon as possible.

LAND TAX VALUATIONS

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [6.03 p.m.]: Once again I address the issue of land tax and the absolute outrage across not only my electorate but the entire State about the orchestrated rip-off of taxpayers in the community by the Carr Government that has been continuing for a number of years. Again I draw attention to a press release issued by the Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney on 28 June of this year. Referring to land tax and the Walton report, which was a damning report, the Minister in his press release stated:

A legislative review group will be established to ascertain what amendments to current legislation are required ...

It is planned that reforms will be in place for this year's valuations.

I turn now to an answer to a question upon notice that I received from the Minister this morning. Referring to the Walton report, the Minister refused to list again the recommendations accepted by the Government. However, he stated that the review group had been formed and had met a couple of times in August. I understand that the review group has held preliminary meetings over the past few months but it has done nothing substantial. The Minister referred to legislative changes to the land tax coming before this House after the Olympics. I am sure those changes will come before the House after the Olympics. However, I do not know what the changes will be or when we will see them.

The Minister, in his answer, said that the valuations will be passed from the Valuer-General to the Office of State Revenue in mid-November. I can only assume from the Minister's answer today that he simply does not understand land tax. He does not understand the process by which valuations are done and passed to

the Office of State Revenue. He does not understand that the land tax assessments will be prepared over the next few months and issued early in the new year, because for the past four months he has been insisting that all future land tax assessments will be done under the new system.

Clearly the Minister does not understand that he has not yet created the new system. Clearly, he will not create the new system over the next few weeks, during the Paralympics. Clearly, the new system will not be passed by this House in time for the valuations to go to the Office of State Revenue. If the Minister proposes significant changes to the valuation system, unless we see those changes and agree to them on the spot, I cannot see how he will get community support for the necessary significant changes to the land tax evaluation system and then get them into the assessments. I ask the Minister again whether he will come before this House and explain. Does he understand the land tax valuation system? Does he understand how the valuations are passed to the Office of State Revenue and how the assessments are issued? Does he understand that the Carr Government has orchestrated a major rip-off of New South Wales taxpayers over the past three years which involves hundreds of millions of dollars?

It is interesting that earlier the Minister for Fair Trading was complaining about something or other. He should have a look at his colleagues in Cabinet who have orchestrated a rip-off of taxpayers in New South Wales for three years. Between the Minister's office and New South Wales Treasury, the Government has systematically ripped hundreds of millions of dollars from good, hard-working investors in properties in New South Wales, as well as home owners. It is time the Carr Government returned to the basic issue. The Government is under pressure from various media quarters to have a good look at the valuation system. The Minister is selling the Government down the river on this issue while the Treasurer sits back happily rolling in the cash coming through the door of the New South Wales Treasury.

The Minister needs to go back to basics. The Walton report was a damning indictment not only of the land tax valuation system in New South Wales but also of the entire Carr Government, which clearly orchestrated the rip-off of taxpayers. The Minister and the Premier should have another look at the Walton report, understand the process of how the valuations go to the Office of State Revenue, understand how the assessments are issued and remove the major recommendations from the legislative review group quickly—in the next week or two would be excellent—so the community can have a look at them. Otherwise, the Government will not get community support for its planned cosmetic changes.

Private members' statements noted.

BILLS RETURNED

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

Administrative Decisions Tribunal Legislation Amendment (Revenue) Bill

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

Adoption Bill

Consideration of amendments deferred.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Lynch) left the chair at 6.08 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

PSYCHOLOGISTS BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Mr Knowles [7.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Psychologists Bill repeals the Psychologists Act 1989 and replaces it with an updated and strengthened regulatory regime for the psychological profession. The stated object of the bill is to ensure that psychologists are fit to practise, and to protect the health and safety of members of the public. An extensive review undertaken

by the Department of Health considered both the recommendations of an Ombudsman's report and the public benefit issues required under the Competition Principles Agreement. The review process has involved detailed public consultation facilitated by a publicly released issues paper. The review concluded that there were some shortcomings with the current registration and complaints handling processes. The bill introduces a number of reform measures to address these shortcomings.

The bill introduces new requirements to provide greater protection for members of the public who use the services of psychologists. In her special report to Parliament into the Psychologists Registration Board, the New South Wales Ombudsman recommended that the Act be amended to require applicants for registration to positively demonstrate that they have competence at the time of seeking registration. The Ombudsman also recommended that the board should be able to refuse registration based on an applicant's past professional conduct. Applicants for registration generally demonstrate their competence by holding the relevant academic qualifications and completing supervised practice. Nevertheless, it is recognised that there may be conduct prior to registration that demonstrates that a psychologist does not have the necessary competence to practise.

The proposed legislation allows the board, in any particular case, to hold an inquiry into whether registration should be refused or conditions imposed on a new registrant to address an identified lack of competence. The power to conduct an inquiry will also be available to the board where a person applies to have his or her registration restored. A provision has also been included in the bill to make it clear that the conduct of the person prior to registration may be taken into account in determining whether a person is of good character and is therefore eligible for registration.

The Psychologists Act currently permits the board to refuse registration where a person has been the subject of disciplinary action in a foreign jurisdiction or where the person is affected by an impairment, that is, lack of physical or mental capacity, or addiction to drugs or alcohol. The new legislation, in appropriate circumstances, enables the board to impose conditions on a person's registration as an alternative to refusing registration. A right of appeal will be available against any decision of the board to refuse registration or impose conditions on a person's registration. Under the bill the board will also be specifically empowered to refuse registration where an applicant has a criminal finding against him or her which renders him or her unfit to practise, irrespective of whether a conviction has been recorded.

The Medical Board can take immediate action to suspend a registrant, or place conditions on registration where this is necessary to protect the public. Under the bill the Psychologists Registration Board will now have a similar capacity to take emergency action to protect the public, subject to appropriate review and appeal provisions to ensure fairness to registrants. The bill also contains a number of measures to better ensure existing registrants continue to be fit and competent to practise as psychologists. There will be expanded requirements for notification and reporting of criminal conduct involving registrants.

Psychologists will now be required to report to the board within seven days any criminal convictions they sustain; any finding against them for a sex or violence offence whether or not a conviction has been recorded; any criminal proceedings pending against them for a sex or violence offence involving a minor; and any other criminal proceedings pending against them for a sex or violence offence alleged to have been committed in the course of practice. In this context, a sex or violence offence means an offence involving sexual activity, acts of indecency, child pornography, physical violence or the threat of physical violence.

When renewing their annual registration, psychologists will be required to complete declarations detailing criminal convictions and certain other criminal findings and proceedings relevant to the question of fitness to practise, refusal of registration in another jurisdiction, any significant mental or physical illness from which the psychologist suffered that is likely to affect the capacity to practise, and continuing professional development and education activities undertaken by the psychologist in the previous year. Clause 22 of the bill will require the courts, when aware, to notify the board of psychologists who have been found guilty of an offence or made the subject of a criminal finding for a "sex or violence offence". As a result, the board will be much better informed as to when either disciplinary action or emergency action to protect the public is required.

The current Act has a single definition of "professional misconduct". The single definition of professional misconduct has posed difficulties in the past. Accordingly, the Psychologists Bill adopts the approach contained in other health professional legislation of a two-tiered definition that consists of "unsatisfactory professional conduct" and "professional misconduct". The two-tiered definition overcomes the problem of the current statutory definition of misconduct being read down to apply only to conduct attracting the "gross reprobation of one's peers".

The complaints handling system has also been strengthened and now provides for certain additional powers in relation to a psychologist who is the subject of a complaint. The board may require the psychologist to undergo a medical examination in order to assist in determining the psychologist's competence to practise, and may require a psychologist to provide information with respect to a complaint. Under clause 26 the grounds for complaint against a psychologist have also been expanded to include complaints that psychologists have not provided services of value, and that psychologists have been the subject of criminal findings that render them unfit to practise, notwithstanding that a conviction has not been recorded in a particular case.

The bill establishes the Psychologists Tribunal. As occurs with other health professions, the tribunal will deal with the more serious complaints that may lead to suspension of deregistration, as well as appeals against the decisions of the board with respect to disciplinary matters, registration and restoration applications. The tribunal will be chaired by a legal practitioner with at least seven years experience and include two psychologists appointed by the board, as well as a representative of consumers selected by the board. The Psychologists Board will deal with the less serious spectrum of complaints in an expedient and expert manner, including complaints about the value of particular treatment that a psychologist has provided.

A new body, the Psychological Care Assessment Committee, will be made up of four members appointed by the Minister. The committee chair is to be a registered psychologist nominated by the board. Two members are to be registered psychologists appointed from a panel of names furnished to the Minister by the board, and one member is to be a representative of consumers. The committee will investigate complaints referred to it by the Psychologists Board and, where appropriate, attempt to settle complaints by consent. The committee will report and make recommendations to the board on the complaints which it investigates. The committee will also have the power to require a registrant to undergo skills testing at the board's expense, where appropriate.

Following an investigation and recommendation by the committee, the board will have the power to order the refund of part or all of the fees paid by a consumer to a psychologist, if the board determines that services of value have not been provided. Further, if the committee concludes during the course of its investigations that a complaint raises an issue of unsatisfactory conduct that should be referred to a disciplinary inquiry, the board will be bound to follow this recommendation. In such circumstances the board will either inquire into the matter or, if of sufficient seriousness, refer it for hearing by the Psychologists Tribunal.

The role of the Health Care Complaints Commission has been preserved in the revised disciplinary scheme. The board and the commission will continue to consult each other regarding the action to be taken concerning each complaint received by either body. If either body considers that a complaint requires investigation by the commission, the matter must be investigated. In those cases where a complaint has been referred to the assessment committee, the commission will be provided with the committee's report and recommendations to the board. Furthermore, the commission will have a right to make submissions to a board inquiry into unsatisfactory professional conduct and to prosecute complaints about psychologists before the tribunal.

The proposed legislation also includes comprehensive appeal mechanisms. In the case of a decision on a complaint heard by the board there is a right to appeal to the Psychologists Tribunal and for that appeal to be by way of a fresh hearing. There is also an avenue for a psychologist to appeal to the tribunal on a point of law. In addition, where a condition on registration or suspension is imposed by the board in an impairment matter, there is a right to appeal to the tribunal. Where a complaint is heard by the tribunal there is a right to appeal to the Supreme Court. However, such an appeal may only be made on a point of law. The reason for limiting appeals in this manner is that the Psychologists Tribunal is established as an expert body with both professional and legal expertise.

Outside these formal disciplinary provisions is the less formal rehabilitative system established by part 9 of the bill for dealing with impaired practitioners. These provisions are modelled on provisions in the Medical Practice Act. The rationale behind the impaired registrants system is that practitioners whose ability to practise is impaired, due to factors such as physical or mental illness or drug and alcohol abuse, can be managed and assisted to overcome their problems before those problems develop to such an extent that patients are placed at risk.

Under the proposed system an impaired registrants panel can be convened to consider impairment matters brought to the board's attention. The panel may make recommendations to the board as to the management of an impaired registrant. The board will be able to suspend or place conditions on a practitioner's

registration where the practitioner agrees to this course. Where the practitioner does not agree, the board will have the option of lodging a complaint about the psychologist with the tribunal, or at a board inquiry. Because the impairment system is non-disciplinary in nature, it encourages practitioners to report colleagues or to self-notify before a complaint arises.

Under the provisions of the bill, any conditions on a psychologist's registration must be entered in the register which is publicly available for inspection. Further, the board will be required to give notice to employers and other relevant persons of any disciplinary or other order in respect of a psychologist or of any conditions placed on the registration of a psychologist. The proposed bill introduces a number of other changes. The process for developing the code of professional conduct has been altered to ensure that matters addressed in the code are appropriate and do not enshrine anti-competitive practices or sanction conduct that may not be in the public interest.

The board will also be required to release a draft code and impact statement in accordance with such requirements as the Minister may from time to time determine. The draft code will be released for public comment, and following that the board will submit the draft code for the Minister's approval. Breach of the code may constitute improper and unethical conduct in the course of practice warranting disciplinary action.

The bill will also introduce provisions to increase the flexibility and transparency of the registration system. Under the current Act, a person is entitled to full registration following the completion of a tertiary course of at least four years full-time study specialising in psychology and two years practical experience. The board relies exclusively on the accreditation process of the Australian Psychological Society and does not recognise non-university-based training. The bill includes revised processes for the accreditation of courses where it can be demonstrated that the course produces graduates with an equivalent level of attainment to those graduates of a four-year program of study.

To this end, provision has been made to enable the board to establish criteria to determine when a course has sufficient specialisation in psychology. Where the board does not recognise a course of study, an application may be made to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review of the decision of the board on such an application. The bill also provides for greater flexibility in the process for completing the supervised practice prerequisite for registration. The bill reconstitutes the board with the addition of a consumer representative. A medical practitioner is no longer to be included on the board, as it is not considered appropriate to require a medical practitioner to be represented on a board that provides for the registration of another independent professional group. The provision enabling the nomination of psychologist members to the board by one particular professional association has also been changed.

Whereas the Act currently specifies that these nominees are to be made by the Australian Psychological Society, the new legislation provides that three psychologists are to be nominated by the Minister from a panel of psychologists nominated by the Australian Psychological Society and such other bodies as the Minister may determine. This will allow greater flexibility as to the sources of board nominations and remove one particular organisation's monopoly in this regard. Further, board members will be limited to serving three consecutive terms of four years each. This will ensure that the board is able to draw on an appropriate mix of knowledge and experience, as well as new ideas and approaches, in exercising its functions.

A number of other reforms have also been introduced. These include prohibiting the use of the title "doctor" by a registered psychologist, unless the psychologist is the holder of an appropriate qualification conferred by a university; allowing the board to issue guidelines with respect to voluntary continuing education for psychologists; providing for the appointment of an inspector; and allowing for the establishment of a psychological education and research account to be administered by the board. There has been extensive consultation through the review process. Both the Psychologists Registration Board and the main professional association, the Australian Psychological Society, support the thrust of the proposed legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mrs Skinner.

**PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS
AMENDMENT (BALLOONS) BILL**

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Mr Debus [7.50 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Protection of the Environment Operations (Balloons) Bill meets the Carr Government's commitment to ban the mass release of lighter-than-air balloons, made by the Premier in this House in early August. The driving force behind the proposal is to protect marine animals that may swallow balloons blown or washed out to sea. It is also the case that after release, latex balloons tend to freeze and shatter in the atmosphere and cause widespread littering. However, tracing those responsible is almost impossible because of the distance balloons travel.

Environmental concerns with the mass release of balloons have received considerable attention in various countries over the past decade. Some American States have already legislated for bans on balloon releases, and the United Nations established its Global Program for Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. This program aims to prevent degradation of marine environments from land-based activities. Australia became a signatory in 1995. The bill before the House provides a step towards meeting our commitments.

This proposal also fills a small but critical gap in the Government's comprehensive actions on litter prevention. To date, our actions have included the \$60 million Urban Stormwater program that encourages and supports improved urban stormwater quality through public education, stormwater management planning and funding remedial stormwater projects. Over 1,300 tonnes of litter and sediment have been prevented from entering our waterways as a result of funding provided through this program. The Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 also created new regulatory measures for litter thrown from motor vehicles, and increased the maximum penalty that may be imposed by a court for such an offence; and more recently the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Littering) Act 2000 that was passed by Parliament earlier this year significantly extended the range of littering offences and fines.

The introduction of the new litter legislation provided the impetus for a public awareness campaign. Environment Protection Authority surveys have shown that the mass media advertisements received strong recognition by the public, particularly television commercials. I am pleased to inform honourable members that there is an extremely high awareness in the community that littering is a problem, and there is an encouraging trend that people are changing their behaviour as a result of increased awareness. We want to continue to build on this support.

I turn to the contents of the bill, which would amend the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. The object of the bill is to make it an offence to release 20 or more lighter-than-air balloons at or about the same time. Penalties would increase for releasing more than 100 such balloons, as the likely environmental impact would be greater. Members should note that the term "at or about the same time" in new section 146E (1) of the bill covers a situation where the release of balloons does not occur in one action; for example, at a concert where the release occurs in stages of, say, five or 10 minute intervals or more.

The wording of new section 146E (1) also covers a situation where the release occurs from different locations, say, within a stadium or other venue. I would like the House to be aware that the Government is seeking in this legislation to ensure that action can be taken against all those that may be responsible for releasing balloons. New section 146E (2) extends liability in situations where there is a total release of 20 or more balloons by several people but there is no one person that actually released the balloons. Therefore, the person who caused or permitted the total release of the balloons would still be liable.

The offences and penalties in the bill mirror those for littering introduced last July. On-the-spot fines would range from \$200 to \$750. Courts may impose fines of up to \$5,000 for offences that are more serious. Releasing fewer than 20 balloons would be exempt. We want to stop releases at large-scale events, not small private functions, such as children's birthday parties. Large hot-air balloons are also exempt. Similarly, weather balloons and other balloons released for scientific purposes would not be affected.

Some sections of the community are looking for the Government to act quickly on this matter. Not least amongst these are the actions of Bethany Henderson, a young girl from the South Coast who has waged a strong campaign to protect marine bird life from the potential threat of swallowing balloons. There has been some concern about the possible economic impact of the proposed ban on those selling balloons. We have made it clear that we are not banning balloons, just controlling their mass release into the open air. In short, the intention is to stop people cutting the strings on masses of balloons outdoors. Many circumstances for using balloons to signify celebration would remain.

However, I believe the recently concluded Olympic Games proved that the community can hold the most expansive and successful community celebrations and entertainment events without releasing great

numbers of balloons. Despite the unfortunate decision of the National Rugby League to release balloons at its recent grand final, mass balloon releases are on the decline. Increasing concern about wildlife impacts appears to have caused event organisers to stop such releases voluntarily. Many New South Wales people want the Government to do more to control the blight caused by litter. They also want action to protect wildlife from unnecessary harm. This bill is one further stage in meeting those desires. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Seaton.

CONDUCT OF THE HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR PORT MACQUARIE

Personal Explanation

Mr OAKESHOTT, by leave: I wish to explain that during the past three hours in this place I have watched an extraordinary attack on my character develop which is based on total misinformation. The implications of this vicious attack are not only a reflection on my character, but also a reflection on every member and, unfortunately, on the views of this House on the Aboriginal reconciliation process. During question time the Minister for Tourism spoke on a range of stories that have been written by overseas journalists following the Olympic Games. She mentioned a story about the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Broken Hill, nightclubbing in Port Macquarie, Aborigines from Bourke and about *Living Outback* generally.

Following the Minister's comment on nightclubbing in Port Macquarie there was some obvious discussion throughout the Chamber about the quality and quantity of night life in Port Macquarie. That ended with me gesturing in a manner that was supposed to reflect a good night out at Port Macquarie nightclubs. This was a gesture of goodwill across the Chamber, and the discussions on nightclubs included Labor as well as Liberal and National Party backbenchers.

Unfortunately, an hour later I received a phone call from a journalist questioning whether the half lifting of my tie was a gesture reflecting Aboriginal deaths in custody. I then went to see the journalist, who was in discussion with a representative of the Premier, and sought further information. The representative of the Premier was, I think, unfortunately and unfairly peddling the story throughout the press gallery that my action was in some way a reference to Aboriginal deaths in custody.

I find it disappointing that I am in a position where I have to deny a story that I believe is both unjust and a clinically fabricated version of the events of the day. I am extremely disappointed as well that the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, has chosen to join the fabrication and has, over the past three hours, made public comments outside the House on this matter. I am also extremely disappointed that my private efforts to clarify this issue in good faith were dismissed by the Premier. Indeed, the Premier made me wait outside his office for 40 minutes this evening, and then chose not to see me to discuss, clarify and resolve this issue.

My actions were in no way related to any Aboriginal issues, nor were they in relation to the *Living Outback*, which, if one looks at the videotape of proceedings, one can see is the comment made by the Minister prior to my action. For the clarification of the House, my actions were in relation to nightclubbing in Port Macquarie, something I encourage all members of the House to consider this summer. Indeed, I will be sending a video to all members of this place encouraging them to visit Port Macquarie this summer.

Also for the clarification of this House, I am a firm believer in the reconciliation process, and anyone who knows me personally and bothers to ask me, knows I believe strongly, both privately and publicly, in a united Australia. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Premier's press secretary have put short-term political expediency ahead of any long-term reconciliation, and in this post-Olympics environment I personally find this level of spin doctoring a step backwards for all of us.

FEDERAL COURTS (CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISIONS) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Mr Debus [8.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends a number of State Acts so as to omit provisions that purport to confer State jurisdiction on Federal courts. It also makes minor amendments to the Corporations Act which are consequential on changes made to the Corporations Law by Commonwealth legislation. There are several State-Commonwealth schemes which provide for Federal courts and tribunals to exercise State jurisdiction. Of these, the Corporations Law scheme has attracted most public attention in recent years. In *Re Wakim: ex parte McNally* (1999) 163 ALR 270 (Re Wakim), the High Court considered whether arrangements in State laws to confer jurisdiction on Federal courts were valid. The court concluded that only the Commonwealth could confer jurisdiction on a Federal court as a matter of the interpretation of the Constitution. The decision meant that arrangements in these schemes for the exercise of jurisdiction by the Federal Court were inoperative, because the source of the jurisdiction was a law of the State.

Following the decision in *Re Wakim*, all States enacted legislation to validate decisions which were found to be invalid as a result of that decision. This legislation was developed through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, or SCAG. The New South Wales Parliament passed the Federal Courts (State Jurisdiction) Act 1999, which commenced on 9 July 1999. Attention is now being directed to those provisions in State Acts which are inoperative because of *Re Wakim*. This bill will amend the State Acts which established schemes to confer State jurisdiction on Federal courts. It will remove or amend these inoperative provisions.

The bill amends the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (New South Wales) Act 1994, the Competition Policy Reform (New South Wales) Act 1995, the Co-Operatives Act 1992, the Corporations (New South Wales) Act 1990, the Gas Pipelines Access (New South Wales) Act 1998, the Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Act 1987, the National Crime Authority (State Provisions) Act 1984 and the Price Exploitation (New South Wales) Act 1999. The bill is modelled on legislation which was developed through SCAG and has been enacted in Victoria. The bill also makes minor amendments to the Corporations Act which are consequential on changes made to the Corporations Law by Commonwealth legislation. This bill does not deal with the major issue of the future regulations of corporations. It merely makes minor changes which are consequential on the decision in *Re Wakim*. I commend the bill to the House.

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

SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [8.05 p.m.]: As with so many other honourable members who have spoken in this debate, it is with the same sense of patriotic pride that I take part in the debate to support the motion moved by the Premier and extend very hearty congratulations to so many people who have been associated with bringing to Sydney, New South Wales and Australia what the President of the International Olympic Committee identified as the best Olympic Games ever. Of course, we need to reflect on the fact that these Olympics were not only for Sydney but for the whole of Australia, indeed for the whole of this State.

The Olympic Games, for regions such as the Illawarra and in particular the region that I represent, started some years ago. I want to give some examples of how the Illawarra has assisted in bringing the Olympic Games to fruition. During the construction phase of some of the facilities a number of businesses in the Illawarra region were a bit slow to recognise the opportunity presented by the Games. In my then capacity as Lord Mayor of Wollongong, I worked with the Wollongong Chamber of Commerce. I want to acknowledge the then Chief Executive Officer of that Chamber, Alan Clarke. We organised to have some people come to the Department of State and Regional Development in Sydney. We were fortunate enough to have the Minister for the Olympics, Mr Knight, come and talk to those people about those opportunities.

Subsequently, firms such as Tony Pollard Electrics did substantial work on Olympic facilities. So the involvement of people from Wollongong and the broader Illawarra started a number of years ago. The economic benefit of the Games came to our region through such firms. Of course we also set ourselves the task, as other communities did, of ensuring that we would be in a position to support the Olympics by providing facilities and opportunities for training for teams before the Games. I want to acknowledge that teams from Portugal, Finland, Iceland, Macedonia, the United States, Belarus, Ireland and elsewhere trained at a number of facilities in Wollongong. I need to acknowledge the efforts of an officer of Wollongong City Council, Mr Matt Waugh, who, along with one of his staff, Margaret Westbury, co-ordinated much of that effort.

The coming of these teams to the Illawarra provided a focus for the Olympic Games, demonstrating to our community that it had a role in the Olympics. Also, of course, we have what is very much a multicultural

community, which meant that those visiting people were made very welcome. I would also point out that the National Olympic Committee of Russia stayed in the North Beach Novotel. From all accounts, they had rather a fun time staying in the city of Wollongong. Again, they were there because people put effort into making sure that Wollongong and the broader Illawarra were part of the Olympics.

In recent days I have talked to a number of retailers and other small business people in the region. They report a very positive time during the Olympics. The other aspect of the Olympics that provided so much excitement round the country—and, again, in the area that I represent—was the torch relay. At first I was a bit nonplussed by the relay. I thought it would be something that would happen, that you would blink and it would be all over. But as the day unfolded an amazing number of people came out of their homes and businesses, gathered by the side of the road and watched this event occur. People were talking to people that they had not seen in 10 years, although they live in the same suburb. All through the northern suburbs of Wollongong—Fairy Meadow, Corrimal, Woonona, Bulli and Thirroul—all sorts of activities were put on. In Thirroul, for example, the Thirroul Village Committee made sure that each young person had an Australian flag to wave.

Prior to the Olympic Games a committee chaired by David Williams raised funds to send the Australian team to the Games. To leave a lasting legacy for a community that has had so many sporting greats and so many Olympians in the past, this group of people built a memorial known as a tribute wall, which names every former Olympian from the region and which will name every Olympian who competes in the future. I thank Prime television in Wollongong, its General Manager, Mike Whiteman, TAFE in Illawarra and a number of other people who were associated with that project. The Olympics are about athletes, no matter what their sport. It is risky when one starts naming people, but I pay tribute to Megan Warthold from Bulli who took part in the women's weightlifting and finished a very creditable twelfth. She lifted 100 kilograms in the clean and jerk and 75 kilograms in the snatch events.

Kerryn McCann, who lives in Coledale in the electorate of the honourable member for Heathcote, who is in the Chamber this evening, ran tenth in the women's marathon. Kerryn is a friend of both my wife and I. We were fortunate to be at the athletics session at Stadium Australia when Kerryn came into the stadium. We took up with great gusto the chant, one which has been repeated in this Chamber many times in debate, to encourage Kerryn. Another athlete to whom I pay tribute is Louise Currey, who won the silver medal in the women's javelin event in Atlanta. Louise injured her knee in a training camp in Brisbane a fortnight before the Games, but she worked, struggled and put up with a great deal of pain to take part in the event. Unfortunately, her knee gave out in the second throw, and she withdrew from the competition. But Louise showed the strength and determination that have been exhibited by the elite athletes taking part in that event.

Many people have spoken about the volunteers. It would be inappropriate not to touch on all the volunteers in my contribution. Neil and Molly McCosky put a great deal of effort into the public domain. Noel Causer acted as a volunteer driver. It was amazing and worthwhile to talk to him and to learn of his experiences. I refer also to a lady from Dapto whose name I do not know. She was an aisle usher at Stadium Australia who caught the train at 4.30 a.m. from Dapto to ensure that she could fulfil her role as a volunteer. I place on record the fact that the public sector has had an opportunity to get things right. It is simply wrong to believe that everything should be privatised and contracted out to the private sector. The important lesson that we have learned from the Games is that major facilities can be built and major events can be managed by the public sector.

I refer to the old adage that success has a thousand fathers and failure is an orphan. So many people were involved in the organisation of these Games that there was no possibility of them being a failure. The old adage that there are many fathers of success is entirely appropriate. I pay tribute to the Minister for the Olympics, SOCOG and all those members of Parliament who worked tirelessly from the time the bid was prepared until the closing ceremony. I pay particular tribute to the workers on the ground: workers in the construction and operational phases; workers transporting people to events; and emergency services personnel. Overwhelmingly they would have been members of trade unions. A number of comrades from the trade union movement in the Illawarra are elsewhere in Parliament House tonight so it is entirely appropriate that I acknowledge the workers in this speech.

I pay tribute also to the spectators. This event would not have been anywhere near as exciting without the brilliance, gusto, excitement and passion of the spectators. They, as much as the athletes, contributed to the success of the events. Australians strongly and appropriately supported Australian athletes, as well as athletes from other countries. People were so appreciative of the athletes' efforts. Our task is not yet complete. The Paralympics are yet to be staged. Earlier I referred to other countries training for the Olympics in Wollongong, the area which I represent. The Australian track and field team for the Paralympics has been in camp for a couple of weeks. It has been training at a facility known as Beaton Park.

My colleague the honourable member for Menai mentioned in her contribution that she can recall where she was when it was announced that Sydney would host the Games in the year 2000. I recall that that happened at about 4 o'clock in the morning. Later that same day in September we formally opened the Beaton Park athletics track, which has received funding and great support from the State Government and a lot of support and funding from a number of State members, the city council and others. I make that point in response to the statement made earlier by my colleague the honourable member for Menai.

Troy Sachs, an athlete born and raised in Bulli, will compete for Australia in the wheelchair basketball in the Paralympics. Tomorrow, Troy will carry the Paralympic torch through our city. I consider him to be something of a larrikin. I have known Troy, who is now in his mid-twenties, for a long time. When Australia won the gold medal in this event in Atlanta I have vivid memories of Troy, who was then in his early twenties, hanging from the basketball hoop and taking as a souvenir the net that hung below it. Troy is quoted in today's *Illawarra Mercury* as saying that he was asked to carry the torch in a particular time frame. He said that he would have none of that. He wants to savour the moment and make sure that he shares it with as many people as he can. Troy's sense of larrikinism will result in him playing a strong role in wheelchair basketball at the Paralympics.

I congratulate everybody who has been associated with staging the Olympic Games in Sydney. Equally, I extend congratulations to those who will take part and those who are involved in organising the Paralympics. I look forward to some exciting competition from Paralympians. We must all acknowledge that the Paralympics are about paralleling the Olympics: they are about celebrating people's ability. I look forward to that competition and wish the Australian team in the Paralympics all the best.

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [8.18 p.m.]: I support this important motion and join with all Australians in congratulating those involved in the presentation of the Olympic Games. I congratulate our wonderful athletes who took part in the Games. I say to the Paralympians who are about to represent our country how proud we are of them and how we, as a nation, are all looking forward to supporting their efforts in those Games. I was sceptical when the government of the day put forward a proposal to attract the Olympic Games to Sydney. I thought of the cost and all the logistics involved. But as it has evolved, it has turned out well. Today I am big enough to say to the public, "Well done and congratulations." To all those who have put in so much hard work I say, "Well done."

The Prime Minister got it right when he said that the Australian people showed themselves to be at peace. That was true. A great example was set during the Games. I am acknowledged as an armchair sportsman. Anyone who knows me well knows I am happy to sit back in the confines of my lounge room and watch sportsmen and sportswomen. I thoroughly enjoy that, and I do not apologise for it. That was the case during the Games. Whenever possible, every day and every night, my family and I watched the feats of our Olympians. As honourable members know, Wagga Wagga is the city of good sports. It has a long and proud sporting history. Over the years it has produced many sportsmen and sportswomen and the city has a sports hall of fame dedicated to them. Today I will place some of their names on the record: the Mortimer brothers, Slater, Kelly, Lawson, Wayne King, Greg Hubbard, Taylor, Collingwood, Scobie Breasley, Greg Brentnall, Stanley Wizell, Beresford, Ellwood, Tony Roche and Terry Denaher, to name just a few.

In the run-up to the Olympic Games the honourable member for Gosford visited Wagga Wagga with the Olympic torch. We had the pleasure of visiting Koorinal School, Henske School and Wagga Wagga High School. On seeing the Olympic torch, the students were absolutely enthusiastic; they certainly got a buzz out of the event. For me the greatest night was the evening that some 15,000 people attended the lighting of the community cauldron in Bolton Park. After the torch had been taken on a long run around the city, where thousands of people had turned up on a bitterly cold night, the cauldron was lit by our own Greg McDermott, who was a medallist at the Seoul Olympics. Our community proudly bestowed that honour on Greg.

It was a great buzz for me, as it was for the organising committee, which included AMP representatives and Peter McAlister, who is heavily involved in sport in the city of Wagga Wagga. His name is renowned. Whenever one mentions football or any form of sport, Peter McAlister's name comes to the fore. I offer my congratulations to the organising committee, which did a magnificent job under trying circumstances. Because of heavy rain, alternative arrangements had to be made. The rain and the water was so bad that sand and chip bark had to be brought in to prevent people from becoming bogged in the park. The committee put on a wonderful promotion.

Wagga Wagga contributed in many ways to the Olympic Games. During this debate many honourable members have spoken about different aspects of their electorates and the input they had to the Games. The

honourable member for Lachlan spoke about the whip crackers from Wagga Wagga. I thought that was great, but Wagga Wagga helped and contributed a lot more. Our musicians travelled a long way for their practice sessions before they took part in the ceremonies. Our dairy farmers, who are, unfortunately, going through difficult times because of the deregulation of the milk industry, supplied the milk for the Olympic Games. They were very proud of that. It was acknowledged that Wagga Wagga milk is some of the best milk produced in Australia. I congratulate the dairy farmers in our region. I wish them all the very best in these trying times.

All honourable members would realise that the deregulation has caused difficulties for families, and my area is certainly not immune from those difficulties. Fearnies Buses supplied 36 coaches for the Olympic Games. Some friends of mine drove those buses. They came home last week with wonderful tales of their experiences. Joe Solomon was one of those people who drove passengers around Sydney. He had a wonderful time and met some very interesting people as well as some great athletes. Many speakers in the debate have rightly mentioned the efforts of the volunteers. It has been said that the volunteers were the face of Australia, the face of Sydney. I am having a list prepared of the members of my community who were enthusiastic, who embraced the Games and who volunteered their time in the same way as many others across all electorates of New South Wales and, indeed, Australia.

It is my intention to acknowledge their efforts by inviting all of them to a special function in Wagga Wagga, where I can thank them for their efforts, for giving up their time and for leaving their loved ones for two weeks to help celebrate the Games. I congratulate everyone who has been involved in the initiative to strike a special medallion for these workers. It is entirely appropriate. I am pleased that the Premier has adopted the initiative of the Leader of the Opposition and said that if a sponsor can be found the medallions will be struck. I encourage a suitable sponsor to come forward to help supply these medallions as keepsakes for those who gave up their time.

On the long weekend I went to a small community in the western region. I became involved in a conversation about the Olympic flame and about the great community celebrations. I was told that a person I went to school with was in charge of the logistics of the running of the flame in Australia. That person was Iris Preston. I was then told that a fellow by the name of Robert Clark, who I also went to school with, was a driver with the flame. They both went to school in a small town called Ivanhoe, which was mentioned earlier in this debate. It is in the electorate of the honourable member for Murray-Darling, and it is where I was schooled. Those two people from that small community went out and created their own niche in Australia, but they came together to help with the torch relay.

The security of the torch was provided in part by Genevieve Graham. Genevieve was Miss Wagga Wagga in 1994. She is in the Police Service and is a very well-respected and loved figure in the city of Wagga Wagga. It was delightful to see Genevieve return home to escort the Olympic torch into our great city. On the plane to Sydney this week I spoke with Sasha Marks, an attendant with Kendell Airlines. Sasha was speaking about the passengers she had helped to get to Albury and Wagga Wagga. She talked about the teams that had visited the city of Albury and the fact that Andrew Hoy had been a passenger on one of her flights. He had his medals with him. The passengers insisted that Andrew sit at the front of the plane so they could see him as they exited, shake his hand and look at the medals he had proudly won for Australia. That exemplifies the way Australians embraced these Games.

There were many moments of great interest. I took the time to listen to events on the radio. The beach volleyball was a memorable moment. My young son, James, and I were listening to the event and when it got to the last couple of minutes we stopped our vehicle on the side of the road to listen to them. It was exciting stuff. Honourable members should remember that these remarks are being made by someone who watches sport from an armchair and thoroughly enjoys it, but who has not been the greatest of participants when opportunities have presented themselves. They were great events. The men's 4 x 100 freestyle relay was the greatest race I have seen. When it was finished I was exhausted because I swam every stroke with them. No-one can forget the great sportsmanship shown by both the Australian representatives and representatives from other parts of the world in the pole vaulting, gymnastics, diving, boxing and equestrian events.

In relation to the equestrian events, I refer specifically to Charles Sturt University. In fact, Charles Sturt University provided 24 horses for events at the Olympic Games. Those horses carried such names as Junee, Mangoplah, Gumly Gumly, Grong Grong, Cookardinia, Wagga Wagga—of course—Yarragundry, Coolamon, Tumbarumba and Wantabadgery. All those names are synonymous with my electorate of Wagga Wagga and the electorates adjacent to it. We had a great deal of pride while following the participation of those horses. Recently, it was recognised that Wagga Wagga has cemented its standing as the future centre for the modern

pentathlon in Australia, with Charles Sturt University praised for its role in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. That praise came from the peak international body of the modern pentathlon, the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne [UIPM], which hailed the Sydney Olympic Games as the best ever—as did Mr Samaranch.

We now look forward to more Games. As the previous speaker said, we look forward to the Paralympic Games. Australians now look forward to enjoying watching our great athletes who are about to perform their stuff. I was rivetted as I watched Louise win her race and win gold for Australia. She won for her sport and for herself and the many people who admire the great feats of our Paralympians. I, for one, will be there at every opportunity to support the feats of our Paralympians. I sincerely wish them the best of luck in the Games. Australia will be there with them and will be proud of their efforts.

In conclusion, I have been impressed by the amount of publicity and good news presented by the media in regard to the Olympics, from the coverage we received on prime television to the great articles we read in newspapers such as the *Daily Advertiser* with pictorials describing the efforts, the pain and the happiness experienced by our Olympians. I have one pictorial that shows the enjoyment experienced by the Australian athletes and relates the story well. I pay tribute to the *Daily Advertiser*, which kept us informed and up to date. Indeed, it has produced a beautiful special front-page reproduction edition that records the great events of the Olympic Games. [Time expired.]

Mr BARTLETT (Port Stephens) [8.33 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to contribute to this debate, which has continued for some 10 to 12 hours now. My attention was caught by the following line in the motion:

That this House notes the worldwide recognition that the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games were the best ever conducted and expresses its thanks to the many Australians who made this possible.

In about 1975 I was privileged to spend about four weeks travelling around the Peloponnese in Greece, including a visit to Olympia. When the Games were held in Greece, if people were at war with their neighbours they stopped fighting and went to the Games; they were allowed to pass through each other's territory to get to the Games. In those days women did not participate in the Games. Officials did not measure the time it took an athlete to run a certain distance or the distance that an athlete threw something. Competitors simply won events in the year of the Games.

The Olympic Games in Athens brought the community of Greece together, just as the Sydney Olympics have brought together the Australian community and the world community. That is a significant aspect of what occurred over the two weeks of the Olympics. Australia brought the world together at a time of war in the world. Although the Australian community has been divided for some time over the International Olympic Committee and ticketing, the Sydney Games brought the Australian community together in a way I have never seen before. It was a credit to all the Olympic volunteers, who in many ways stole the show from the athletes.

The volunteers received worldwide recognition. No matter where people came from, they were treated as friends of Australia. It was simply wonderful to participate in the atmosphere of the Olympic Games. In 1983 Port Stephens formed a sister-city relationship with Bellingham. At that time I did not know anything about sister-city relationships. At the end of World War II General Eisenhower said he had controlled the biggest armies the world had ever known but he could not bring peace to the world. When he became president he started the sister-cities movement. Basically, he said that he could not allow diplomats and politicians to be in charge of peace in the world; it had to be people-to-people contact.

Much of what has occurred in Port Stephens over the past fortnight have come out of the sister-city movement over the past 10 years and from the community spirit that has developed between Port Stephens and Bellingham. At one stage during the Olympic fortnight I had the pleasure of meeting representatives from King Five Seattle News during their visit to Port Stephens. Their research in Washington State in America showed that Port Stephens and Bellingham were the only two sister cities in Washington State and New South Wales. During their visit to Bellingham they took lots of video footage and talked to people in the sister-cities movement. When they came to Australia they contacted us and asked whether they could visit Port Stephens to compare Port Stephens and Bellingham. And they had Megan Quann, a swimmer from Seattle, with them. I had never heard of Megan Quann.

These people had the company's permission to film in Port Stephens and to follow the exploits of Megan Quann. They were absolutely amazed by the environment and the lifestyle in Port Stephens. They could not believe our culture. They loved what they saw, and that came across in the video footage. I am the first to

admit that Port Stephens is only a small part of what has taken place. King Five Seattle News broadcasts to some 3.5 million people in Washington who watched Megan Quann swim in the 100 metres breaststroke and beat Australia's Leisel the weasel Jones into second place and the silver medal. The coverage that the Olympics Games received in Bellingham will have lasting effects in Seattle and Washington State, as it will have in Port Stephens, New South Wales and Australia. The television coverage was a glowing representation of our lifestyle, our culture and our environment. We are talking about cynical newsmen, people who are in the frontline doing these sorts of things all the time. They were very impressed with what they saw.

The Olympics had a viewing audience of some 3.5 billion. For all the altruistic reasons in the world we run the Olympics, but at the end of the day what we hope to come out of the Olympics is ongoing coverage of things Australian, a different understanding of Australia, that we are not a quarry, that we have much more depth to us than that. That is the message that has now gone out. It has changed the world's opinion of what Australia is like. Over the last ten years some 200,000 people each year have gone out on dolphin watching and whale watching trips in the Port Stephens area. Tourism is booming. If we can tap into and secure that growth in tourism for the future, it will be the long-term result of the Sydney Olympics. I do not need to inform members that one in nine jobs in Australia today revolves around tourism and that one in eight new jobs is being created in the tourism sector.

I should like to acknowledge a couple of other groups in the Port Stephens electorate. Robyn Yvette Dance Studio went to Bellingham in 1995 where they put on a performance as part of the cultural exchanges under the sister-cities link. Robyn's dancers also performed in the tap dancing and flower segments of the Olympic Games opening ceremony. The enthusiasm of those children and their memories of what took place on that night will have a lasting impression on their lives. I get the feeling that the event will be a little like "Where were you when JFK was killed?" It will be one of those significant events in people's lives in respect of which most people will be able to remember where they were at the time.

At least something in the Sydney Olympics will jog people's memories for the rest of their lives. In December this year Robyn will lead a tour to Bellingham. We have already sent faxes and telegrams to Bellingham saying things like, "Well done Megan Quann" and "Here come the dancers from Port Stephens that were in the Olympics to put on another cultural show." In this way we build up friendships around the world and develop the Olympic ideals that came out of the entire movement.

I should like to speak about one volunteer by the name of J. J. Smith, who is a very good mate of mine. J. J. is a Newcastle boy; he was born in the Hunter. In the 1960s he worked for the Water Board. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s he was in the police force where he worked for police rescue. In the mid-1990s he was part of a random shooting while on duty. He took two bullets and did not even know the assailant. He subsequently got out of the police force. I met J. J. early in the 1990s when, as an RAAF air force reserve 26 Squadron member I trained him to be an RSO. As I said to him at the time that I sent him a message, I am sorry that I did not teach him to duck a little better. J. J. is Chairman of the Victorian subcommittee of Port Stephens Sister Cities. He was a volunteer for the Sydney Olympics.

He travelled to Sydney and undertook part of the one million hours of training. Even though he had an extremely bad dose of the flu, he continued to do his duty. Indeed, J. J. represents and symbolises the 47,000 volunteers who came out during the Olympics and did their best for New South Wales and this country. I think he did a magnificent job, as they all did. The history of volunteerism that we have in this country is probably unique in the world in that people are volunteering in their communities for all different sorts of reasons, and when something like this comes along they all join together.

On a personal note, I loved the live sites. I went to The Wiggles concert and saw all the kids jumping up and down with delight. They just loved being part of the Games. The live sites allowed people who could not afford to go to the Olympics to watch the athletes and to be very much part of the whole event. The live sites around the city were very much part of making the Games such a huge success for the people of New South Wales. For a person who does not own a television, I almost moved in with my sister for a couple of weeks and got glued to the television. I thought the coverage on Channel 7 was as good an Olympic coverage as I had seen.

I was particularly moved by the advertisements; they were original and clever. I would have to give first prize to the Tooheys advertisement in which the Ocker goes out and grabs the blue marathon line and takes it around the Hills hoist and the whole marathon team just passes by. It was a wonderful image to show the overseas visitors who were watching some of the Olympic coverage on television. I also appreciated the more moderate presentation of medal ceremonies, which I often find extremely tedious. I believe that the shots taken

of Sydney Harbour, the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House during the triathlon swim, bike and run races will reverberate around the world and bring tourists to New South Wales for probably a generation. The motion moved by the Premier has my wholehearted support, and obviously it has the wholehearted support of all members of the House. I was extremely pleased to be part of what was a wonderful event.

Mr RICHARDSON (The Hills) [8.47 p.m.]: I am pleased to be able to speak to this motion and to record the extraordinary level of support of the people of New South Wales for the Olympic Games and, I suspect, for the Paralympics which are soon to begin. The Olympics were a great advertisement for New South Wales and indeed Australia. However, I suspect that the greatest advertisements of all were Australians themselves. We were shown to the world as being the friendliest, most open and most honest people in the world. The way in which people from all over the world reacted to that very open and friendly face of the Australian people was extraordinary.

I can recall back in 1993 when Sydney won the Games. It was a bipartisan bid, but I place on record the fact that it was Nick Greiner's idea and that Bruce Baird was the Minister responsible for the Olympic bid. I am sure that all members of this House would be grateful to them for the vision they showed so many years ago. Indeed, it was Nick Greiner's vision that we would have the most successful Games ever. That vision has been delivered in spades, and I extend my congratulations to the Government and the Minister for the Olympics on fulfilling Nick Greiner's vision.

Australia maintained its enthusiasm throughout the seven years following Sydney winning the Games. I observed that very early on. Castle Hill Public School in my electorate adopted the small principality of Monaco for the Games. Last year I took the torch out to the school to show the students. The extraordinary level of excitement and enthusiasm that those kids showed for the torch at that time indicated to me probably better than anything how Australians would embrace the Games when they came to Sydney. Less than two weeks before the opening ceremony, the St Lucia team arrived in Sydney with a chef de mission and an assistant chef de mission—a team of only five athletes—and came out to Glenhaven Public School which had adopted them. The team's special ambassador was Kerry Chikarovski who also came out to the school. A special gala performance was staged for the chef de mission. By that time, the excitement was reaching fever pitch.

The torch relay came through my electorate and literally tens of thousands of people lined the route. Such huge crowds have never been seen before in Castle Hill. The torch arrived at Pennant Hills Park in the electorate of Epping on Wednesday 13 September and 30,000 people attended. The police were expecting 10,000 people and found it almost impossible to control the crowds. But it was a very good-humoured day—even though the temperature reached 30 degrees—and that good humour was maintained for the next several weeks.

I remember that the night of the opening ceremony was almost like the night before Christmas—nothing was stirring, not even a mouse. Although I was not fortunate enough to attend the opening ceremony at Homebush Bay, I watched it on television, as I am sure every honourable member who did not attend the opening ceremony did. Immediately before the opening ceremony began, I had occasion to go outside my house. It was quite extraordinary because there was not a single car on the road or a single person outside. People were either watching the opening ceremony on a big screen or on their televisions at home, or they were privileged to be attending the ceremony. Any person from overseas who had come to Australia and had experienced what would normally be expected on Friday night in West Pennant Hills or in any other part of Sydney probably would have realised that he or she was in for something special, and so it turned out to be.

That riveting spectacle—Ric Birch's opening ceremony—absolutely caught me by surprise. It was a complete knockout and, quite honestly, I have not heard a bad word said about it. Many of the 12,000 performers came from my electorate. The horses that were part of the commencement of the opening ceremony depicting the *Man from Snowy River* theme were stabled in the Castle Hill showground. Shortly beforehand my wife said that although she knew the opening ceremony was meant to be a secret, she thought some horses were involved and that they had something to do with the *Man from Snowy River*. It was a lucky guess because she had not actually spoken to anyone, but she was right.

I congratulate young Nikki Webster who put on an absolutely outstanding and unforgettable performance. I am sure that she will go very far in whatever field she chooses. I gather that she has been chosen for a film that will be made in South Africa. The very open and natural way in which she projects herself will take her a long way. She was, and is, a great ambassador for Australia. Right throughout the Games, the venues sparkled. The weather was generally kind. Although there were a few days of rain, it was one of the most glorious spring periods that I can recall.

I place on record my thanks to the 47,000 volunteers who worked throughout the Games. Many of them came from my electorate. Indeed, business in The Hills was down because so many people were attending the Games or were working for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games [SOCOG]. I hope that the reduced level of business activity will improve in weeks to come. Certainly, restaurants in my electorate still seem to be down in trading activity. A week or so ago I spoke to a restaurateur who told me that things had really not picked up since the Games probably because people had spent most of their money. That is a concern that should be recognised.

People such as Ian, Jayne and Katie Hawkshaw, Keith Bensley from Castle Hill, Evan Thomas from West Pennant Hills and Barrie McIntosh from Castle Hill were among the 47,000 volunteers. Peter Gilliard—who runs Western Camera and Video Service and to whom I gave a reference—was a driver. All honourable members who watched the swimming events would have seen a chap who came out with all the swimmers for every event at the swimming centre and that was Geoff Williams who is the registrar of William Clarke College in my electorate. As I understand it, his son is heavily involved in swimming and that was Geoff's contribution to the best Games ever. Of course, there were many, many others who volunteered.

I was struck by a thought in relation to volunteers and I know that the Premier has had something to say about that, too. I hasten to add that it is not an entirely original thought and I am sure that many honourable members have had the same thought. If the enthusiasm that was shown by volunteers at the Games could be perpetuated in some way, the trend of reduced volunteerism—which, unfortunately, New South Wales is experiencing currently in service clubs, parents and citizens associations and other voluntary organisations—could actually be reversed. Community groups are finding it hard to attract enthusiastic members or leaders.

One way that we may be able to go about harnessing the enthusiasm of volunteers is to establish a volunteer register to record people's skills and abilities and interests. Such volunteers may be used only once or twice a year or for a period, but it might be found that volunteers are more prepared to contribute a week or two weeks of their time, which was the case during the Olympics, than they would be prepared to turn up, for example, to a meeting every Monday night or on weekends. I bring forward that suggestion to the House because I believe it could have some merit.

I attended a couple of Games events, one of which was the weightlifting at Darling Harbour. I was very struck by the friendliness and open enthusiasm of the volunteers. I also went out to Homebush Bay by public transport—like everyone else—to attend the women's diving events. I guess it is hard to fault the public transport but I suggest that more thought might have been given to the drop-off points. We attended the diving which was located at the southern end of the Olympics site. The buses from The Hills and the north-west areas of Sydney dropped passengers at the north gate, which necessitated a 45-minute walk. A disabled person or even somebody not as agile as my wife and I would find it very difficult to reach that venue. There were buses operating to transport disabled people but I gather they dropped people off almost as far away from the venue as the north gate terminus. Because the Paralympics will commence next week, that is an issue that should be addressed during the next few days.

I read the comments of the Minister for Transport with interest but I am sceptical that the Olympic success of the public transport system will be able to be transferred to daily commuting. I say that because the very factors that made the trains run on time and that enabled the rail system to transport such large numbers of people are the reasons why people would not be tempted to use public transport. As I understand it, those factors include a reduced frequency and longer pause times at stations. One of the proposals I have heard is that people who are travelling longer distances should change trains at Redfern before coming onto the city circle. Changing modes or changing trains for buses is an absolute no-no if we are trying to attract people to use public transport. Moreover, taking a long period to get from point A to point B is also a no-no. Indeed, the 45-minute walk that my wife and I had to endure each way could be tolerated for a special occasion, but on a daily basis commuters would give that the thumbs down.

I wish to place on record some performances of individual athletes from The Hills district. Trish Fallon, who is a member of the Opals, is from my electorate and she won the silver medal for basketball. That was a fantastic result. I will not say that the team was unlucky not to win gold because the Opals conceded that the Americans were the better team. Nevertheless, they achieved an outstanding result. I am sure that honourable members would remember young Jana Pittman running in the 4 x 400 metres relay. She comes from the electorate represented by my colleague the honourable member for Baulkham Hills. She actually beat Melinda Gainsford-Taylor's time when she ran in the semifinals and got the team into the final, which was an absolutely outstanding result. She is only 17 years old and has been named as the *Hills Shire Times* Young Sportsperson of

the Year. I am sure that we will see big things from her in Athens. Stuart Tinney, from the electorate of Hawkesbury in The Hills district, was a gold medallist in the three-day equestrian event. Unfortunately I was unable to get tickets to that equestrian event.

On a broader scale, performances from people such as Ian Thorpe, Grant Hackett and Kieren Perkins—who was unlucky not to get three gold medals in a row—will always be remembered. The Australian crowd really showed their spirit by the round of applause they gave Peter van den Hoogenband, who is obviously not an Australian, when he narrowly beat Ian Thorpe in the 200 metres race. Inge de Bruijn was an absolutely outstanding competitor, the best female swimmer in the world bar none. Who will forget Matt Welsh taking a bronze medal in the 200 metres backstroke or the fabulous victory by the Hockeyroos? I am sure that the men's 4 x 100 metres relay swimming team of Michael Klim, Chris Fydler, Ashley Callus and Ian Thorpe was one of the most exciting races that any of us have seen. Susie O'Neill won the 200 metres freestyle and was narrowly beaten by Misty Hyman in the 200 metres butterfly. She is a great ambassador for Australia and richly deserved the position on the IOC.

For me the *pièce de résistance*—apart from Tatiana Grigorieva, who gained silver in the pole vault, although she found it difficult to compete during Cathy Freeman's 400 metres victory—was Jai Taurima's silver medal. That was the most exciting event that I witnessed during the whole Olympic Games. Overall, I congratulate everyone involved. The dream of Nick Greiner, Bruce Baird and Rod McGeoch that Sydney could host the world's best Olympic Games was realised. In passing, I thought that the East Timorese team marching into the stadium struck an extraordinarily responsive chord amongst all Australians. I will always remember the two Korean teams marching into the stadium as one. The Games certainly have done a lot to build relationships amongst nations and, hopefully, to ease old enmities.

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [9.02 p.m.]: I support the motion of the Premier and echo all the other speakers in congratulating those responsible for the organisation of the Olympic Games and their execution, particularly the Minister for the Olympics, Michael Knight, on his efforts. I am sure his efforts will be remembered for many years to come. Hopefully the expertise that he demonstrated and acquired will be used in other areas in times to come, hopefully at other Olympic Games. The Olympics had an effect on rural and provincial regions in New South Wales that was different in many ways. Part of my electorate was unable to receive Channel 7—no prime television. For someone with a wife who is enthusiastic as far as sporting events are concerned, particularly major events such as the Olympics, I was subject to some pressure. My wife said "You're a member of Parliament, why can't you do something about it?" Of course, it does not extend quite to the Federal arena!

It was a problem and, sadly, some people who were not in a position to journey to the Games or to obtain access to a screen that displayed the events were denied the opportunities that others had. I was fortunate to attend the rowing at Penrith and I had a great day. I watched a number of heats. I knew one young man in the coxless fours and I was delighted, first of all when they came in third in their heat and later on when they won the bronze medal. There is no downside in winning a medal of any variety. In fact, being selected for a team is an extraordinary event and one that no-one would ever take away from someone. To win a medal is cream to the cake. The colour? Well, it is like all things; we have colour problems in all aspects of society. Nevertheless, to take part, to win something and to represent your country is a tremendous honour and one that I am sure will always be enjoyed.

One good comment I received in my electorate related to rail transportation. While my electorate is outside CityRail services and within Countrylink services, people were still able to buy their tickets and travel. The linkages were excellent; the arrival times were as described. The crowd control was certainly satisfactory from their point of view. I experienced the crowds on a 28-degree day and the good-natured attitude of visitors, viewers and particularly volunteers was quite surprising. I note that next year is the International Year of Volunteers. The proposed recognition of our volunteers for this event with a medallion is a tremendous idea. I certainly hope funding is available for the medallion.

I shall remember the extraordinary sight of those people who surrendered their time and gave freely of their talents. I have never seen so many happy railway workers on a railway station. It was wonderful that they came over and asked if they could help. Of course, some of them came from Maitland and helped the metropolitan people in terms of attitude, but nevertheless they did their job well. There might have been a slight premium paid, but they went beyond the requirement and delivered that extra service. I spoke to international visitors a number of times when I was in Sydney, and they were extremely interested—and not only in the exchange rate, which translated into good trade for Sydney during the Games and in turn for New South Wales.

The ticketing problems that beset the Games organisation early was soon forgotten. At the time it was distressing. I know one person who spent \$4,500 on tickets in the ballot and did not get one ticket. Being a

member of Parliament, it was difficult to speak to him for quite some time. Nevertheless, he got some tickets, saw some events and had a great time. Wandering through the city was quite an experience, with screens in the Domain and in Martin Place. One literally had to step over bodies to get anywhere because nobody was moving. There were families, older people, people in sports clothes and people in business suits carrying suitcases. It was quite extraordinary.

Driving into Sydney from Maitland was an absolute dream. No trucks! What a great idea. I hope the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads can take advantage of the Olympic experience. It made a tremendous difference. It was an experience to be able to get from Hornsby to the Parliament in less than 40 minutes. That is an Olympic experience on its own and one which I hope we will see replicated by other amendments to the State's transport Acts. The Minister has flagged that he is going to look seriously at the advantages gained from the Olympic experience in all forms of transport. That is a bonus for the community in total as a result of the wonderful Games.

Honourable members will remember the difficulties three or four days before the Games, when bus drivers complained that for 750 bus drivers only 500 meals had been provided and that those meals were fit for year 6 children. However, the transport system became a smooth-running operation because more than 40 people from middle management were brought in to oversee the operation of bus, train and ferry services. Buses were also brought in from Newcastle to supplement the supply in metropolitan Sydney.

That clearly demonstrated the value of public transport and the organisational capacity of that transport system. The scheduling was in place. It was an experience that the private sector did not have. It had the job to start with, but its efforts had to be supplemented and the task was substantially taken over by the department. In such a very short time those managers, operators and drivers rose to the occasion and provided world-class transport systems, the value of which we can all appreciate. Hopefully, that will put something of a different view on the prospect of privatising those forms of public transport.

I want to congratulate a constituent. I say that tongue in cheek: he has been living in England for the past 12 years. But he was a school prefect along with my daughter. I refer to young Matt Ryan, who won gold in equestrian events, giving us our first really big boost in the Games because it was a repeat win. My daughter attended the equestrian events. She had in tow a baby in pram and three bags, as most mothers used to do. She said she had a great time. She was able to park within a 10-minute walk of the venue. The volunteers wanted to inspect the bag only for glass, and there was no glass so she went through like a breeze. She forgot the factor 30 suntan lotion, but remembered to take a hat. She and my seven-month-old granddaughter thoroughly enjoyed the horses.

That is something that Australia has to recognise. Everybody was able to enjoy themselves. There was no discrimination. The costs, in the main, for the average event were not unreasonable. Those events were well achievable by public transport. In her case, because she was a mother with a young baby and had to take a mass of paraphernalia with her, she had to take a private vehicle. She needed therefore to select events that would allow her to take the car and still have reasonable walking access to those events. That was a part of the plan that perhaps was not emphasised enough, but it was planning that she took advantage of and thoroughly enjoyed.

I would like to issue a congratulatory comment to the Speaker, our colleague John Murray, who, in association with the President, ran this place like a four-star restaurant for the entire duration of the Games, assisted by the parliamentary staff, who were absolutely superb in the way that they conducted themselves. I attended about six functions here to assist in that role. I am sure my colleague the honourable member for Wallsend also would have been pressed into service at least once or twice.

At one of those functions I had the opportunity to talk briefly with Princess Anne, who was here to support the British team. That meeting was a surprise. Of even more surprise was my talk with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark, who walked up to me and said, "Hello. I'm Frederick." It was quite a different approach to that of the Princess Royal. I guess Scandinavia has a different protocol. These were wonderful people. It was great to see them out here supporting their teams. I think six or seven royal houses attended the Games to support their teams. That tells me that the emphasis that we place on sport and sport support at government level is not misplaced. I think we must not only maintain it but expand it—not just for the glory of medals but for the value that sport has within our community and its value to individuals personally. To encourage that is a great thing.

Honourable members will recall Prime Minister Tony Blair's comment when his team returned victorious. Bear in mind that when the Brits arrived they expected to win only one gold medal. They went home with 11. Tony Blair's comment was, "Over its next term this Government will give to sports and sports-related

matters £Stg750 million." That is to be multiplied by a factor of three to convert it to Australian dollars. That is the investment that his Government is prepared to put into sport. It will be putting money into sport from infants schools right through to university and then into the community. I think the Brits will be a power to be reckoned with now that they have had that sudden spark struck from the success factor of 11 in Australia.

That sort of investment is essential. New South Wales is the beneficiary of a great event. The permanent icons at the Olympic site will be revenue earners for us. They will be magnates for major sporting events world wide—certainly anything south of the equator will be held here, as will probably a lot of European and North American events as well. The revenue that we can anticipate from tourism and sport support will be not insignificant. Australia generally, New South Wales particularly and Sydney especially will be the beneficiaries. The only plea I have is: Share a little with your country cousins! There is a big State out there, and we all need a dollar. If we can get a little more revenue into Australia or Sydney from Games and Games-related events in the future, then we should be able to literally move mountains—not necessarily build western highways through mountains, but hopefully some projects that have been on the back burner will now come forward and be prime economic movers for New South Wales in the future.

The tourism aspect of the Olympic Games is, of course, unmeasured at this time. We have the example of Barcelona, where tourism continues to climb. It has not plateaued yet. I anticipate that will be the case here in Australia. The Minister for Tourism recently issued a press release listing major newspapers of the world that had printed articles on New South Wales. I was delighted that the *Chicago Daily* had a two-page article on the Hunter Valley. That was tremendous. That means the focus is broadening from the metropolitan area to country areas.

I was dining with one of the officials from Saudi Arabia who said that he had decided Sydney was a pretty great spot, and he had heard there was an even better one north—the Gold Coast. He was going to see if he could organise a family holiday up there. I think he said it included hiring a plane. I do not mind if they come out here, take advantage of our reasonable exchange rate and spend a bit of money in Queensland, but I did say it was better to try the south and that the Hunter would be great. This is the first time that those officials had been to Australia. They were impressed with the Olympic advantage, impressed with the country, and very impressed with the people. Whilst their form of democracy is somewhat dissimilar to ours, the more they come out here the more likely it is that they may become used to an idea that is a little more all-embracing—and at least the ladies will get a go! The Olympics were tremendous. As someone who can now honestly say he is a country person, I recognise the problems, but I also recognise the advantages, and they far outweigh any problems that we experienced.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [9.17 p.m.]: I was a child during the Olympic Games in 1956, just a wee child.

Mr Price: I was going to say that, but I wasn't game!

Mrs SKINNER: I know some members would like to have said that but just did not have the courage! I can remember the Melbourne Games vividly. I can even remember individual events. I recall watching the hop, step and jump. I had never before heard of an event like that. I remember the pole vault. Above all, I recall the atmosphere engendered in the population and in me by those very simple Games, compared with the Games that we have just experienced. I also had the advantage of being at a boarding school in east Melbourne opposite the Fitzroy Gardens, where all the athletes were training. That was a sight to behold. I saw people of a size, shape and colour that I had never seen before.

So I was looking forward to the Sydney Olympics with a great deal of enthusiasm. My husband worked for one of the gold sponsors during the bid. The Skinner family therefore was very much involved right from the word go. In fact, all five of us stood at Circular Quay on the night that Mr Samaranch announced Sydney as the winner. I do not think any of us went to bed that night! My husband was responsible for the lighting on top of the Opera House, so we all stayed there and enjoyed the evening and the wee hours of the morning with him. My enthusiasm for the Olympics waned when I was one of those who had all their money returned. In the ballot for tickets I got nothing. However, my husband fortunately got some second choice tickets, and I managed to go to two events. They were not spectacular events but I am pleased that I went because I got a feel for the atmosphere of the place. Just being there, regardless of the event, was really what it was all about. I went to the stadium on the first Saturday of the athletic events and I went to the rowing at Penrith.

During the night of the bid, my 13-year-old son said to me that he was going to start rowing because he thought that was a good way of being considered for the Sydney Olympics. He was a good schoolboy rower but,

unfortunately, he discovered girls when he was about 17 and the 4.00 a.m. starts did not appeal to him any longer. He, along with a number of other children of members of Parliament, was lucky enough to be one of the first rowers at the Penrith course. So I have been there on many occasions over the last few years. It was wonderful to go back again and see how that course had developed. The trees had grown and it was a much more sophisticated place than it was in the early stages of the first regatta. Everybody involved with the Olympics right back from then should be congratulated.

I mention, as have a number of my colleagues, the foresight of Nick Greiner, Bruce Baird and those people involved early on in the bid. At the time some people in the community were sceptical. I congratulate all those people and everyone else involved on the work that they have done. I watched the opening ceremony from beginning to end, as I am sure did a great many people. I am not a great television watcher and watch only an occasional news broadcast or current affairs program. But I have always been glued to the television during the Olympics. I sat up all night during the Atlanta Olympics. It gave me great pleasure to tell our overseas visitors that they should stop whingeing about the fact that our time zone was the wrong time zone for their night viewing, that we were used to it; and that it was nice for us for a change.

The opening event was sophisticated yet it showed all the true aspects of Australia and it showed the elegant and sincere involvement of our indigenous people. I thought it was simply wonderful. Strong congratulations go to Ric Birch and all those involved. My cousin, who works in the fashion industry and who was a volunteer dresser for the opening ceremony, told me that it was chaotic. Imagine dressing birds, butterflies and fish! That was her line of work but she said it was absolutely fantastic. It was one of those unusual events and we could not have done without the volunteers. When I saw the two Koreas and the East Timorese marching into the stadium I knew that we had a wonderful Games on our hands.

During the two weeks of the Olympics I went to a few events but my family went to many more. Between us we saw soccer, baseball, water polo, beach volleyball, athletics and rowing. Those sports very much reflect the interests of my children. I was busy during the Games because I had my family of five and seven guests staying in my house on and off during the two-week period. So it was a matter of hot bedding it on some occasions. I had two guests from England who had never been to Australia. They were relatives of my husband who had never intended coming to Australia. Their minds were blown away. They will be back.

Earlier the honourable member for Maitland talked about returning tourists. I know at least two people who knew nothing about what Sydney was like. They could not believe the weather—and neither could I—and they could not believe the generosity of the Australian people. They had heard what sports lovers we were, but they really did not believe it until they came here and saw us. They could not believe how fabulous the Hunter Valley red wines were. We went through a fair portion of Hunter Valley wines. So they will be back. I assure the honourable member for Maitland that they will be back and they will be visiting the Hunter Valley.

A young girl from Denmark stayed with me for a few nights and I had a family of three from Perth—an athletics coach and two of his young charges. It was a joy observing them watching and enjoying the Olympics Games. They were talking about it and analysing it from the point of view of the professional aspect of coaching and the difference it made to various teams. I was proud to be in the stadium, to watch the Games on television and to be part of the crowd. One of the things about which I was most proud was being an Australian and being part of a population that really is generous in supporting not just its own team—we did that wholeheartedly—but everybody else. It did not matter that the events that I saw in the athletics stadium did not feature any of the big stars in the Australian team.

I would love to have seen them, but it really did not matter because we barracked for everybody else. We gave the people who tried hard but who were not ever going to win just as big a cheer as anyone else. Who will ever forget Eric and his four laps of the Olympic pool? I do not think that young men from too many countries would have had an experience like that with the support of spectators and the support of the Australian team. I understand that, in the early days of his training, the Australian team bought him a tracksuit and taught him how to turn so he could do more than 50 metres in the pool. That really typified the generosity of Australians in the minds of those who were visiting. That is what they said to me.

Everyone has spoken about the volunteers. The volunteers to whom I spoke were getting a big kick out of what they were doing and they were getting enjoyment out of being able to assist people. I mention two volunteers in particular—my staff member, Kate Merrill, and Lisa Tait, who works for the Hon. Patricia Forsythe. Both of them volunteered and worked hard with the international media at the SuperDome. It took days of training before they commenced their task and they worked long shifts. But what an experience for those

young women! They will remember that experience, the friends they made and the activities that they were involved in for the rest of their lives. I congratulate them on their involvement. I think they are extremely privileged to have had that opportunity.

I mention the people from Zimbabwe, my guests. I brought them to this place and showed them round the Chamber, as do all honourable members with visitors, and they sat in my seat in the Chamber. The attendants were as elegant and as courteous as they always are. The staff in the dining room presented them with a meal that any honourable member would be proud to serve anywhere. I thank the staff in this Parliament, as always, for their first-class service. I mentioned that I sat and watched television a great deal during the Olympics period but I, like a lot of people, did a fair amount of work. I have an office at home and I managed to catch up with quite a lot of paperwork. My in tray went down by at least five centimetres. But I had the television on in the background, so if there was a special event I knew I could whip over and watch it.

I am sure that the sporting highlights I enjoyed were the same as those enjoyed by others. Without question, Cathy Freeman was an inspiration. What an inspired decision to let Cathy light the torch! I felt for her when I heard the television commentators say just before her race that the fate of the future of Australia rested on her shoulders. What a dreadful thing to say about anyone! I believe that the look on her face after she completed that race must have been absolute relief. I congratulate Cathy, along with all our other athletes. The men's 4 x 100 swimming relay had to have been a marvellous highlight. The 1,500 metre swimming event is the event that I wanted to see very much. It is fabulous that Grant Hackett won. I have to admit that I am a bit of a Kieren supporter, but good luck to Grant. It is wonderful that, at long last, Grant managed to get a medal for that event. Lisa Skinner, the gymnast—unfortunately I cannot claim that she is a relation—was so elegant in the gymnastic floor events. Frankly, I was stunned. She was a beautiful little performer. It might surprise honourable members that I was a good gymnast in my youth.

Mr Fraser: Just like Aunty Jillian.

Mrs SKINNER: Like Aunty Jillian. My son and daughter played water polo when they were at school, so the water polo final, with that winning goal in the last second, was amazing. Andrew Hoy and the others in the equestrian events, and Simon Fairweather, were all inspiring. A number of people from my electorate—especially rowers, particularly members of the Mosman Rowing Club—were among the competitors. Alastair Gordon and Daniel Burke were in the men's eights, who came second to Great Britain in a fighting finish. Virginia Lee and Peter Hardcastle were in the sculls, and Victoria Roberts, who rowed with my son at Redlands, was in the women's eights. Although they did not win a medal, it was a fantastic race, especially as they beat the United States.

The sailing was on the foreshores of my electorate. We did exceptionally well in those events. The torch relay touched on my electorate only briefly. However Greg Norman brought the torch across the bridge. Louise Sauvage is absolute inspiration. I congratulate her and wish her every success for the Paralympics. The torch was also at the zoo. I was lucky enough to attend with my daughter Amy. I extend my thanks to Mosman council for including us. There are 11 representatives from my electorate in the Australian team. Peter Burge was in the long jump. I have mentioned the rowers. In sailing there was Melanie Dennison from Neutral Bay and Anthony Nossiter from the Middle Harbour Yacht Club, as well as Neville Wittey, Joshua Grace and David Edwards. Anna Windsor, who is a friend of one of my daughters, was one of the swimmers.

I commend the local yacht clubs that were involved in assisting with the sailing on the harbour. They had a testing and challenging job, particularly when one remembers the way the winds were. All those involved did a sterling job. I conclude by mentioning one of my constituents who has been a significant contributor to the Olympic Games. I refer to Rod McGeoch. Rod lives in Neutral Bay, not far from where I live. His work in the early part of the bid was fundamental to our success in getting the Games. I was saddened to hear he was in hospital with viral encephalitis for almost the entire Olympic Games. He managed to go to only one event, but he did get there. We all owe Rod McGeoch a huge thank you for his involvement in putting the bid together. I hope he enjoyed watching the Games on television as much as I did. I congratulate all concerned and commend the motion.

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [9.32 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to participate in this debate, which, over the past two days, has been a great example of the unifying effect of the Olympic Games. The debate has paid tribute, as it rightly should, to those responsible for the successful bid to host the Olympics, the previous Coalition Government. The debate has also paid tribute to the hundreds of thousands of people, both paid and volunteers, who have been involved in the preparation and staging of the Olympics, and to the

Australian public for its response to the Olympic Games and for the friendly, generous and hospitable way they have shown Australia to the world. It is fitting that we pay tribute to everyone who has been involved, bearing in mind the unifying impact the Olympics have had on all Australians. We hope that feeling continues, together with the great feeling of reconciliation that was present right from the opening ceremony. The torch relay and the opening ceremony welded together that feeling of unity that was present both at the start of the Olympic period and during the Games. I hope that feeling will continue during the Paralympics.

I believe that all members may have found the period from 1993 to the time of the Olympics to be a fairly gruelling period. There were problems along the way and the media often emphasised the negatives rather than the enormous organisational job that was being done. In July this year I found myself in Melbourne and Adelaide. I thought I was in a completely different country. In both those cities the people I spoke to—whether they were members of Parliament, government officials, business people or people in the street—were already excited. They did not seem to be feeling the effects of any of the negatives. It was not until the torch relay—and it was a brilliant concept to start the relay at Uluru with Nova Peris-Kneebone emphasising the importance of indigenous people to Australia—that we started to get the flavour that developed right through the Olympics.

The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will be interested to know that the first time I saw that flavour demonstrated was as I drove from Macksville to Coffs Harbour to catch a flight back from a meeting of the Coastal Council. That was the day on which the torch relay moved from Coffs Harbour through Urunga, and that is where I came upon it. It interested me as I drove along to see knots of people from farming communities standing along the roadside with their flags. I saw buses at Urunga with schoolchildren—

Mr Fraser: Fire engines.

Mr GAUDRY: Yes, fire engines, and the police and all the volunteers involved in the torch relay. One could immediately see the enthusiasm. When the torch arrived in Newcastle there was something like 40,000 people in our great foreshore park to watch Mark Richards light the community cauldron. Once again it was evident that people were grasping the opportunity to express friendship to others who were there to celebrate with them. Everyone who has spoken in the debate has probably mentioned the opening ceremony and the brilliance of Ric Birch. The opening part of the ceremony was rather brilliant. It involved the fire and water aspects of Australia and our indigenous people. It linked together Nikki Webster, the young girl, with the wonderful Djakapurra Munyarryun, the dancer from the Bangarra Dance Company: the linking together of our indigenous culture and our young, growing Australian culture. The ceremony went on with the lighting of the flame by Cathy Freeman—fire and water were again involved at the end of that ceremony—and famous female athletes from the past were involved in the lead-up to that part of the ceremony.

I watched the opening ceremony on a large screen at the Newcastle Workers Club, along with a mass of people in the auditorium. The enthusiasm at the club was the same as if the people had been at the opening ceremony. That was something that people remarked on throughout the Olympic period. I came to Parliament on the day the marathon was run. At the front of Parliament it was interesting to hear the applause for the leading runners, for every runner in the event, for the police who were following, and for the ambulance. The same level of enthusiasm was shown to virtually everyone. I was looking at the screen in the Domain when the winning runner in the marathon entered the stadium and when Steve Moneghetti came in. The cheering and applause from the Domain was as though the people were at the Olympic event itself. I am told that happened at all the live sites: people felt absolutely involved and felt part of this Olympic experience.

In particular, I pay tribute to the workers in the public transport system, which was pivotal to the success of the Olympic Games. There were difficulties with the transport system, and those difficulties led to an urgent decision being made to involve the Newcastle public bus service. That involved Newcastle bus drivers travelling to Sydney to drive Newcastle buses during the Olympic period. Consequently, Newcastle buses operated on a Saturday timetable, which obviously disrupted people in general and those who started work early in the morning in particular.

Yet during the Olympic period I think I received only two phone calls from people not so much to complain but to point out how that had seriously inconvenienced them. That demonstrates the enormous level of forbearance shown during the Olympic period for people whose lives were disrupted. I refer to those who live in the area surrounding Broadmeadow railway station. First, I congratulate the stationmaster and staff and the volunteers who worked in that area on the enormous job they did during the period to ensure that people coming to the Olympics had a smooth transition on and off trains and to assist people if there were any problems. Many comments have been made about the outstanding level of service provided by the workers and volunteers during the entire Olympic period.

One aspect that was very important to the Hunter in the lead-up to and during the Olympic Games was the business opportunities offered by the Olympics. I commend the Hunter Olympic business task force. It took a while for people in our city to realise that the Olympics provided employment opportunities and much collaboration was necessary to ensure that some Olympic contracts could be picked up by Hunter businesses. The Hunter Olympic business task force reported on its success: It reported that the economic benefit to our region from pre-Games training activities was well over \$8.2 million.

During the Olympics and the Paralympics the Hunter is hosting some 550 athletes and officials from 15 countries. Indeed, 17 international Olympic and Paralympics teams came to the Hunter for pre-Games training. Together with the Olympics, that has provided many benefits not only economically but in terms of developing social relationships between team members and the people of the Hunter. One great benefit of the Olympic Games has been the development of what one radio commentator said was the development of social capital. It was not so much economic capital but a higher level of understanding between peoples and linkages that can lead to greater friendships between countries and potential economic outcomes.

Through the work of the Hunter Olympic business task force Hunter companies won Olympic-related contracts worth something like \$142 million. Those contracts related to construction, signage for the Games, security services, transport, flags and banners, and laundry services and clothing—a range of business and work value that came to the Hunter from the Olympics. The Hunter Olympic business task force is co-ordinated by Sandra Gilshenan, chaired by Councillor John Kilpatrick from Lake Macquarie and includes a range of business and community people from the Hunter Valley.

Sandra Gilshenan said that one real positive for the task force in terms of expressing the value of the Hunter to other people was the fact that the Irish Olympic team was staying in the Hunter—and I am sure the honourable member for Liverpool, who is in the chair, would have been pleased to meet the Irish Olympians. People from one Irish television station visited the Hunter to see the athletes and their training facilities. I understand that they put together a 10-minute documentary on the Hunter Valley which was shown in Ireland immediately after the opening ceremony. That was important in terms of promoting our region and in building friendship links. As the honourable member for Liverpool knows, many people in the Hunter have Irish heritage.

The diverse range of teams hosted by the Hunter included the Argentinian swimming team, the Chinese Olympic gymnastics team, which was extremely successful in the Games, the Dutch swimming team—the previous speaker mentioned the wonderful swimming exhibition by the Dutch swimming team—the Cyprian Olympic skeet shooting team, the Danish Paralympic team, the German Paralympic team, the Guatemalan Olympic team, the Iceland Paralympic athletics team and, as I said, the Irish Olympic team. They are only some of the teams hosted by the Hunter.

In this multicultural society there is a great opportunity for us to continue those links and to form friendships with people from throughout the world. That is one great benefit of the Games. Once again I congratulate all those involved, especially the police. One thing I noticed during the Olympic period was the close involvement of the police not only in controlling the crowds but also in mixing positively with people from across New South Wales. I pay tribute to the police for the enormous amount of planning and training in preparation for the Olympics and for ensuring the safety of the community and the athletes during the Olympic period. Once again I congratulate the people of Australia, our athletes, all those who worked during the Olympic period and those who will be working during the Paralympics.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Anderson.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PARRAMATTA TO TOP RYDE BUS SERVICE

Mr TINK (Epping) [9.48 p.m.]: I refer to an issue relating to bus route 545 which presently runs between Parramatta and Top Ryde. On Monday morning, in driving rain and fairly shocking conditions, I met 130 residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village, which is adjacent to one of the bus stops that will be affected by the proposed changes to the bus route. The average age of the people present at the meeting—all of them were wearing overcoats and carrying umbrellas and so on—was between 75 and 80 years. I had arranged

the meeting some time ago. Given the weather conditions, I rang the organiser in the morning to say that perhaps it might be a better idea to meet in the retirement village hall. However, the residents were so steamed up about the issue that they wanted to meet on site, rain, hail or shine. As it turned out, it was raining heavily.

This issue arises consequent upon proposed changes to the bus route between Parramatta and Top Ryde which are the result of Sydney Buses buying out North and Western Bus Lines. I think it is fair to say that the purchase of the North and Western bus company by Sydney Buses has been generally well received throughout northern Sydney. However, I would like to think the problem that has arisen with regard to the Alan Walker Retirement Village is an anomaly which, once pointed out to the Government and more particularly to Sydney Buses, will be rectified. The current bus route runs along Marsden Road and Terry Road. There is also an occasional service that runs on the hour along Marsden Road, Mobbs Lane, Raimonde Road and then down Valley Road. The service provides the 300 residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village with a direct bus service once an hour, connecting them to Parramatta and Eastwood and, most importantly, to Ryde hospital and the medical services that cluster around the hospital.

If the bus route is changed as proposed and is not further altered to continue the bus route up to Mobbs Lane, the residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village will basically be cut off from Ryde hospital and the Ryde Medical Centre, which will be a disaster for them. When the changes to the bus route were announced in the *Northern District Times* on 1 December 1999, they were generally welcomed. For example an article in the *Northern District Times* that day reported the Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation as saying it was great news for senior citizens and schoolchildren alike. Generally speaking I agree with that. However, if this anomaly that has become apparent to the residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village is not rectified in the spirit of the changes which have generally been good for older people and younger people alike, it will be a disaster for them. It amounts to a basic fundamental equity issue about how older people, most of whom can no longer drive, are able to gain access to Eastwood and medical services.

I cannot believe that this arrangement will be allowed to stand. I certainly do not believe that the Government set out to do this. I believe it has been an oversight by someone in the transport bureaucracy. However, I sincerely hope that the anomaly is rectified. The concerns expressed at the meeting the other day were not limited to the residents of the village. Concerns were also expressed by a number of other people, who told me that they were not really aware of the changes. However, when they saw a rather odd procession of well over 100 senior citizens in the driving rain and went across to have a look at what was going on, they indicated, once they were informed what the meeting was about, that they were not aware of the changes but certainly shared the concerns expressed by others.

The only bus service that will remain is a service that runs specifically for schoolchildren in the mornings and afternoons. Of course, that service is not at the right time for these senior citizens to get to hospital services and to do their shopping. In any event, I do not think it is reasonable to expect senior citizens to travel en masse at the same time as schoolchildren on what are essentially school bus services. Whilst welcoming generally the changes to the ownership of buses in northern Sydney, I sincerely hope that what I assume is an anomaly will be rectified before the new services come into operation.

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.53 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Epping for his comments. This issue has also been brought to my attention. I assure the House that the maps issued by State Transit regarding this matter clearly show that this is a draft process and that the Government is seeking consultation with the wider community. The residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village have made strong representations to me outlining their concerns. I have raised those concerns with State Transit officials who are responsible for this consultation process. State Transit has clearly stated to me that it will listen to the views of all the people who expressed concerns about the proposed bus routes—and I stress that at this stage they are merely proposed bus routes.

I will ensure that the comments made tonight by the honourable member for Epping are brought to the attention of the Sydney Buses officials who are involved with the consultation process, which seeks the views of residents. I would be distressed to hear that it has caused concern to the residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village, many of whom I also know. I wish to point out to the House that State Transit has gone to great lengths to advertise the proposed bus routes, with the printing and delivery of 90,000 pamphlets. There were problems with the original delivery, so State Transit reprinted the pamphlets and redelivered them, and it has done extensive advertising through local newspapers. I again thank the honourable member for Epping for his comments. As I have said, I will ensure that his comments and the concerns of the residents of the Alan Walker Retirement Village are brought to the attention of State Transit and those who have responsibility for that consultation process.

MAYFIELD WEST COMSTEEL PLANT

Mr BARTLETT (Port Stephens) [9.55 p.m.]: In February and March 1999 while I was campaigning in the Mayfield West area of my electorate, on some evenings and afternoons when there was a slight drizzle around and a stench in the area, my eyes became sore, the air pollution was quite thick, and the noise from explosions in an adjoining factory were very loud. Not surprisingly, as I made my way around Mayfield West the residents complained about what was happening at the Comsteel plant, which is an arc steel plant that smelts steel. It is a 1930s steel plant in the middle of a residential area.

When I was elected to Parliament I rang Comsteel, a member of the Smorgon Steel Group, and spoke to David Brown, who was the chief executive officer of the plant. He invited me to the plant for some discussions. During those discussions I found out that the plant was a large employer with some 700 to 750 staff. I raised the issue of the noise, the dust and the smell in the adjoining area and said that it was quite unacceptable in the 1990s. To my surprise, David Brown agreed with me entirely. We had a two-hour tour of the plant, which manufactures rail wheels, mining balls and various extruded lengths of steel.

I was invited to join the Comsteel community liaison group, which was formed in February 1997. The committee comprises residents from the surrounding area. They address problems such as the large number of movements by trucks that bring in the old steel, parking by staff in residential streets, noise, dust and odour emissions. The committee has been of invaluable assistance to the company in keeping the jobs and industry in Newcastle at a time when other companies such as BHP have closed down. The committee members are Kathy Barkley, Kelvin Dallimore, Jim Gowdy, Stephen Hannon, Brian McDermott, Paul McGonigal, Patric Moir, Craig Muir, William Peady and Neville Wratten. The chairman of the committee is Joe Whitehead, and Ralph Penn provides secretarial services.

The plan as developed by Smorgon and David Brown was basically to build a new furnace house to enclose the dust, noise and odour, to build a new furnace above ground so that water does not get into the furnace and cause explosions and to build a new fume extraction system. John Gillespie was the plant manager. The total project from design conception, detailed engineering and drafting, management of the construction phase through to commencement of commissioning production melting has been a resounding success. The project, at a cost of \$14 million, is on time and on budget. The first melt was done on the day it was planned for. No time was lost through injuries and no industrial time was lost. On Sunday 25 June the first steel was melted in the new facility. I should like to refer to a comment by one of the members of the committee, who said:

The noise is much reduced and I had not noticed any fume emissions—I did not know it was already working.

Gone are the days when large white clouds of smoke hang over the suburb of Mayfield. The fume emission problems have been solved. The system is very efficient. Three fabric filters now capture one million cubic metres of dust-laden air from the building every hour. That approximates the volume of a residential house being evacuated every second and could be compared to a cyclonic wind sucking out the fumes through the collection system to look after the residents of Mayfield. I congratulate all the Comsteel workers and contractors who were involved in upgrading the plant. Next Tuesday I will be very pleased to welcome the Premier to the official opening of the plant. From the point of view of Smorgon's relationship to the employees of the plant, I think the employees' future is secure. The problems of noise, dust, odour and explosions to which I referred earlier have all been taken care of by the \$14 million project which will keep 700 jobs in the Newcastle region. I commend the community liaison committee for its efforts.

LONG DISTANCE ROAD HEAVY TRANSPORT OWNER-DRIVERS

Mr STONER (Oxley) [10.00 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House and the to the responsible Ministers the plight of long-distance owner-drivers in New South Wales. On the mid North Coast there are a considerable number of heavy transport long-distance owner-drivers, particularly in Kempsey and the surrounding district. These drivers and their big rigs are very important to the regional economy of the Macleay and the mid North Coast. They bring money from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane into the district; they buy their trucks, tyres, oil and other products locally, and they inject capital city money into the regional economy.

As recently as last Saturday, I attended a meeting of 20 to 30 owner-drivers at Clybucca truckstop and what I heard was of great concern to me. Indeed, what I heard also would be of great concern to governments at all levels. Many of the owner-drivers are reaching the stage of becoming non-viable and are talking about being

forced to leave the industry. They are facing increased costs but also are being squeezed by the rates that they are being paid by large companies for carrying freight. I am pleased that the Minister for Fair Trading is at the table in this Chamber because this is an important issue of protection for small businesspeople, which is what these owner-drivers essentially are.

One driver told me that in the past three months he had made a mere \$1,000 in profit. During the last week, for repeated runs between Brisbane and Melbourne, he made a profit of a grand total of \$136. Another driver told me that last year his costs were in the order of 73 cents per kilometre but had now increased to more than 90 cents per kilometre. The main cost increase occurred in the price of diesel. Whereas last year these drivers were experiencing fuel costs in the vicinity of \$900 per week, they are now facing costs in the order of \$1,750 per week, which is a very substantial increase. Last year in Queensland they were paying approximately 54 cents a litre for diesel but they are now paying 98 cents per litre, even after the industry discount. Despite the diesel and alternative fuel grants scheme of 17.8 cents per litre from the Federal Government, their costs for fuel are still far too high.

The price of diesel has increased more relative to unleaded petrol. I ask why that would be the case when the Federal excise for petrol and diesel is the same, yet refining costs associated with diesel are less than the costs associated with refining petrol. In those circumstances, why would the price of diesel have increased more than the price of petrol? I wrote to four major oil companies to ask them that question. I suggest to the Minister at the table, the Minister for Fair Trading, that this is an issue for the Department of Fair Trading to examine.

Other costs associated with this industry have increased. The premium for green slips insurance has increased from \$315-odd, which is what it was six months ago, to \$470, and the increase has nothing to do with the goods and services tax [GST]. Insurance costs and registration costs have also increased. These are issues under State control. In spite of increased costs, the companies with which these owner-drivers contract say that costs should have decreased owing to Federal Government tax reforms and are offer reduced rates. I cite the example of the transportation of copper from Brisbane to Port Kembla. Contractors were paying \$38 a tonne but they are now offering \$28 a tonne, take it or leave it.

Unlike the situation of employees who work under awards, there is no protection for these owner-drivers. I am very concerned that this issue could lead to overloading by drivers, cutting corners on maintenance and driver fatigue. I have very serious concerns in relation to driver safety and road safety generally. Certainly against the background of a spate of accidents involving heavy transport vehicles in the Macksville and Kempsey districts recently, these matters are of very great concern. I understand that the Motor Accidents Authority has an inquiry under way. I understand also that the Federal Government is developing a code of practice. But, surely, there is a role for the State Government in relation to diesel prices, fair trading and legislation protecting subcontractors and owner-drivers—perhaps a role for the Special Minister of State and Minister for Industrial Relations. [*Time expired.*]

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [10.05 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Oxley for the comments he made and for drawing attention to what must be a very difficult time for long-distance drivers and people involved in the trucking industry. Those people are being squeezed left, right and centre. Often it is the case, unfortunately, that when drivers are simply trying to make a reasonable living, practices arise which lead to tiredness and increasing levels of accidents. It must be very difficult for family members of drivers—who are generally males—to farewell spouses, brothers or sons and wish them a safe return home.

The group referred to by the honourable member for Oxley has the support of the Transport Workers Union in their struggle. Large transport companies are squeezing this industry unfairly. Increases in the price of fuel have been another undeniable factor and there has certainly been an impact from the overseas increase in the price of oil. Another factor is the Federal Government's responsibility for the GST and the difficult debate over excise relief. I support the honourable member for Oxley in his concerns for constituents of his electorate who are involved in the long-distance road haulage industry. I will make representations wherever I think they would have an effect to bring these people some justice—people who are just carrying out their normal working day lives.

INTEGRAL ENERGY ILLAWARRA BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [10.07 p.m.]: Last Friday evening, my wife and I had the pleasure of attending the Integral Energy Illawarra Business of the Year awards presentation. This is an annual ceremony which is designed to recognise small businesses in the Illawarra. It is organised by the Illawarra Business Chamber. I acknowledge the chair of the Illawarra Business Chamber, Phil McGavin, and its chief executive

officer, Jacky Zelinsky, whose staff was responsible for organisation of the event. The function was a celebration of the contribution that small business makes to the economy in the Illawarra region and took the form of an awards ceremony. But there was also a deal of entertainment which was organised by Michael Cassell. Michael is a very young man and I congratulate him on the work that he does. I also point out that students from the Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts were also very much a part of the entertainment during the evening. I believe it is important to appreciate the link between some students and industry.

The awards were presented in a number of categories. In the manufacturing, mining and construction category, which was sponsored by BHP, Poppets Schoolwear was the winner and Elizabeth Kingston accepted the award. In the category for accommodation, leisure and entertainment, the award was sponsored by the Wollongong City Council and was won by the Wollongong Sport and Entertainment Centre, which was represented by Stuart Barnes and Bill Barnetson. I point out that the entertainment centre is a Crown reserve trust and a Government organisation, and it is important to note that.

The export award was received by a small business in the southern highlands known as Technico Pty Ltd represented by David McDonald. Australian Business Ltd sponsored the award to a company that paid a tribute to the Department of State and Regional Development and Australian Technology Showcase for their support in promoting potato processing technology to the world. The information, technology and telecommunications category was sponsored by Telstra and the award was accepted by Ian Gregory and his colleagues on behalf of Accent Communications, a business that is growing strongly in the region.

The professional and commercial services category, sponsored by Heard McEwan Lawyers, went to Partners Developing Your Business, an accounting and business management company operated by John Appoloni and Jacqui Fairley-Hales. The community service business category was sponsored by Port Kembla Port Corporation and collected by Neil Preston on behalf of Greenacres and Flametree Industries. Greenacres is a community-based organisation which for some time has offered support for people with intellectual disabilities. I point out as an aside, given that the Minister for Sport and Recreation is in the Chamber, that the Illawarra Academy of Sport was a finalist in this particular category.

In the retail and wholesale area, sponsored by Wollongong Central Crystal Bears, a business that retails children's fashions won the award. I mentioned before that Elizabeth Kingston from Poppets Schoolwear won the manufacturing category, and this is another business which Elizabeth owns with her daughter, Melissa Kingston-Gervase. The extremely important innovation award was sponsored by Wollongong Image Campaign and Boral Blue Circle Southern Cement, a business based on the Southern Highlands at Berrima, with the award being collected by Ian Unsworth. It was interesting to hear Ian and other winners of different categories acknowledge their staff as being partners in this process.

The small business award sponsored by Imagescape went to a very small business called Food Rethought which is a restaurant-cum-cafe operated by Wendy King and Glen Gotland on the campus of the University of Wollongong. The overall award for business of the year went to Partners Developing Your Business to John Appoloni and Jacqui Fairley-Hales. The award was sponsored by InfoComp Pty Ltd, the company that won the award last year, which demonstrates its commitment to the process of encouraging businesses to develop and give a commitment to service and quality. Overall, people came together to celebrate achievements but also to talk about success and to encourage others to build a business and work hard for success. As I mentioned, it is important to note that every category winner acknowledged the contribution of their workers and staff.

AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [10.10 p.m.]: Tonight I draw attention to Australian heritage in my electorate, one of which is the museum at Kurnell. Recently I read a letter that said:

I am one of the volunteer drivers for the Olympics. Early one morning I had to drive an official (a friend of Juan Antonio Samaranch) from the Regent Hotel to pick up his wife at the airport.

On our return journey, I casually mentioned the first landing by Captain Cook at Kurnell. They were keen to see this site for themselves.

When we arrived there, the museum was closed and would not open until 11 a.m., would you believe?

Apart from that, I was further embarrassed by the appearance of the place. To say that it is rundown would be an understatement. It seemed to have the same coat of paint that I saw almost 15 years ago.

As I was driving back to the city looking at the magnificent skyline of Sydney, I couldn't help thinking to myself that for all Captain Cook had achieved, surely he deserved better—the birthplace of a nation deserves more respect.

If we can spend millions on fireworks that last for a few minutes, surely we can spare a few dollars for the preservation of history.

The Chinese say: when drinking water, think of the source; when drinking wine, think of the passage of time.

I say: when living in a great country, think of its founder.

But I shall read a further letter that points out the decrepit state of the museum at Kurnell, the first landing point of Captain Cook and the birthplace of Australia. It continued:

In a State where being of Anglo-Saxon Heritage is politically incorrect, it is not surprising and extremely sad that there is so little interest in preserving history that relates to Great Britain.

Although I came to Australia as a baby in the post-war years when migrants were paid to come here to help build this country, I have never considered myself as anything other than Australian.

I love Australia, feel immensely proud of our achievements and hold Australian citizenship.

However, my heritage is British—yet it seems that in the current political climate, all other cultures are encouraged to celebrate and embrace their heritage except those of British extraction, who must endure constant criticism aimed at undermining the very culture that pioneered this country.

That Australian citizen is entitled to that view. Kurnell is certainly the birthplace of modern Australia. If this were a country such as the United States of America tens of millions of dollars would be spent on that birthplace. The Premier is well known as a keen student of American history. If the Premier chose to switch his interest to Australian history, perhaps the birthplace of modern Australia at Kurnell would receive the attention it deserves. A plan of management for Botany Bay National Park has been released by the Government but unless necessary funds are allocated to implement the required works, a plan only it will remain. Cooktown in northern Queensland, where Cook and the *Endeavour* were shipwrecked, proudly manages to maintain a very fine museum, yet here in the Olympic city our birthplace is a national disgrace.

The other aspect of heritage to which I will refer is surf lifesaving. We were all very proud that at the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games surf lifesaving took pride of place. In the Cronulla electorate there are four very fine surf clubs—Cronulla, North Cronulla, South Cronulla and Elouera. It is regrettable and not good enough that recently when an application was submitted Sutherland council chose to act against the interests of the surf lifesaving movement. I ask the council to reconsider its decision and make sure that surf lifesaving is encouraged and to not put obstacles in its path.

CHEQUExchange

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.15 p.m.]: Tonight I raise strong concerns about a newly emerged credit institution known as ChequEXchange operating in the Bankstown local area, throughout New South Wales and now, I am now advised, throughout Australia. ChequEXchange is a credit lending institution which preys on financially vulnerable people, particularly people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, struggling families and the elderly. To borrow money from ChequEXchange one needs to simply establish their identification, provide information that one has a bank account and demonstrate that one has earned some form of wage or income.

ChequEXchange, apart from cashing many forms of cheques, specialises in payday lending, providing immediate credit to individuals between paydays, even if those individuals have a zero bank balance. This credit institution is a loan shark which is charging interest rates of up to 1,300 per cent for borrowed money. ChequEXchange operates in Australia under the realms of a company known as Australian Money Exchange [AMX]. This company boasts in its own literature that it is now a \$US55 billion worldwide industry.

It is alarming that this credit lending institution, which preys on the financially vulnerable in our community, operates in New South Wales and Australiawide by exploiting a loophole in current credit laws which do not cover loan terms under 62 days. It is important to note that the two ChequEXchange branches currently in Bankstown have been set up in very close proximity to local registered clubs. Clearly, this has been done in an effort to unfairly exploit the State Government's recent move to prohibit the cashing of cheques in clubs and hotels which have a value of beyond \$400. These restrictions, which seek to reduce the ability of club and hotel patrons to access cash for gambling, were introduced by the Government in an effort to minimise harm associated with gambling.

I have raised these concerns with the Minister for Gaming and Racing because clearly these practices contradict the initiatives that the Government has put in place. Problem gamblers in Bankstown are now able to leave their club or pub, walk across the road and not only cash almost any type of cheque but also borrow money on the spot, against their pending wages—money that they have not got. Australians, on latest statistics, now owe a staggering \$14.05 billion on credit cards alone. Indeed, credit card debt has risen by a massive 22 per cent in the past year. Every adult now owes about \$967 as part of the national credit debt. In this context, it is tragic, and a real concern, that ChequEXchange has emerged as a new credit lending institution that has leeches itself, without regulation, onto the financially vulnerable in our community, charging crippling interest rates and fees. This payday lender should in my view be closed down unless it can be properly regulated in line with the requirements of the uniform credit code that applies to other lending institutions.

If an individual borrows money from this shonky credit provider, the individual does not have to be given a copy of the loan contract; ChequEXchange, as the lender, does not have to disclose contract details before the borrower signs. The lender can repossess security, such as motor vehicles, without notice, and repossession can take place within just 30 days of the default. There is no requirement for the lender to disclose the interest rate, and borrowers have no right to challenge the level of fees and charges, as they do with loans over 62 days. ChequEXchange is a moneylending predator and its victims are financially struggling families, problem gamblers and the elderly.

Clearly, something needs to be done about the current operation of ChequEXchange and other like moneylender organisations. I know that the Minister for Fair Trading, who is in the House this evening, already is very concerned about the way that this and similar companies are operating. In that light, I call on the Minister to examine appropriate legal means with the aim of suspending the operation of ChequEXchange—at the very least, until a more suitable and regulatory framework is put into place which can viably control this company's lending activities in line with community expectations.

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [10.20 p.m.]: Payday lenders are nothing but loan sharks playing on people desperate for cash. The simple truth is that consumers have virtually no rights when they deal with those operators. That is why I am pleased to be able to advise the House and the honourable member for Bankstown that New South Wales, in conjunction with other States, is in the process of closing the loopholes that have allowed these unsatisfactory practices to arise.

Payday loans are short-term loans to tide the borrower over to payday. I understand the average loan is about \$250 over two to four weeks. Payday lenders do not charge an interest rate; they charge a fee, usually \$20 to \$25 for each \$100 borrowed. For loans of just a few weeks, this equates to annual interest rates of up to 1,300 per cent. These lenders target people who have had problems getting credit in the past. Because payday loans are for less than 62 days, borrowers are currently not covered by the uniform credit code.

A report has recently been presented to the Ministerial Council on Consumer Affairs. Prepared by my Queensland colleague Judy Spence, the report, amongst other things, recommends that the Consumer Credit Code should be amended to cover payday lenders; consumers should be told the effect of annual interest rate applying to a loan; and fair trading authorities should issue guidelines warning that requiring security, such as title to motor cars, for small payday loans could be in breach of the Consumer Credit Code and Consumer Credit Act. The report has been circulated to all jurisdictions.

If four out of the seven Australian fair trading Ministers agreed to the reforms, or an amended version of them, the reforms can be quickly made law throughout Australia. Let me make it clear: it is my intention to move quickly to close this loophole. Of course, I intend to take the details of the final proposal to Cabinet for discussion once other States have agreed. I thank the honourable member for Bankstown for raising this most important issue in his electorate. Sadly, it is an issue that is becoming increasingly evident in electorates throughout Australia.

LISMORE ORGANIC WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [10.22 p.m.]: I wish to report on a launch that occurred in the Lismore City Council precinct. I was invited by the council to attend the launch of commencement of works for the Tryton Waste Services facility that is processing Lismore's organic waste using vermiculture. Breakthrough technology using worms to turn green household waste into valuable fertiliser is set to make Lismore the national leader at the cutting edge of organic waste disposal. Sydney-based engineering company Tryton Group will begin building a \$4 million organic reprocessing facility on Lismore council's Wyrallah Road tip site in the next few weeks.

Former New South Wales Premier and Tryton Group chairman, the Hon. Neville Wran, joined company representatives in Lismore to launch this venture, which has been developed in conjunction with Lismore City Council, describing it as "beginning a journey down a path of great significance, not only to Lismore but to all of Australia." The project is set to dramatically increase the life of council's tip and save money on waste disposal. It also has the potential to make money for council in the long run—and that has to be a benefit in itself.

Tryton currently has patents pending on the first-in-Australia vermiculture technology it is developing. The company is currently breeding four types of compost worms on the Lismore waste site and aims to have more than 11 tonnes of worms ready for the reprocessing facility to begin operation in March 2001. The worms will turn plant, paper, cardboard and food scraps from Lismore residents using council's weekly organic waste collection into worm castings. The castings are a nutrient-rich fertiliser. The project also has the potential to supply worms, which breed rapidly, as stockfeed, especially for the growing local aquaculture industry.

Nick Try, managing director of Tryton Waste Services, said his company would be working with the Cellulose Valley Technology Park to develop protein-rich worm products as agricultural feed. Lismore City Council now hopes to double the 6,000 tonnes of green waste collected in the first year of the organic service. Already some 53 per cent of waste, which previously went into landfill, is being converted to compost. Lismore is very proud of this. Already, councils right across Australia have expressed interest in the project. Lismore's pioneering work puts the council into a position to offer a regional solution to the environmental problems associated with landfill. The council now has the expertise to assist other councils with the disposal of their organic waste. Its model has worldwide implications for the ongoing problem of decreasing landfill, a major problem for every council.

The reprocessing plant initially will have the capacity to process 35,000 tonnes of organic material a year, producing around 12,000 tonnes of fertiliser. The \$2.5 million building will be made using a double-skinned plastic shell. It will be fully automated to control the temperature and humidity to create a hot, dark and humid environment for the worms. The plant, which will cover 3.1 hectares, will have the capacity to expand to process more than 180,000 tonnes of material. For the first five years council will be paying Tryton to process its organic waste, and after that council will receive a royalty on the worm castings sold from this venture. I compliment Lismore council on its initiative and Tryton on taking part in this world-class initiative starting in Lismore.

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [10.27 p.m.]: I would like to thank the honourable member for Lismore for his erudite and cogent statement on the need to take care with our future regarding recycling and to come up with creative solutions to deal with domestic waste problems. I was very interested to hear what Lismore City Council is doing with regard to its waste problem and its use of organic means of waste disposal, in particular using worms. The honourable member for Dubbo suggested that Lismore was the worm capital of Australia, if not the world. Saving money and extending the life of landfills are two side effects of a well thought out waste disposal campaign. Members of Parliament become experts in many strange things. Hearing about 11,000 tonnes of worms and their ideal environment is one of the great joys of being a member of Parliament. Members become interested and are experts in a range of subjects. I congratulate Lismore City Council on the wonderful work that it has done. I thank the honourable member for Lismore for raising this matter in this place.

CHAMPION HOMES BUILDING PRACTICES

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.29 p.m.]: I again draw to the attention of honourable members the unsatisfactory behaviour of Champion Homes. On 9 August I raised in this place many of the problems being faced by people using Champion Homes. I then specifically mentioned the problems being experienced by five families. I certainly spoke to other families who had had similar experiences but I could not mention any of them individually because Champion, in return for completing or rectifying work, extracted non-disclosure clauses from those people. Champion's response to these issues is quite instructive.

Mr Wayne Mather, who purports to speak on behalf of Champion Homes, inferred to a local newspaper that one of the families that I had mentioned knew nothing at all about the matter I had raised in Parliament. That was a lie by Mr Mather, as my solicitor subsequently pointed out to him. His claim was certainly contrary to the written document provided to me by the family concerned. The second lie that Mr Mather told—his second claim—was that on 18 August Champion had been given the all clear by the Department of Fair Trading. On 1 September the office of the Minister for Fair Trading told me that that was definitely not the case.

Subsequent to the comments that I made in this place in August I have received further complaints. For example, Mr Bruce Etherington of Wattle Grove saw reports of my comments and contacted me to say that his experiences with Champion were identical to the ones that I had described. He had been promised a completion date of April-May and, as at September, he was still waiting for completion. One of the more recent complaints that I received is from the Giannini family, which comprises Sharon, Mark and their five children. They were previously victims of the HomeFund catastrophe. Despite that setback, and with both Mr and Mrs Giannini working full time, they decided that they would attempt to own their own home. The children were particularly excited about this new dream home and were looking forward to having a larger house with more bedrooms.

Unfortunately, their dream home turned into a nightmare because of Champion. The building contract was dated 11 February 2000 and 26 weeks was allowed for construction. It has still not been completed and it is unlikely to be completed before Christmas. Champion said that plans would be lodged with Camden council in late January or February. They were not lodged until mid-March. Champion said that it would have the plans approved by council within two weeks. In fact, they were not approved until 16 May. Champion failed to supply supporting documents such as shadow diagrams when the plans were first lodged. Documents were lodged for approval at the Water Board. However, Champion refused to retrieve the approvals until a number of approvals for other properties were also ready for collection. That, of course, slowed the process.

These events obviously caused delay. Champion then attempted to say that the tender price had changed and increased by \$2,000 because of the delay. Given that the delays were largely caused by Champion, it is not surprising that the Gianninis remonstrated with Champion, which then miraculously reviewed its position, although it still insisted that it wanted an extra \$1,000. One extraordinary aspect of the issue was the case of a drop-edge beam, which was going to cost an additional \$7,000. The beam was said to be necessary because of the height of the land at the front of the block. There was more fill there than was necessary or than had been approved by council. That extra fill necessitated the drop-edge beam.

Of course, the fill had been put there by Champion Homes. If it had done the earlier excavation on the site correctly there would not have been any excess fill. The drop-edge beam made the house higher. Because of that it caused a lot of extra materials to be used, for example, extra bricks and stairs and the necessity for an extra railing on the verandah. On 7 August Mr Giannini sent a letter to Champion pointing out some of these issues. On 28 July Mr Giannini sent a letter to Camden council stating that he wanted no changes to the council-approved plans without its consent. Of course, the drop-edge beam was not on the council plans. Despite this the beam went in and the slab was laid on top of it. After raising all these concerns Champion Homes miraculously agreed that the cost of the extra work would be reduced to \$1,800, to be shared equally between the Gianninis and Champion. That was clearly unacceptable and eventually Champion retreated.

The list of problems with the construction continues. For example, Champion delivered the wrong front door. The door opening was too small. Nails were not hammered into joints but next to them. One of the bedroom windows was too high. Most concerning is the fact that the slab that has been laid appears to be crumbling. The frame overlaps the slab and on other parts the frame does not sit properly on the slab. It has been inspected by a building consultant who has issued a page and a half of defects. Other things, such as footpaths, have been put in incorrectly. Scaffolding was delivered too early, before the second storey work was to be done. The supplier was heard bragging that he had made a lot of money for things that were not necessary.

The Gianninis tried to obtain redress. One of the things that they did was to speak to a local newspaper. This provoked a Champion Homes representative into claiming that this would be a breach of the Giannini's contract with Champion. Of course, that would have been an unconscionable provision in such a contract. It is equally the case that there was no such provision in the contract, so that tawdry attempt at blackmail failed. Champion has also been quite keen to try to intimidate people into not making contact with newspapers or politicians by the use of the threat of legal proceedings. I ask for an investigation of the Gianninis' complaints and a broader investigation into whether or not Champion is a fit and proper organisation to hold building licences in this State.

FRIENDS OF KU-RING-GAI ENVIRONMENT INC.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.34 p.m.]: All communities have within them those people that we come to know as real gems and real heroes because they work tirelessly on behalf of communities. Tonight I refer to an organisation within the Ku-ring-gai community, the Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment Inc. [FOKE], which is headed by Anne Carroll, President, and Kathy Cowley, Vice President. I mention also in this regard Jean Posen. FOKE has largely led an effort within the Ku-ring-gai municipality to ensure that the residential environmental amenity which makes up Ku-ring-gai—that is, large homes and significant tree cover—is retained.

I have said in this House on a previous occasion that there have been significant threats from both developers and State Government planning policies which have threatened the character and nature of Ku-ring-gai. FOKE, along with organisations which have been formed latterly, such as the Ku-ring-gai Preservation Trust, have led the way in harnessing resident action in order to ensure that those things which have attracted people to the Ku-ring-gai district for almost a century continue to be preserved. It is with some pleasure that I note this evening that FOKE has been successful in having the Australian Council of National Trusts place on the endangered places list for 2000 Ku-ring-gai urban consolidation areas. This significant nomination was announced by former Federal Labor Minister Tom Uren on 22 August.

In the nomination process, FOKE and the Ku-ring-gai community had the support of Federal member Brendan Nelson, me as a State member and Ku-ring-gai council. Not often would all three levels of government come together to support something like this. The nomination registers at a national level that the heritage of Ku-ring-gai is of national significance, that it is under threat and that urgent measures must be adopted to protect the Ku-ring-gai municipality. The Department of Urban Affairs and Planning is currently considering a draft residential strategy for Ku-ring-gai. In dealing with that draft strategy over many years, but in particular over the past 12 months, council has been at pains, along with FOKE and the Ku-ring-gai Preservation Trust, to try to preserve that unique environment and residential amenity that make up Ku-ring-gai.

I hope that, in the light of this action by the Australian Council of National Trusts, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, the Minister and the head of the department acknowledge that the National Trust believes that the urban conservation areas within Ku-ring-gai are of a unique nature and that they are endangered. I am also pleased to note that Keep Australia Beautiful has advised that FOKE's entry has secured a finalist position. The finalist dinner, which will be held in November, will be addressed by the Deputy Premier. FOKE has been invited to put on a display about that significant residential environmental amenity within the municipality. If the Deputy Premier has not already made a decision in relation to the draft residential strategy I hope that he takes note of the National Trust's position, the Keep Australia Beautiful position and, more importantly, the residential position.

The National Trust and consultants engaged by Ku-ring-gai council in relation to that residential strategy recognise the significant built environment of Ku-ring-gai and the need to preserve these areas' heritage features. There is a degree of coincidence, kismet, serendipity in the fact that the National Trust was founded by people who were residents of Ku-ring-gai. It is now worthwhile that the organisation that was founded years ago by residents of Ku-ring-gai is now providing some protection to Ku-ring-gai to ensure that its built environment and heritage are preserved.

As honourable members know, Ku-ring-gai combines a unique blend of remarkable examples of twentieth-century architecture, representative of some of Australia's finest architects, set in equally landscaped surroundings within a region of Sydney bounded on two sides by a natural environment recognised by national park status. As the local member I can attest to the wider community's interest in preserving the unique residential and environmental amenity of Ku-ring-gai. Last year's council election, at which seven members of the Ku-ring-gai Preservation Trust were returned on a council of 10, made it clear in which direction the residents are interested. So I simply acknowledge the work of FOKE, Anne Carroll, Jean Posen, Kathy Cowley, and all those involved in securing this nomination by the Australian Council of National Trusts.

NATIONAL POLICE REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [10.39 p.m.]: I wish this evening to comment on an event I was privileged to attend on Friday 29 September: the National Police Remembrance Day service held at Narwee Baptist Church. I was fortunate to accompany to that function my parliamentary colleagues the honourable member for Menai and the honourable member for Rockdale. The three of us could not help but become very involved in what was a very moving ceremony conducted by the Georges River region of the Police Service. The Georges River region is under the command of Assistant Commissioner Ike Ellis, who has done an outstanding job in that position, looking after the Georges River region. He has given great leadership to all officers in that command and I congratulate him not only on the National Police Remembrance Day service but also on the leadership he provides to the Georges River region.

The service at Narwee Baptist Church was conducted by two police chaplains, the Reverend David Warner and the Reverend Peter Kilkeary. Both those gentlemen provided very moving addresses to those assembled, which included serving police, retired police, families of police officers and community representatives such as me. I congratulate Reverend Warner and Reverend Kilkeary on the attention to detail

they provided in the conduct of that ceremony, the way they respectfully considered the people there and the way they remembered police officers and the contribution they make to our community. That was adequately summed up in a very moving service that morning.

The Kogarah Municipal Band assisted on the occasion and played music outside the church as people moved in—solemn music that was appropriate to the occasion—and it assisted in the service itself. Speaking of music, I particularly comment on the contribution made by Mr Geoffrey Chard, AM, who has a magnificent baritone voice. He is a retired member of the Sydney Opera Company. His contribution to the service was appreciated by all those in attendance. Police Remembrance Day takes the opportunity, firstly, to think about those who have been killed in the service of the Police Service, not only in New South Wales but throughout Australia and the Pacific area.

This year we remembered Constable Matthew Potter, who unfortunately died on 7 January this year. He was remembered in a moving part of the ceremony when we also thought of nine other serving members of the Police Service who, while not dying on duty, had passed away within the past 12 months. A beautiful candlelighting ceremony was conducted by members of the service, and it was the most appropriate way to reflect on the loss of the serving members of the Police Service during the past year. At the end of the service it was appropriate for those in attendance to come together for morning tea, and as I moved amongst those in attendance they were all very impressed with the way the ceremony had been conducted and the thoughtfulness that had gone into the ceremony. Each and every one of the people I spoke to felt proud and privileged to have been in attendance on that morning.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Police Service of New South Wales on what it does for the community. In particular I congratulate Assistant Commissioner Ike Ellis and the Georges River region for the manner in which they conducted the National Police Remembrance Day service this year. I believe it is the first time that the region has had the opportunity to have a service within its own area. I particularly congratulate the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police for allowing the Georges River region to conduct the ceremony at a regional level this year. As I said, all those in attendance appreciated the opportunity to participate in what was a reflective and moving opportunity to remember those who make such a major contribution to our community.

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [10.44 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Georges River. As we discussed privately, the issue of the National Police Remembrance Day is above politics. Services were held on the day in various parts of the State and throughout Australia. I attended the Uniting Church in Pitt Street with the commissioner, and the Federal commissioner, Mick Palmer. The solemnity of that occasion was brought home to me when those police officers whose lives had been lost were represented by their family members extinguishing lighted candles in church. It is a constant reminder to me as Minister and as a civilian member of the community of the dangers that police face every day of their lives. It is a good time for us to take stock of what happens to those in the voluntary services and, on this day, in the Police Service.

I thank the honourable member for what he said about Ike Ellis, the regional commander for Georges River. He is an outstanding police officer. I can assure the honourable member there was a great deal of solace to those members of the police family who were at the service I attended, and he referred to the families of members of the Georges River police who were at their ceremony. They take great comfort in knowing their loved ones who paid the supreme sacrifice will never be forgotten by the Police Service or, may I say, by Parliament.

Mr SPEAKER: For the benefit of those members of the surfing fraternity who are in the gallery, once every day 10 members are allowed to make a statement about some matter of importance to their electorates. The member for Dubbo, Tony McGrane, is now about to make the last of those statements.

CENTRAL WEST PARKINSON'S DISEASE SUPPORT GROUP

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [10.46 p.m.]: I wish to draw the attention of the House to a support group in my electorate—the Parkinson's Disease Support Group. Many people are aware of Parkinson's Disease, but many more have become aware of it since Hollywood actor Michael J. Fox contracted the disease. The disease has suddenly become cool in a sense, but it remains a cruel disease. In America Michael J. Fox has elevated the disease to prominence with public awareness programs based around his standing in the community. The strategy would have made Michael J. Fox's character in *Spin City*, a public relations guru, very proud. While not as prominent but equally as important, the Central West Parkinson's Support Group, based in Parkes, has been quietly gathering information regarding this debilitating disease for use in research to improve the plight of Parkinson's disease sufferers in New South Wales.

The support group, which is headed by former Parkes Mayor Jack Scoble, who has Parkinson's disease, gained enough funding to conduct a survey of Parkinson's disease sufferers in the central west. The aim of the survey was, firstly, to improve understanding of the physical health, mental health, wellbeing and social circumstances of sufferers and their carers in the central west of New South Wales; secondly, to describe the health and social service needs of sufferers and their carers; and, thirdly, to describe satisfaction with services in relation to health problems among sufferers and their carers. Other organisations that helped to put together this study were the New South Wales Department of Ageing and Disability, the New South Wales Parkinson's Syndrome Society, Orange City Council, Parkes Shire Council, the Central West Division of General Practice and the Queensland University of Technology. One interesting item to emerge from the study was that the small town of Trundle has one of the highest incidences of Parkinson's disease in the world. Indeed, the figure of 7 per cent is by far the highest percentage in Australia.

Many statements have been made about the incidence of Parkinson's disease in rural areas. Often it has been suggested that there is a link between Parkinson's disease and the high level of chemicals used in rural areas. The relationship between Parkinson's disease and the use of chemicals to spray crops is debatable. The last relevant survey conducted in 1963 showed that Australia had 30,000 sufferers of Parkinson's disease. However, the Parkinson's disease support group has predicted that the figure is much closer to 50,000 sufferers. Herein lies the crux of the problem. Rightly, governments of the day do not give money away unless facts back up requests for financial help. Therefore, the Australian Parkinson's Society needs a prevalence study to present the facts to the government of the day and drug companies about the number of people in Australia now suffering from Parkinson's disease. Therefore, I ask the Minister for Health to consider funding a prevalence study to bring the New South Wales figures up to date. Of course, such a study could be based on the good work already done in the Central West of New South Wales.

Sufferers of Parkinson's disease have a dedicated facility at Concord hospital, but that is available only to those who live in the metropolitan area and in areas adjacent to Sydney. Support groups are necessary for all the different types of diseases. I suffer from a rare blood problem called haemachromatosis, and sufferers of that disease have a support group. People with haemachromatosis have too much iron in their blood, and if they do not receive the right treatment they literally rust. I was diagnosed with this condition after the death of my father. At that time many people did not know what caused haemachromatosis. During discussions in Parkes recently I learnt that this disease is closely linked with Parkinson's disease. Remembering that my grandfather had died of Parkinson's disease, I felt at the time that I should declare a pecuniary interest because unfortunately both my father and my grandfather died from a problem associated with iron in the blood! With great haste we should provide funding for the advancement of a cure for Parkinson's disease for self-survival.

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [10.51 p.m.]: I indicate to the honourable member for Dubbo that I will ensure that his very eloquent address is drawn to the attention of the Minister for Health. This is a serious issue, and I am sure the Minister will communicate with the honourable member.

Private members' statements noted.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That this House at its rising today do adjourn until Thursday 12 October at 10.30 a.m.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.
