

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 18 October 2001

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

BILLS RETURNED

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

Public Finance and Audit Amendment (Auditor-General) Bill

Consideration of amendments deferred.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION (ILLEGAL BROTHELS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 6 September.

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [10.01 a.m.]: I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Yeadon.

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (CONFISCATION AND FORFEITURE OF VEHICLES) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Dump a load of rubbish for a quick buck and lose your keys and vehicle. That is the simple message this bill intends to send to all illegal dumpers who spoil our bushland. One of the most serious environmental blights on our natural landscape and bushland is dumped rubbish—the work of illegal fly-by-nighters who want to make money by taking a load of waste and dumping it anywhere but in a licensed tip. Sadly, these blights are evident across New South Wales, and I cannot think of a single area I have visited that is not affected in some way. In recent months I have visited some of the illegal dump sites favoured by these vandals. Bushland near Barden Ridge in Sutherland has been a magnet for this rubbish. I have seen literally acres of the site, which adjoins the licensed landfill. It has mountains of carpet underlay, more than three dozen burnt-out car wrecks, piles of domestic waste, piles of tiles and building waste, material that looks suspiciously like asbestos, televisions, car parts and paint tins.

Trails have been made by large vehicles to numerous parts of this bushland area, which is in a creek catchment, where eventually all the chemical leachate from this trash will make its way to poison the fish, insect, reptile and bird life. The dumped rubbish smothers native plants and will probably permanently affect the possibility of regrowth, even after clean-up. Since my first visit there, council has made some major efforts to prevent car access off the main road and has placed large sandstone boulders along the roadside. Despite that, these vandals have found other ways in and are still plying their poisonous trade. There is no doubt in my mind that the nature of this waste strongly suggests that it has a commercial or industrial source, and it is highly likely that the drivers of the vehicles that brought it there received a fee for doing so.

I visited Crown land along the Bargo River in my electorate where again truck loads of waste, which comprises industrial materials, building materials, car parts and packaging, have been driven into pristine

bushland and dumped. The tragedy is that in this area there are some very rare species of the persoonia plant, which many local people want protected. They want to see this area become part of the Bargo River national park proposal. I was shown two examples of plants that have been damaged by trucks in the dumping area. The persoonia bargoensis plant is rare and deserves protection.

Wingecarribee council area has not escaped the blight. Rubbish has been dumped in areas near Berrima Weir on Crown land. Roadsides in our dramatic escarpment roadways near national parks, bushland and State forests have been used by these dumpers as tip sites. The damage caused to the environment by this waste is enormous. I have already mentioned the impact of leachates on soil and waterways. This leachate can remain in the environment for a long time as plastics and other dumped materials slowly degrade and release their components. Loose asbestos is a hazard; when it gets wet by rain and then dries on a regular basis it blows around in the atmosphere. Apart from anything, this rubbish looks awful.

As the Minister for the Environment has said in this place, rubbish attracts other rubbish. Once someone sees a pile of waste there is a temptation to think that a little bit more will not make much difference, so the cancer spreads. Anyone who drove along Heathcote Road before its recent major clean-up will know that it was a prime example of that. Dumped waste also attracts and harbours vermin like foxes, cats, rabbits and rats, which compete with native animals in our bushland, and the rubbish provides them with a place in which to breed. In these uncertain times dumped waste is also a security risk, and I shall say more on that later.

I have three people in particular to acknowledge in the development of this bill. The first is Mr Warren Hart, a resident of Barden Ridge, who emailed me some months ago to draw attention to the problem in his area. He met me at the Sutherland site on my first visit. I was also joined there by Councillor Kevin Schreiber of Sutherland council and the honourable member for Vacluse, who has been working on trying to solve dumping issues in his electorate in partnership with councils and community groups, with a good deal of success. We saw the devastation of the Barden Ridge site.

The honourable member for Vacluse told us about the gains made in the Bondi area regarding dumped cars. Rather than remaining dumped in Bondi streets, abandoned cars were handed over to charities and sold, the proceeds going to important charities, such as CanTeen. The honourable member for Vacluse suggested that confiscating vehicles used by dumpers might be a deterrent in the same way the anti-hooning legislation has been successful in stopping car hooligans. The thought that they might lose their vehicle has been a great deterrent to people who otherwise would have performed dangerous activities in stolen or borrowed cars. That legislation was also an initiative of the honourable member for Vacluse. While looking at the Barden Ridge site, these ideas seemed worthwhile.

Councillor Schreiber outlined the costs that local councils would incur—direct costs to ratepayers—of commercial dumping of the scale at Barden Ridge. He estimated that it would take approximately four council officers up to two months of solid work to clear the rubbish and take it to a licensed site. That does not take into account the additional costs for the use of council vehicles, equipment and the payment of dumping fees at licensed sites. These costs are additional to the time robbed from other important and constructive work for ratepayers that these four council officers would be otherwise doing. The costs are enormous to the community, individual ratepayers and to families. Ratepayers bear the costs that could otherwise go to positive projects in the community. It has been put to me that the opening hours of the Lucas Heights waste facility could be extended. At present the closing time on Sunday afternoon is relatively early—I believe either 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. This might mean, particularly during daylight saving periods, that after a Sunday afternoon backyard clean-up some people arriving at the Lucas Heights landfill site and finding it closed might in frustration take the lazy way out and take their boot load next door into the bushland. Changing the opening hours at the waste facility is an issue for the council and its local community, but more convenient opening hours might make a difference. I am sure that councillors and community members will want to look into that.

The Coalition acknowledges the reforms in the recent Protection of the Environment Operations Act to redraw litter offences and increase penalties. The Coalition supported that legislation, moved amendments to toughen up categories of fines for aggravated offences, and was pleased to have Government support for those amendments. I listened with interest to the Minister's announcement about video camera surveillance of dumping sites. I hope this legislation also will make a difference, although my concern is that the likely outcome for someone caught littering will be the imposition of a fine. The people in the cases I have described would consider a fine to be an acceptable risk, an acceptable cost of their grubby business to take money from witting or unwitting clients for the disposal of waste, only to have it end up in our bushland.

The intention of this bill is to provide a meaningful deterrent to that practice. I would be delighted if its effect resulted in a dramatic reduction in this sort of offence and consequently no confiscation of vehicles. We

need to get to the core of the problem—a good deal of this rubbish is dumped for commercial purposes, for fee or reward. The bill makes this distinction clear. Dumping rubbish is a money-making enterprise for the fly-by-nighters who can only continue this practice while they have their vehicle. For these people a fine of several hundred dollars—or even thousands of dollars, as imposed recently in places like the Shoalhaven area—is likely to occur only once a year in all likelihood, if at all. These people consider the risk of a fine acceptable and a cost they are prepared to bear. When compared to the cost involved in taking loads to landfill, a fine is generally the cheaper option.

The solution to deter these people is to hit them with the threat of losing their vehicle. If they have no vehicle, they cannot dump rubbish. The vehicle could be worth \$30,000. Though there are options in this legislation through which their vehicle may be returned, they face the prospect of not having their vehicle for a period of time, and so stopping or curtailing their illegal activities. What seems to be happening is that people advertise their services as legitimate contractors, or they are known by word of mouth as rubbish contractors who undertake on a commercial basis to remove waste from building sites, businesses, homes or individuals. Clients genuinely believe the load is going to a licensed site not knowing that the fee they pay is really a 100 per cent profit for the illegal dumper.

Unethical businesspeople can obtain other rewards by avoiding paying the landfill fee. This illegal dumping is a major problem for the hundreds of thousands of honest, legitimate waste contractors who are properly licensed and who observe the law and pay all appropriate fees at licensed landfill sites. They are let down by a system that is soft on fly-by-nighters and illegal dumpers. I have mentioned some of the major dumping grounds that I have seen, but I shall mention a couple of others. Recently I have been meeting with a group of people in my electorate, the Balmoral Village Association. Mr Larry Wilson, the president, raised with me the issue of illegal dumping in local bushland around the Balmoral area. We are blessed with many national parks and State recreation areas. Unfortunately, because access to many of these is by remote roads, they are attractive to those who want to dump commercial or even private waste.

Unscrupulous contractors and private individuals dump construction waste and other materials. The likelihood is remote of having a designated person in Balmoral with powers to issue infringement notices. Therefore, to achieve convictions against illegal dumpers, it is important to help local residents become educated about the sort of information necessary to note and communicate to authorities. I wrote to the Minister for the Environment on behalf of the Balmoral Village Association asking whether "dob in a dumper" types of signs could be displayed locally to dissuade dumpers, and to achieve better community reaction to those dumpers, people need to be aware that they can take down vehicle registration numbers and that sort of information. At a Federation tree planting ceremony at Balmoral, Mr Wilson said that he was pleased to hear about the legislation that I planned to introduce. It could be another valuable tool if local people would take down information about people they see illegally dumping, which may lead to the confiscation of such a vehicle.

Councils and residents in the Shoalhaven, Goulburn, Central Coast, northern suburbs, northern beaches and Illawarra areas, virtually anywhere with bushland close to urban areas, are at risk. Built-up urban areas are also at risk where large-scale furniture and car dumping is common. Recently I visited a street in Bondi with Peter King, the Federal Liberal candidate for Wentworth. He wanted to show me the scale of commercial dumping that local residents put up with in the Bondi area. We found a pile of furniture in a local street that was enough to furnish a small flat. Not far away we found no less than four dumped cars in a local street. Mr King is convinced that this legislation will be a useful tool for local councils to crack down on and deter commercial illegal dumping of furniture and cars. This legislation has an application both in rural and urban areas.

The bill contains the following features. Its object is to confiscate any vehicle used to dump waste illegally in bushland or other places for commercial gain. The bill provides for the confiscation of a vehicle or trailer used in the act of dumping material in an unlicensed disposal place for financial gain, fee or reward. Confiscation and forfeiture will occur if an authorised officer reasonably believes the vehicle has been used in connection with the offence and the offence was in connection with business, fee or reward. Alternatively, confiscation and forfeiture could occur by court order as a result of prosecution of the offender. The authorised officers of regulatory authorities can include the Environment Protection Authority [EPA], council rangers, council officers, and officers of Sydney Water and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. So it includes a range of State agencies with powers delegated to them by the EPA. It picks up the recent amendments to the Protection of the Environment Operations Act [POEO] in which the issuing of infringement notices was extended to a range of government agency officers.

The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] is required to supply vehicle ownership data to these officers. The vehicle must be returned to the owner or user if court action has not been initiated within 28 days.

Confiscated vehicles can be sold or returned under conditions that are satisfactory to the court or the appropriate regulatory authority. For example, it might be determined that the offender must clean up what was dumped and must undertake all necessary environmental remediation. When that is done, it might well be that the confiscating authority believes that the vehicle can be returned. Alternatively, the vehicle could be sold and the proceeds of sale retained to cover the cost of the clean-up or to cover the costs of other appropriate activities undertaken by the agency.

If a person appeals against the seizure, the person may have the vehicle returned on payment of security until the court determines the matter. Non-commercial dumpers would not be subject to vehicle confiscation under this bill. That avoids a situation in which a householder has dumped material after a weekend clean-up and the vehicle has been confiscated, which perhaps has caused disadvantage to another family member or friend who is left without a car. While it is equally wrong to dump illegally for commercial or non-commercial purposes, the bill is not intended to be unreasonably heavy handed or to enter a minefield of unintended impact. The focus of the bill remains very strongly on people who undertake illegal dumping for commercial gain, for fee or reward. The bill focuses on them because I believe it is that type of dumping that is the major problem confronting our bushland areas.

In developing the bill—for which I thank Peter Barrett and Nigel Hill of Parliamentary Counsel—Parliamentary Counsel recommended that to achieve its objects the bill should be modelled on the Fisheries Management Act, division 4, part 9, which is the most workable mechanism in this circumstance. Since I announced the idea of this bill, I have been encouraged by the enormous support for it. There is a genuine need, particularly among council officers and staff, to have a better and more practical range of tools available. No council areas are free from this blight. I have had contact with councillors from the Central Coast such as Brenton Pavier from Wyong Shire Council; Councillor Andrew Ho from the Strathfield Municipal Council, who has publicly called on the Government to support the bill; Megan Lavender at Canada Bay council; Kevin Schreiber at Sutherland Shire Council; and councillors and officers of the Wollondilly Shire Council.

As recently as this morning I was speaking to Councillor Paul Stephenson, the Mayor of Mulwaree Shire Council. He told me about the costs that the Mulwaree shire has had to meet in recent times associated with clearing up dumped rubbish in the Tallong Park and the Marulan areas, which is yet another example of the dumping blight. The General Manager of Wingecarribee Shire Council wrote to me and stated:

With reference to your Private Member's Bill, Council is certainly supportive of any measures which will assist in decreasing illegal dumping in the bushland.

I thank David McGowan for his expression of support. His statement is a typical reaction to this bill. Councillors know what a tough problem illegal dumping is. They know that they cannot solve it by imposing fines alone, and they welcome another weapon in the armoury, which they can choose to use if it helps them. I have certainly received encouragement from key environment groups in a similar vein because they regard illegal dumping as a terrible blight, particularly in our national parks and reserves. A letter I received from Mr Peter Griffiths who lives in my electorate also shows the type of reaction to the bill from residents in affected areas. Mr Griffiths lives in Bowral and states:

... only this morning I heard you on the news addressing the problem about irresponsible rubbish dumping.

I agree with you and congratulate you in your efforts to have illegal dumpers vehicle confiscated. It seems to be a step in the right direction, as I have and no doubt you have seen the result of someone dumping rubbish in parking areas on the Freeway between the Highlands and Campbelltown. It does seem to be out of control.

They do indeed need stopping and I have been wondering for some time how it could be done.

As a Commercial and Private Inquiry Agent, it is my belief that we only have to place a few of these people before the court, before it will have an effect on this nasty and unsavoury practice.

No doubt, it is impacting on the ecology/environment and is affecting us financially, by it having to be removed.

It never ceased to amaze me what some people will do for greed, that is, to save a dollar and take this rubbish to the tip.

Once again, thank you very much for your efforts in regards to all the matters I have mentioned and keep up your good work.

If there is anything I can do to assist in your efforts to stop this dumping of rubbish in bushland, please do not hesitate to call me as I too feel strongly about it.

Illegal dumping affects many people. When people see rubbish in bushland, they are sickened and they understand the environmental impacts. People are looking for practical solutions. The fact that so many

councillors in so many parts of Sydney and regional New South Wales have expressed support for this new tool highlights how important this bill is to people. I hope the Government will support this legislation and give councils an extra tool to deal with the blight of illegal dumping. The legislation is designed to be clear, to be fair, and to target the commercially motivated fly-by-nighters who use our precious bushland as a tip.

Councils support the bill, residents support it, conservationists support it, law-abiding waste contractors support it, the Coalition supports it and I seriously hope that the Government will support it. I particularly call upon the honourable member for Menai to get behind this bill because Menai is where this bill was born. This bill will provide practical assistance to the Sutherland Shire Council in combating the blight of illegal dumping. Indeed, I call upon all members of the Government to get behind this bill because it is a chance to make a difference to what is a major incremental environmental time bomb in this State. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Yeadon.

WILDERNESS AMENDMENT (PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion, by leave, by Mr Webb.

CROSS-BORDER COMMISSION BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 6 September.

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [10.29 a.m.]: I support the legislation introduced by the honourable member for Ballina. Members in regional and rural New South Wales understand, and have understood for some time, the difficulties faced by people living in border towns. I suggest that even the Premier and members of the Government understand those difficulties. I draw to the attention of the House the Premier's statement this year about the need for councils in the border towns of Albury and Wodonga to, if not amalgamate, think and act as one. The Premier has recognised the difficulties experienced by residents of those border towns.

Another example of border towns that experience similar difficulties is Tweed Heads and Coolangatta. I am sure the Minister at the table, the Hon. Kim Yeadon, is aware of the legislative difficulties experienced when building roads from one side of the border to the other. No doubt he would also be aware that New South Wales has a problem with partially filling the wetland on our side of the border, which must be done before the airport runway can be extended so as to enable national and international planes to land. The problems created by State legislation in border towns are obvious.

Some 30 years ago I lived in Moree, and I recall that people who lived in the border town of Mungindi would have a second property, an address or a garage, on the other side of the border in Queensland. Vehicle registrations in Queensland were much cheaper than they were in New South Wales. A fellow by the name of Andy Doyle, a wheat carter who lived in New South Wales—his yard was in Queensland and he conducted business on both sides of the border—registered the majority of his trucks in Queensland because it was cheaper and more convenient. As a result, New South Wales lost revenue. Because Queensland returns its tax on fuel to the oil companies, fuel prices are some 12¢ to 15¢ a litre cheaper in Queensland than they are in New South Wales. The price of fuel in the Tweed Heads-Coolangatta zone is comparable to the price of fuel in Queensland. To make it less attractive for motorists to travel north over the border to purchase fuel, Coffs Harbour is in the third North Coast zone. The differences are obvious.

The most emotive issue we have seen for many years in cross-border towns is daylight saving. Queensland does not have daylight saving. People living in New South Wales-Queensland border towns either miss planes or arrive at the airport one hour early. Last year Seagulls Leagues Club refused to operate on New South Wales daylight saving time because tourists come across the border to utilise its facilities. Some businesses operate on New South Wales time and others operate on Queensland time. It is inconvenient not only for businesses but for tourists, locals and everyone concerned.

The problems caused by daylight saving are so ridiculous that people can no longer organise their lives with any certainty. Watsons Caravans Centre in Coffs Harbour recently drew my attention to the difference in

caravan registrations from State to State. Most people who buy caravans travel extensively around Australia because it is a great country. Yesterday the Government moved a motion about people driving north and south.

People pack up their caravans and away they go. But it is amazing how many cars registered in New South Wales tow caravans registered in Victoria. Why do we have this anomaly? If you register your caravan in Victoria—people normally travel only for holidays or for an extended two- or three-month period during the winter break—you save not hundreds but thousands of dollars over 10 years. Stamp duty and registration on caravans is totally different in Victoria. It becomes extremely attractive, particularly to retirees, to buy, register and service their caravans in Victoria. The \$1,000 you save in charges could go a long way to contributing towards your holiday.

There is anomaly after anomaly. The demerit points system that applies to motor vehicle licences is totally different from New South Wales to Queensland, and from Queensland to Victoria. Motorist can even have dual licences. I am aware that there is an attempt to introduce homogenous legislation across all States for heavy vehicle motor transport. Queensland motorists who are fined in New South Wales do not have points recorded against their Queensland licences.

For example, a U-turn at traffic lights is illegal in New South Wales, but legal in Queensland. Even though Queensland motorists are aware they are breaking the law in New South Wales by doing a U-turn at traffic lights, they are not particularly concerned about it because no points penalty is applied to their licences, only a fine. It really becomes a problem in Tweed Heads and Coolangatta. Police officers in Tweed Heads have to use their discretion when a Queensland driver who works on the New South Wales side of the border does a U-turn at traffic lights.

The legislation will set up a Cross-Border Commission comprising a chairperson and four to eight part-time members appointed by the Premier. The part-time members will be residents of New South Wales and, in the opinion of the Premier, suitably qualified to represent the various interests of border communities. It is a sensible proposal.

The bill should attract support from both sides of the House. Let us take politics out of this. The Government should support the bill. We are giving the Government the opportunity to appoint members of the commission. As I said previously, the Premier is aware of the difficulties experienced by those living in cross-border towns, as evidenced by his statements about Albury and Wodonga councils. He is acutely aware of the problems in that area. I am sure he would be acutely aware of the problems faced in Tweed Heads and Coolangatta. I say to the Premier: Do not play politics. Instruct your Minister and your colleagues to support the legislation. If the Premier thinks it is deficient in some way, he can let us know. I am sure the honourable member for Ballina would be only too happy to accept amendments that would improve the legislation, if that is possible.

One of the functions of the commission would be to invite members of border communities to make submissions in relation to matters affecting those communities. Even though I do not live in a cross-border town I am aware of cross-border issues that affect the community, and I have related some of them to the House previously. The commission would conduct inquiries into such matters affecting border communities as referred to it by the Premier or as the commission considered appropriate. The commission would also make recommendations to the Premier and prepare an annual report for the Parliament in relation to the results of its inquiries into matters affecting border communities. In effect, the commission would act as a mediator and, I suggest, give those communities the opportunity to live in peace.

I would like to relate an interesting story about cross-border issues and Dr John Walmsley, the proprietor of Earth Sanctuaries. I am aware that the Minister does not like Dr Walmsley very much—but, then again, I suppose Dr Walmsley does not like the Minister very much either—and that the Government is not a great fan of his. Personally, I am. Dr Walmsley and his wife, Prue, opened a sanctuary at Scotia on the South Australian-New South Wales border, in the electorate of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, and they are doing a fantastic job of preserving and conserving protected species. I was invited to attend the opening of the sanctuary, but unfortunately I was not able to attend. Tim Fischer, the Deputy Prime Minister, was honoured and delighted to open the sanctuary, which has a tremendous record in fencing out feral cats, foxes and other animals and ensuring the propagation of various species.

Dr Walmsley wanted to introduce certain endangered species from South Australia into New South Wales, but the National Parks and Wildlife Service said, "Oh no, we can't have South Australian species in New

South Wales." I am yet to find a kangaroo, a koala, a numbat, a bettong, a bilby or any other animal that would look at an atlas to see whether they were in New South Wales or South Australia. The National Parks and Wildlife Service would not allow Dr Walmsley to introduce the species. How did Dr Walmsley overcome this problem? He bought a little property on the South Australian side of the border and fenced it in, but he left the fence on the border line open. He then released those endangered species.

I would say that those little furry creatures are now living quite happily in New South Wales as well as in South Australia. I do not think the diversity of the animal population makes any difference; indeed, I believe Dr Walmsley has done a great job. I say to the Minister and his colleagues: For God's sake, get off this man's back. He is the only person who is successful in protecting more than 3,000 endangered species, including the platypus. Get off his back, work with him, and ensure that his way of conservation is adopted by New South Wales.

In conclusion, although I know it is not within the leave of the bill, I draw the House's attention to the hardworking nurses who are outside the Parliament at present. I suggest that they probably have cross-border anomalies, but their anomalies are more of a political nature. I suggest that the Government go out and listen to them. I can hear them from inside the Chamber, and I fully support them. I say to those nurses: You have our support. I hope the Minister for Health gives you some money to run Coffs Harbour hospital so you do not have to boycott the opening of the new hospital next week, which is what they are going to do. I hope you get the support and the staff levels you need to run that hospital.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [10.44 a.m.]: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour is a man I would support as Leader of the National Party in this Parliament. He is an aspirant for the leadership of the National Party. He is a man who is highly respected by a number of members on this side of the Chamber because we regard him as a real asset to the National Party and to people in country New South Wales. Therefore I am absolutely amazed that he would support the Cross-Border Commission Bill. What is the intent of the bill? How does the National Party intend to resolve these issues? It is going to set up a committee! That is how the National Party intends to resolve cross-border issues: It is going to set up a committee! What will that committee do? A new committee will be set up, there will be jobs for the boys and girls, and the committee will report to the Parliament.

Do we really need another commission? Do we really need another committee? Do we really need another 15 or 20 people, plus the secretariat, Hansard to record the hearings, and all the other necessary staff? Do we need all of that to deal with cross-border issues? We do not. And why do we not? Because yesterday the Parliament passed a bill that deals with the Murray River, the Hume Weir, Mulwala and other waterways in that region. That bill is proof that matters can be resolved by the co-operation of governments. That co-operation results in decisive action and the resolution of the matter. It does not require another superstructure, another layer of administration, trying to solve problems between governments. Imposed bureaucracies do not work, they never have worked, and they never will work.

I think the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, the aspirant to the leadership of the National Party of New South Wales, spoke in support of that legislation yesterday. The National Party supported that legislation because it knows, as well as everyone else, that the way to resolve cross-border issues is through co-operation through governments, not through creating another bureaucracy. In question time recently the National Party spoke about spending money on research into Australian fauna; it said that somehow that was a waste of money, that the \$250,000-odd should be spent on other issues involving country New South Wales. How much does the National Party think the Cross-border Commission will cost? It will cost \$1 million to commence. Would that money not be better spent on country New South Wales? The National Party simply wants to waste money and the time of the Parliament by creating another bureaucracy that would have no authority anyway and would simply submit a report to the Government.

What about the other governments that we are dealing with? Will they establish committees as well? Will Victoria have a cross-border commission? Will Queensland have a cross-border commission? Will South Australia also have a cross-border commission? Will those committees submit reports to their governments? If so, what will their governments do? Will their governments talk to our government, or to the other State governments? This bill is an absolute waste of the time of the Parliament, and it shows the ineptitude of the leadership of the National Party in this Parliament. It also shows why the National Party rating is now down to 2 per cent in this State.

National Party members opposite put their heads down. They do not mention that, do they? The National Party rating is down to 2 per cent of the vote. Why? Because they show no leadership in this Chamber,

because they show no leadership in country New South Wales, and because they waste time on stupid issues like this. There have been cross-border issues between Victoria and New South Wales, and they have been resolved by co-operation between their governments. Consider, for example, problems with roads and bridges that have been resolved by governments. Consider also policing and other community issues that have been resolved by governments.

Mr George: You wouldn't even know where the borders were.

Mr McBRIDE: I would not know where the borders were!

Mr George: When was the last time you went across one?

Mr McBRIDE: Earlier this year. I have spent a lot of time on cross-border issues in my role as Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Roads.

[Interruption]

The honourable member for Lismore was not a member of this House then, so he would not have known about it. Perhaps he was just asleep on the backbench. The honourable member should talk to any National Party member whose electorate is on the New South Wales-Victorian border or the New South Wales-Queensland border.

Mr George: Mine is.

Mr McBRIDE: The honourable member should talk to the previous incumbent, an excellent representative of the electorate.

Mr George: The electorate didn't go to the border then. There was a redistribution.

Mr McBRIDE: I know the issues. I was up there. We went along the Summerland Way and discussed funding for the Summerland Way. There were negotiations with the Queensland Government for the flow-on into Queensland. All of those issues were the subject of negotiation between the relevant Ministers. That is the way forward. That is how we need to deal with these issues. I was amazed when the Leader of the National Party asked a question in this House about the expenditure of \$250,000 on tracking and protecting Australian wildlife and suggested that that money should be used for, say—

Mr George: Books for students?

Mr McBRIDE: No, for noxious weeds and other issues. He suggested that it was a waste of money being spent in country New South Wales, that it should have been spent on some other issues for the betterment of country New South Wales. Now the National Party has said, "We want to waste a million dollars annually on issues involving country New South Wales. We want to set up a committee." The National party wants to set up a bureaucracy that would have no authority and no power other than to submit a report. We should be cutting down on bureaucracies and spending more on servicing our communities. I cannot believe that the Leader of the National Party, which is absolutely struggling for recognition in New South Wales, would continue to ask questions about metropolitan Sydney. He has no focus on country New South Wales.

Honourable members continue to ask questions about funding for country New South Wales, saying it would be more appropriate for the money to be spent in other ways. Now the National Party has introduced a bill that would result in the creation of another bureaucracy, one that would require a budget of not less than \$1 million per year. Members of the National Party say it would be better to spend the money on that bureaucracy rather than on providing concrete services to country New South Wales. I am disappointed that this bill has been introduced. It is good to see the National Party leadership aspirant back in the Chamber. I think it is time for a change in the National Party leadership. I believe if they had a new leader we would not see this sort of bill introduced into the Chamber to waste the time of the House.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [10.52 p.m.]: I hope the honourable member for The Entrance was not referring to the nursing brochure that was just handed to him when he made his last comment. There are 2,000 nurses campaigning outside Parliament House as I speak. They would be delighted to see the honourable member for The Entrance. As a member of the Government he might have some contribution to make to that

gathering. However, he has certainly made absolutely no contribution to this most important debate on the Cross-Border Commission Bill and the anomalies associated with cross-border problems. I have been looking forward to the introduction of this bill since I entered Parliament. My electorate of Burrinjuck borders the Australian Capital Territory and there are many cross-border anomalies there. Despite the time constraint, I will outline as many of them as possible.

The object of this bill is to establish the Cross-Border Commission of New South Wales. The bill will also make consequential amendments to the Public Sector Management Act 1988. The bill allows the commission to invite members of a border community to make submissions to the commission in relation to matters affecting that community. That is something that is well overdue. I receive many submissions from constituents relating to cross-border anomalies, and it would be of exceptional value to have a commission to which anomalies could be addressed.

The bill will allow the commission to conduct inquiries into such matters affecting border communities as are referred to it by the Premier or as the commission considers appropriate, and to identify issues affecting border communities and to make recommendations to the Premier regarding such issues. Honourable members should be aware that many borders are invisible. Some people who live close to a border have to travel across the border to their nearest major town, and many are faced with different State anomalies. The bill allows the commission to prepare an annual report for tabling in Parliament in relation to the results of its inquiries into matters affecting border communities. It will also allow the commission to perform other functions conferred or imposed on it by or under any other Act or law.

The honourable member for Cabramatta said in her second reading speech said that she believes there are insufficient anomalies on the New South Wales-South Australian border and the New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory border to warrant the creation of a formal commission at this stage. That is a blatantly arrogant and ridiculous statement. She should know better. People who live near the New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory have to deal with a number of serious anomalies each and every day. I have invited her to visit Burrinjuck on a number of occasions. I am pleased that she was able to come on one occasion, but if she would like to see some cross-border anomalies at first hand, I invite her to come to my electorate and I will show them to her.

For example, the Transborder Bus Company runs three commuter buses, one Countrylink feeder bus and four school buses per day into and out of the Australian Capital Territory. The company transports on average each day 90 commuters and seniors accessing medical services and about 200 students. Transborder has problems with cross-border anomalies. Occupational health and safety standards are different as between the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales, and the company has to comply with two different standards. Bus operator accreditation standards are also different. Deane's Bus Lines, which operates out of Queanbeyan, also has the same problem with its 30-odd bus runs.

There are also many other anomalies relating to health, of which dialysis is just one example. People have to travel to Canberra for dialysis treatment because there are no facilities around Goulburn. There are legal anomalies. The Australian Capital Territory does not recognise New South Wales powers of attorney. Teachers transferring from New South Wales to the Australian Capital Territory must change schemes. That can be to an individual's disadvantage if, for example, they contract an illness, such as breast cancer, after joining the State superannuation scheme and prior to the transfer. Jenny Mendick of Post Office Box 56, Tumut, wrote to me to explain the anomaly that she faced trying to teach over the mountain in the Australian Capital Territory education system. She wrote:

Firstly I have been paying into the State Super Scheme of NSW since 1977. Eighteen years ago I was diagnosed with breast cancer. At this time I had a lumpectomy and radiotherapy. I have continued teaching full time and had two beautiful children since this diagnosis.

Five and a half years ago I had more breast cancer diagnosed and I had a bilateral mastectomy and chemotherapy. Since this diagnosis I have continued to work full time as the Assistant Principal at Franklin School.

To transfer into the ACT education system I have to stop being a member of the State Super Scheme in NSW and join the Public Service scheme in Canberra. I have been told by the ACT staffing unit that I must belong to their scheme to be given a permanent appointment in the ACT system. This may have to be a limited benefits super benefit because of my breast cancer.

In this day and age when money could be transferred from my pay in the ACT by the flick of a computer button into my NSW SSS fund it seems very silly. This type of problem destroys mobility of public service personnel and the beneficial cross fertilisation of ideas. Why should a person with a breast cancer diagnosis be treated so badly when I may be hit by a bus before another diagnosis occurs.

Transferring also means I must go back to first year out status and go on a temporary contract basis. I will be monitored for 12 months by four teachers to determine if I can become a permanent member of the ACT teaching service at the bottom of the service ladder.

I have one subject to go and I will have completed my Masters in Education. I have nineteen years teaching experience, a Bachelor of Arts, a Diploma in Education, a Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education and a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia to primary students. One wonders how an education system in Australia can not recognise this level of expertise but rather decides I should begin again. It has taken me two years to even gain a temporary appointment in Canberra.

I want to live in Canberra and this is the cost I have to pay.

I also outlined the absolute arrogance of the Premier in his letter of 16 May 2000 to the honourable member for Ballina, the shadow Minister for Land and Water Conservation. He said:

I believe that current arrangements and structures for dealing with border problems are more likely to achieve seamless borders than a Cross-Border Commission. Consequently, I can advise that the Government members will not be supporting the *Cross-Border Commission Bill 2000* in Parliament.

Jenny Mendick's case certainly puts paid to the need for that commission. The shadow Minister for Land and Water Conservation said in his original letter to the Premier:

It is ... [the Coalition's] genuine desire to see the multitude of issues confronting border communities addressed by a non-political body, representative of the community, reporting directly to the NSW Parliament.

This is not a political exercise; it is an exercise that can be carried out by the New South Wales Parliament for the benefit of all members whose electorates face those cross-border anomalies. The shadow Minister for Land and Water Conservation continued:

... the Coalition's proposal for a Cross-Border Commission is the most appropriate vehicle to address these issues. People living in these communities suffer much inconvenience and business faces extra costs that run into millions of dollars each year.

A cross-border commission will bring many benefits to border communities, including the Australian Capital Territory. It will attack problems that are not being addressed under current arrangements, such as differences in payroll tax, the need for workers compensation premiums in more than one State, daylight saving and so on. It will produce more jobs in New South Wales. The rate of payroll tax in the Australian Capital Territory is lower than that in New South Wales and the threshold is much higher. It is a great advantage for businesses in my area to skip over the border to the Australian Capital Territory. How do we encourage businesses into rural areas when they are facing those sorts of anomalies?

A cross-border commission will also increase accountability as it will be required to report to Parliament on progress being made by the Government in implementing the commission's recommendations. For the Premier to say that the current arrangements and structures for dealing with border problems are more likely to achieve seamless borders is patently absurd in view of the ongoing cross-border problems. I refer to disability services and accommodation cross-border anomalies. This week I received a letter from Brian and Carol Kay, Waminda, Barton Highway, Jeir Creek, via Murrumbateman Post Office, New South Wales, 2582, to the Minister for Disability Services. It stated:

Dear Minister,

We need to have a cross-border policy in disabilities.

We are in the unenviable position of being located 13 minutes over the border of the ACT, with our 27yr old Cerebral palsied son using ACT services and education since the age of 6yr.

Now that we have applied for an accommodation support package, we are told by your Department that there is no "cross border policy." ... There should be.

As we, his parents, are of an age approaching retirement, Paul and we no longer feel that respite care is appropriate. We desire full time supported accommodation in a community in which his established daily activities can continue. Paul needs 100% care and we have provided this until he was 21yr, from which time we have provided 50% of his care and Hartley Court (the ACT) the remainder.

It has taken all of twenty-five years for us, the family, to establish his social networks, education and health care networks within his local community and in a practical, supportive environment. We are not prepared to take such vital support from him.

It is unrealistic to expect a dependant person who, ever since his pre-school years has used ACT services and because of lack of government foresight, is required to start all over again to find support services in another location.

We urge the government to consider the plight of Paul and people in similar circumstances to us. After all—the Canberra Hospital is available for the south-eastern region of NSW as well as the ACT residents. Why shouldn't the same cross border policy apply to disability service provision on a case by case basis?

I received a letter from Mr Angelo Galea, Rota, via Breadalbane, New South Wales, 2581, concerning licensing of plumbers and cross-border registration. Mr Galea was issued with New South Wales licence L5647 as a plumber, drainer, gasfitter and liquid petroleum gas fitter on 22 October 1980. That licence expired on 21 October 1982. He subsequently applied for and was granted licence L8320 for the same work categories on 29 April 1983 and he has maintained the licence as current until the present time. Both licences were issued by the former Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainers Board. Mr Galea was of the understanding that holding a licence in New South Wales would entitle him to operate in his trade in any other State without payment of further fees. The Minister for Fair Trading advised:

... this has never been the case except in regard to Victoria from the mid 1980s. An arrangement was put in place at that time to allow an applicant who had paid the appropriate fees to one of the two states, and held a current licence before applying for a licence in the other state, would pay only one fee.

There is now even an independent arbiter on the hospital cross-border funds dispute between the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. The arbiter recognised economic principles as well as issues of access and equity. The arbitrator decided that New South Wales should pay at a higher rate based on New South Wales average costs for teaching at major urban hospitals. The Australian Capital Territory had budgeted to receive \$28.6 million in revenue from New South Wales cross-border payments. This escalated to \$35 million. The cross-border revenue represents nearly 10 per cent of the total revenue—just over \$400 million—of the Australian Capital Territory health system.

The Australian Capital Territory Government recently issued information on arrangements for cross-border funding from New South Wales. Under the Australian Health Care Agreement, which governs the Australian hospital funding system, all States and Territories provide access to public hospitals without regard to the place of residence of all Australians. There is no direct charge to interstate public patients treated by public hospitals. However, the governments of States and Territories make arrangements to recompense each other for the cost of treating these patients. The Australian Capital Territory has an unusually large issue of border-crossing patients, due to our role as a regional centre. The Canberra Hospital, in particular, is the region's major trauma centre. Approximately 26 per cent of patients treated in Canberra's public hospitals are not Australian Capital Territory residents.

Accordingly, the New South Wales Government payments form a significant part of the revenue for the Australian Capital Territory health system—approximately \$30 million in recent years, or just under 10 per cent of the department's annual revenue. Those funds are applied by the Australian Capital Territory Department of Health and Community Care directly to services in the Australian Capital Territory. Time precludes me from going through every piece of information I have in relation to cross-border anomalies. Suffice it to say that I have raised several examples today that reinforce the need for a cross-border commission to be put in place. I believe that very strongly. These issues will not be resolved without such a commission being put in place. We have to face cross-border anomalies such as those that relate to health, education—including the Australian Capital Territory college system, to which a lot of New South Wales students travel—bus services, public transport, legal matters, general trade issues, and the like. I thoroughly recommend that the House adopt the Cross-Border Commission Bill.

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [11.07 a.m.]: I support the Cross-Border Commission Bill. In doing so, I acknowledge the Coalition's genuine desire for the multitude of issues confronting border communities to be addressed by a non-political body that represents the community and reports directly to the New South Wales Parliament. This bill is the most appropriate vehicle to address those issues. People who live in border communities—such as those who live in the Lismore electorate, which adjoins the Queensland border—suffer much inconvenience. In addition, businesses face extra costs, which run into millions of dollars a year, because of cross-border anomalies. I will highlight some problems in my electorate. I hope that members of Country Labor will support this bill because its provisions are needed in country and regional New South Wales.

The first issue that I wish to raise relates to daylight saving. I am sure that all honourable members will say, "Here we go again." However, this issue is not about faded curtains or cows not milking; it is about the quality of life for one-third of this State's population who live outside metropolitan areas. We could argue either for or against daylight saving, but everyone knows that it inconveniences people in regional areas. It inconveniences in particular those who live in cross-border areas, as Queensland does not have daylight saving. That causes problems for health, clubs, the entertainment industry and schools—the list goes on.

The other day, when I was speaking to Jim Hurley of Brown and Hurley, an important issue relating to daylight saving was raised—an issue that has not been brought to the attention of this Parliament. Trucks leave Queensland an hour later but they are expected to be in Sydney an hour earlier because of daylight saving. What pressure are we placing on semi-trailer drivers by reducing their travelling times? Driver, who have to meet deadlines at the start of business the next morning, cannot load in Queensland until the close of business.

Mr Fraser: It also affects bus timetables.

Mr GEORGE: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour makes a valid point.

Mr Gaudry: It is a great argument for daylight saving in Queensland.

Mr GEORGE: The honourable member for Newcastle should convince Peter Beattie of that fact. He has raised a valid point. Much has been said about governments working together to solve these problems. This is one problem that the New South Wales Government has not solved in the years that it has been in office. So much for Country Labor! Earlier the honourable member for The Entrance spoke on this issue. A large part of the Tweed electorate runs along the Queensland border, right up to the Gold Coast. The honourable member for Tweed voted for daylight saving, which will put his electorate out of step with Queensland. That is typical of what goes on in this place.

Daylight saving poses particular problems for children in western New South Wales—those who live near the Queensland border. We must address those issues. A number of honourable members in this House have heard me refer to the differences between payroll tax and workers compensation in New South Wales and Queensland. I refer again, and I will continue to refer, to the workers compensation bill that is being paid by the Northern Co-operative Meat Company in Casino—one of the biggest employers north of Newcastle. That company's workers compensation bill is \$2.4 million. The workers compensation bill for the same number of employees working at an abattoir in Queensland, which is just two hours away, is \$1.46 million—almost \$1 million less.

It is unfair for the Northern Co-operative Meat Company and it is unfair for any businesses operating along the Queensland border to be continually faced with additional workers compensation premiums. The companies with whom those businesses are competing, which are located just a few hours away, have cheaper workers compensation premiums. Those problems, which must be addressed, apply equally in relation to payroll tax. I will continue to raise these issues in this House until those anomalies are addressed. Those businesses and companies are not competing with people in Sydney; they are competing with people over the border in Queensland. The fishing industry is also penalised. Problems are experienced by people who want to fish in the waters of Queensland and New South Wales. I highlight another issue facing people living in the Legume, Stanthorpe or Wylie Creek areas. I am sure that many honourable members are wondering what areas I am talking about.

Mr Gaudry: No. It is up near the Queensland border.

Mr GEORGE: I am pleased that the honourable member for Newcastle is in the Chamber as he might be able to assist me in conveying a message to the Government. People who live in Wylie Creek and Legume have post office boxes in Warwick or Stanthorpe. However, as their postal address is in Queensland they cannot have a New South Wales driver's licence. They live in New South Wales, drive in New South Wales and their cars are registered in New South Wales. However, they cannot have a New South Wales driver's licence because they have a Queensland address. These anomalies must be addressed. I am sure that the honourable member for Newcastle would be aware of the provision of ambulance and emergency services in those areas. When people living in those areas require ambulance services they do not know from where they will receive one—Queensland or New South Wales. This problem is experienced by cross-border residents in New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia. I compliment the honourable member for Ballina on introducing this private member's bill. I encourage every honourable member to support it.

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [11.17 a.m.]: I welcome an opportunity to speak in debate on this bill. I congratulate the honourable member for Ballina on introducing this long overdue bill. Over the past six years of the Carr Government it has become more evident that we need legislation like this in New South Wales to ginger up the Government, move it out of its tired mode, move it back to community consultation and move it

away from the arrogance that so typifies it at the moment. This worthwhile initiative will result in further interaction with communities on the border not only of Queensland and Victoria but also South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. There is no shortage of issues that can be addressed in this forum. A few issues have been mentioned today and in previous addresses, for example, daylight saving, workers compensation, payroll tax, rules and regulations, roads and transport, and general conditions of trade.

I will focus on some of the issues that are important in New South Wales as there is a severe differential between our conditions and those in our neighbouring States. I refer first to payroll tax. The current payroll tax rate in New South Wales is 6.2 per cent. There is no doubt that, for the past six years, we have been targeted by the States around us. Queensland, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory have moved to identify payroll tax as a vulnerable point for New South Wales. The Carr Government has been ripping off businesses in New South Wales for the last six years. The rate has remained at 6.2 per cent despite a firm promise from the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr, and the Treasurer of New South Wales, Michael Egan, to reduce that rate to 5 per cent. Those two men were caught out making those promises during the election campaign leading up to the 1995 election. The Treasurer and the Premier both repeated those promises to various reputable news outlets in the month following the 1995 election.

The Premier is a history buff, but he cannot rewrite the history of payroll tax. He and his Treasurer promised that after the 1995 election they would get the payroll tax rate down to 5 per cent. They did not do it. It is currently hanging at 6.2 per cent and it is scheduled to come down to 6 per cent next year because it is the year before an election year. For the next 17 months members on this side of the House will tell the people of New South Wales that the Premier and the Treasurer promised to get the payroll tax rate down to 5 per cent by the year of the Olympics and that they had expressed a desire to get it down to 4 per cent in the future. Payroll tax is extremely important to this bill because we are targeted by the States around us on that specific issue.

Through sheer incompetence the New South Wales Government has not sorted out its workers compensation regime. As a result, businesses close to the borders—especially with Queensland and Victoria—are under pressure from businesses across the borders that are achieving much lower workers compensation costs. The New South Wales Government reigns supreme for adding the burden of substantial rules and regulations on businesses. When it adds a burden to business—perhaps the Labor Party does not appreciate this, but it should in the twenty-first century—it adds a burden to investment and employment in this State. It is all very well for the Carr Government to say that New South Wales is in a wonderful position and has been for some time, so it can rest on its laurels in attracting investment and employment. That is not the case. The economy is now weaker and we are heading into difficult times.

It is long overdue for the Carr Government to review workers compensation, payroll tax, and rules and regulations. A burden on business is a burden on investment and employment. That burden is heaviest in areas close to the borders, especially with Queensland and Victoria. This bill provides a forum for the Government to look at those issues. The Government's response may be that Parliament should be a clearing house of community concerns, and I agree. However, I point out that as of today 516 notices of motion—the list of community concerns—are awaiting debate. For six years the Carr Government has said that those issues are not important; only Government spin and racking up the number of sitting days—which are de facto sitting days—are important.

Mr Gaudry: How is your cross-border arrangement with Bligh and Coogee?

Mr DEBNAM: Bligh and Coogee are doing extremely well. The Government is in real trouble in Coogee. The member retired two years ago—although he still holds office! The Government is in dire straits. It is a real problem for the Government. The honourable member for Bligh happens to be doing a very good job, while the honourable member for Coogee has real problems. The mayors of Waverley and Randwick have been working solidly on that retirement plan for two years now.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! The honourable member for Vacluse has responded to the interjection. He should now return to the leave of the bill.

Mr DEBNAM: We should look at why this bill has been introduced. It is providing another forum for debate of community issues and, I would suggest, for presenting solutions. But it has been introduced because the Carr Government has undermined the institution of Parliament as a forum for debate. The Carr Government has become an elected dictatorship. I suggest that it evolved to an elected dictatorship very quickly after the 1999 election, probably for a number of reasons. Since his Young Labor days the Premier has always had Federal ambitions and he is now increasingly focused on that.

The Premier seems to delight in spending more and more time not only on his history interests but also on Federal issues. It has become a joke amongst many of the media watching the institution of Parliament in New South Wales that there is no debate on State issues, such as cross-border issues. Everything in New South Wales, according to the Premier, appears to be a Federal problem. I suggest to the members of the Labor Party in New South Wales that the Premier is a Federal problem. They should solve it. They should move him on. They should let him go, whether he wants to go to the Senate or the House of Representatives.

Mr Gaudry: Point of order: It is a fairly quiet morning and we are having some banter across the Chamber. However, I ask that you ask the honourable member to discuss issues pertinent to the Cross-border Commission Bill.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER: Order! The point of order has considerable substance. I have allowed a degree of latitude to this point in the debate. However, I now ask the honourable member for Vacluse to confine his comments to the subject matter of the bill.

Mr DEBNAM: We should look at the functions of the commission. First, members of the broader community will be invited to make submissions to the commission in relation to matters affecting the community. Members of the community will be provided with a wonderful opportunity, which has been effectively denied to them under the Carr Government. As I said, this Government has become an elected dictatorship and it is not listening to the people of New South Wales, whether the issue is nurses, policing, schools, infrastructure or accountability. Second, the commission will conduct inquiries into matters affecting border communities as referred to it by the Premier or as it considers appropriate. This is a great bipartisan opportunity. The Premier can refer matters to the commission and the commission can raise issues itself. According to the bill, the Premier will appoint people to the commission, so there can be no suggestion that it will be taken over by lobby groups.

Third, the commission will identify issues affecting border communities and make recommendations to the Premier regarding such issues. Again, this is a tremendous opportunity to raise issues of importance to the community. Fourth, the commission will prepare an annual report, to be tabled in Parliament, in relation to the result of its inquiries into matters affecting border communities. That is extremely important because it gets back to accountability. That is something that has been undermined in New South Wales for six years, regardless of portfolio and of whether it is a general issue that should be addressed by Parliament. The Carr Government has done whatever it takes to undermine accountability in New South Wales. We see that in relation to another bill relating to the Auditor-General, which we debated yesterday.

The purpose of this bill is commendable and the Government should swallow its pride. The Government is extremely reluctant to adopt Opposition policies, although it has adopted a number of my policies over recent years—and I have congratulated it every time it has done so, whether those policies related to reducing taxes or impounding the cars of hooners. I will congratulate the Government again if it embraces this bill. I understand the Premier's reluctance to embrace another good idea from the Opposition, but if he does he will be congratulated. He should do what he always does with our private members bills: photocopy it, change two words and introduce it as a Government bill. The sooner he does that the better, because there are so many issues of concern to cross-border communities.

I emphasise that the bill provides a forum for people to air their concerns. Honourable members know that if the Government provides that forum on the borders of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory there will be no shortage of issues raised. It will be up to the commission to prioritise them, discuss them and, whenever possible, identify solutions. The community would add substantial resources to the commission to help it get through the process. I can understand Treasury saying that this will be another drain on the taxpayer, but it is important that communities on those borders have an opportunity to discuss those issues. Marijuana is an issue that is raised on the border with South Australia. New South Wales has its own problems with the Government's soft approach to drugs, but there is an extraordinary problem on the border with South Australia. *[Time expired.]*

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

LACHLAN ELECTORATE WEED ERADICATION FUNDING

Deferred division

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question, That the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes, 34

Mr Armstrong
Mr Barr
Mr Brogden
Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Collins
Mr Debnam
Mr George
Mr Hartcher
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humpherson
Dr Kernohan
Mr Kerr

Mr McGrane
Mr Merton
Ms Moore
Mr O'Doherty
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Oakeshott
Mr D. L. Page
Mr Piccoli
Mr Richardson
Mr Rozzoli
Ms Seaton
Mrs Skinner

Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Stoner
Mr Tink
Mr Torbay
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Webb

Tellers,
Mr Fraser
Mr R. H. L. Smith

Noes, 49

Mr Amery
Ms Andrews
Mr Ashton
Mr Bartlett
Ms Beamer
Mr Black
Mr Brown
Miss Burton
Mr Campbell
Mr Collier
Mr Crittenden
Mr Debus
Mr Face
Mr Gaudry
Mr Gibson
Mr Greene
Mrs Grusovin

Ms Harrison
Mr Hickey
Mr Hunter
Mr Iemma
Mrs Lo Po'
Mr Lynch
Mr Markham
Mr Martin
Mr McBride
Mr McManus
Ms Meagher
Mr Mills
Mr Moss
Mr Newell
Ms Nori
Mr Orkopoulos
Mr E. T. Page

Mrs Perry
Mr Price
Dr Refshauge
Ms Saliba
Mr Scully
Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Stewart
Mr Tripodi
Mr Watkins
Mr West
Mr Whelan
Mr Woods
Mr Yeadon

Tellers,
Mr Anderson
Mr Thompson

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

TRANSPORT FARES INCREASE**Deferred division**

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question, That the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

[*In division*]

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: As the mover of this motion, I assure the House that no division was called at the time the motion was deferred.

Mr Iemma: It's in *Hansard*.

Mr O'Farrell: You show it to me in *Hansard*. Mr Speaker, as the mover of the motion I can assure you that no division was called prior to the deferral.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I cannot rule on the point of order taken by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition until I have looked at the business paper.

Ayes, 34

Mr Armstrong
Mr Barr
Mr Brogden
Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Collins
Mr Debnam
Mr George
Mr Hartcher
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humpherson
Dr Kernohan
Mr Kerr

Mr McGrane
Mr Merton
Ms Moore
Mr O'Doherty
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Oakeshott
Mr D. L. Page
Mr Piccoli
Mr Richardson
Mr Rozzoli
Ms Seaton
Mrs Skinner

Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Stoner
Mr Tink
Mr Torbay
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Webb

Tellers,
Mr Fraser
Mr R. H. L. Smith

Noes, 50

Mr Amery
Ms Andrews
Mr Aquilina
Mr Ashton
Mr Bartlett
Ms Beamer
Mr Black
Mr Brown
Miss Burton
Mr Campbell
Mr Collier
Mr Crittenden
Mr Debus
Mr Face
Mr Gaudry
Mr Gibson
Mr Greene

Mrs Grusovin
Ms Harrison
Mr Hickey
Mr Hunter
Mr Iemma
Mr Knowles
Mrs Lo Po'
Mr Lynch
Mr Markham
Mr Martin
Mr McBride
Mr McManus
Ms Meagher
Mr Mills
Mr Moss
Mr Newell
Ms Nori

Mr Orkopoulos
Mr E. T. Page
Mrs Perry
Mr Price
Dr Refshauge
Ms Saliba
Mr Scully
Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Stewart
Mr Tripodi
Mr Watkins
Mr West
Mr Woods
Mr Yeadon
Tellers,
Mr Anderson
Mr Thompson

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

CRIMES (FORENSIC PROCEDURES) LEGISLATION

Debate resumed from 20 September.

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.46 a.m.], in reply: I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

Mr Amery
Ms Andrews
Mr Aquilina
Mr Ashton
Mr Barr
Mr Bartlett
Ms Beamer
Mr Black
Mr Brown
Miss Burton
Mr Campbell
Mr Collier
Mr Crittenden
Mr Debus
Mr Face
Mr Gaudry
Mr Gibson
Mr Greene

Mrs Grusovin
Ms Harrison
Mr Hickey
Mr Hunter
Mr Iemma
Mrs Lo Po'
Mr Lynch
Mr Markham
Mr Martin
Mr McBride
Mr McManus
Ms Meagher
Mr Mills
Mr Moss
Mr Newell
Ms Nori
Mr Orkopoulos

Mr E. T. Page
Mrs Perry
Mr Price
Dr Refshauge
Ms Saliba
Mr Scully
Mr W. D. Smith
Mr Stewart
Mr Tripodi
Mr Watkins
Mr West
Mr Woods
Mr Yeadon

Tellers,
Mr Anderson
Mr Thompson

Noes, 32

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

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

Noes, 32

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BOWRAL HOSPITAL

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [11.58 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes in relation to Bowral Hospital:
 - (a) the State Government's failure:
 - (i) to maintain adequate orthopaedic services;
 - (ii) to act on providing public ophthalmology to alleviate the travel and waiting times for elderly people needing cataract and other surgery; and
 - (iii) to act to offer other services in the local public system including urology and ear, nose and throat [ENT], when such equipment and facilities are available nearby in the private hospital;
 - (b) cuts to availability of joint replacement surgery from four joint operations per surgeon per month to one joint operation per surgeon per month until further notice;
 - (c) the effect on 35 patients on one surgeon's waiting list, pushing some patients to nearly three years of waiting;
- (2) condemns the Minister for Health for his neglect of health services in the Southern Highlands electorate.

On a day when there are thousands of nurses from hospitals in every single part of the State protesting outside this Parliament I am amazed that neither the Premier nor the Minister for Health has bothered to take part in this debate on this motion. It is shameful. I would have thought that both of them would want to participate in the debate and hear what is happening at Bowral hospital and in so many other hospitals around the State. It is also appalling that this motion has been on the notice paper since November 1999. Every single item in the motion is still a matter of crisis in the Southern Highlands. In the two years since I first gave notice of the motion the Carr Government has taken no steps to significantly address the problems I foreshadowed with Bowral hospital.

It is not surprising that I have just heard hundreds of nurses outside Parliament House saying, "Where's Bob?" and "Not happy, Bob." They are not happy because this is the famous Premier who said he was going to cut waiting lists, which are now worse than they ever were before he took government. I will update honourable members about the state of neglect of Bowral hospital and the services that it provides in my area. I am joined in that concern by the honourable member for Camden because people in the electorates of the Southern Highlands and Camden rely on the services provided by Bowral, Camden and Campbelltown hospitals.

Whilst Bowral hospital is the subject of this motion, the neglect of health services in the Southern Highlands electorate impacts also on people who live in the Wollondilly shire and in the Camden area. Current health statistics show that staff numbers at Bowral hospital have dropped from 257 to 242. Shortly I will outline its effect on individual nurses and patient care. Similarly, admissions have dropped enormously at Bowral hospital, from 6,571 to 6,290. Each year 25,000 people in the South Western Sydney Area Health Service have to go outside that area to access services from other areas. That means 25,000 journeys a year are being made by patients, and probably with carers—small children with parents, elderly people with relatives and so on. That means they have to leave our area on a daily basis to seek services that are not available at Bowral hospital, at Camden or in our area.

Nurses are very much the current symptom of the Carr Government's neglect. No nurses from Bowral hospital were at today's rally, for a very sad reason. A few days ago they lost a very close colleague, Maureen Brown, who was the much-loved ward clerk at the Milton Park ward at Bowral hospital. Out of respect to the family of Maureen Brown the nursing staff at Bowral hospital chose to make their protest locally today so that they could be there to support Maureen's family.

However, the fact that they are not here today does not mean that they are not concerned about the current nursing crisis. There are shortages in the specialist areas. There are pages of casual nurses on the books of the hospital but very few of them are prepared to fill a shift when they are called because they are simply tired or burnt out and do not want to face another day in the sort of conditions under which nurses are being forced to work.

Staff nurses are worn out. A part-time nurse who would normally work a five-day fortnight is now being forced to do approximately eight days. It will not help the overall condition of a part-time nurse who is recovering from an injury or who has some other problem if they are asked to increase their workload. Full-time nurses are doing about ten shifts a fortnight back to back and are not getting their proper sleep in between shifts. Apparently a nurse from our local area resigned recently to take on other work in a related medical field. She could not cope with trying to juggle her family and the needs of dealing with young children as well as being pressured to take on an additional shift burden.

In a recent week, 50 shifts at Bowral hospital could not be filled. That means that staff were being pressured to take on additional shifts back to back. Some nurses are even contemplating taking on entirely different jobs or cleaning contracts and other business opportunities, simply because the working conditions and the remuneration is better. I understand that other nurses are learning computer skills in order to try to take on jobs within the system that are more administratively based, so they can get out of the clinical field because the conditions are just too difficult.

At the moment, 210 nursing positions are vacant in the South Western Sydney Area Health Service out of nearly 2,000 nursing positions vacant in the State. That is, one-tenth of all vacant positions are in our area. Orthopaedic surgeons are always struggling against reduced elective surgery times. The budgets are too low even when the doctors and nurses are available. Funding is not made available for the individual components that are necessary for orthopaedic surgeons. We know that they are expensive. There has also been no progress in making local neurology and ear, nose and throat services available.

A lot of local people, including ophthalmology patients, Dr Peter Macken, who is our local ophthalmologist, and Mr Ian Southwell, the Chief Executive Officer of the South Western Area Health Service, have helped me lobby to find ways to provide public ophthalmology services at Bowral hospital. Mr Southwell has done an enormous job. There have been great advances but that is only one of the areas that needs to be improved.

One of the most important areas for improvement is increased availability of orthopaedic surgery time so that the numbers on the waiting list can be reduced. It is unacceptable that some patients have to wait a year or more. The Government has not done anywhere near enough to try to reduce the burdens of medical insurance for practitioners, such as orthopaedic surgeons. Recently, at Bowral hospital orthopaedic surgeons were forced to withdraw their services for emergency surgery. That meant that about 10 patients a week were denied emergency surgery at Bowral hospital.

They were forced to go to other places such as Liverpool or Campbelltown, and that places an enormous burden on family and friends who have to travel to support patients in hospitals that are more than one hour from their homes. That is simply unacceptable. I want the Minister for Health to unequivocally rule out of his plan to downgrade emergency departments in hospitals such as Bowral hospital that do not meet the department's criteria of annual use. The situation has not improved in the past two years at Bowral hospital. We still have a crisis and I want to Minister for Health to tell the House today what he will do to fix it.

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.08 p.m.]: It was not until the last two minutes that the honourable member actually spoke to her lengthy motion. Despite that, the Government opposes it. Was the honourable member serious when she claimed that this Government has neglected health services? What has this Government achieved in recent years by comparison with the record of the Coalition? This financial year the Government's recurrent health expenditure is \$7.7 billion, an increase of \$2.5 billion, or 47 per cent, since 1994-95. By 2000-2003 we will be spending almost \$8.1 billion on health. That is in stark contrast to the increase of less than the \$0.3 billion in real terms between 1990-91 and 1994-95 when the Coalition was in government. The real increase in recurrent health funding reflects this Government's continued commitment to health.

In 1994-95 the Coalition spent just \$19.4 million on major new works. This year our total planned expenditure on health capital works is \$529.2 million, which is a record level of investment. We have guaranteed capital funding of \$480 million for the next four years to build and upgrade health services. This year's budget includes an extra \$49.2 million to kick-start a major capital works program. The former Coalition Government closed or wound down 30 hospitals. In contrast, this Government has built or redeveloped 225 health facilities, and there are more on the way. We have also committed ourselves to building or redeveloping 34 small rural hospitals as a result of the Sinclair report.

Now that we have established the facts on who neglected the health system, let us look at the detail in the budget for the South Western Sydney Area Health Service, the area health service that is responsible for health services in the electorate of the honourable member. Since 1994-95 this Government has more than doubled the budget for the South Western Sydney Area Health Service. As a result of the Government's guaranteed three-year budgets, that health service will get a cash injection of \$143.5 million. The area's budget for the financial year is a massive \$510.5 million. By 2002-2003 the annual recurrent budget will be in excess of \$527 million—an increase of more than \$72 million or 16.4 per cent in three years.

In addition to this recurrent funding, the Government has invested heavily in new infrastructure for the communities of that area health service. We have invested heavily in larger hospitals to provide people with a range of services and facilities closer to their homes. They no longer have to travel to Sydney to get expert medical care. Liverpool Hospital is being expanded as a major teaching facility. Specialist services in cardiology, rheumatology, gastroenterology, critical care and diabetes are all being expanded. For the first time, cardiothoracic surgery is available for the communities of Wollondilly and Wingecarribee as well as those in the Camden, Campbelltown, Bankstown, Fairfield and Liverpool local government areas.

Cardiac surgery began at Liverpool Hospital in the 1997-98 financial year. People with coronary disease can now have their bypass operation at Liverpool Hospital. About 1,000 heart operations have been performed at Liverpool Hospital. Previously, each year some 900 residents of that area were treated in inner Sydney hospitals. The honourable member accused the Government of failing to "alleviate the travel and waiting times" for people needing surgery. As a result of this Government's actions in building up Liverpool Hospital, the people of Bowral and other small communities in the honourable member's electorate are now able to receive highly specialised treatment and follow-up care without having to travel to St Vincent's, Royal North Shore, Royal Prince Alfred or any other major teaching hospital in Sydney.

By providing additional services and building expertise at facilities like Liverpool, patient referral patterns are shifting to deliver equity and access to people who have been denied local services for generations. Bowral hospital has benefited under this Government. While the Government has been spending big on the larger hospitals it certainly has not forgotten the smaller hospitals. The Bowral and District Hospital has been redeveloped at a cost of \$2.6 million. In addition, new community health centres have been opened in Bowral and Wollondilly. The Wingecarribee Community Health Centre and the Wingecarribee Shire Central Library were opened in July 1999. I visited the honourable member's area when she helped to open those facilities and she never said a bad word about the Government spending that money.

Apart from providing new or developed facilities there have been additional flow-on benefits to these communities from the millions of dollars being spent on them. Almost \$5 million has been spent by this Government on health capital works in Bowral. This Government has not neglected Bowral hospital; it has increased its funding. Under the former Coalition Government its budget was just over \$12.5 million. Today, under the Labor Government, funding to Bowral hospital has increased by almost 50 per cent to just over \$18.4 million. Through its local hospital the community of Bowral has access to an extensive range of health services. They include medical surgical care, emergency treatment, maternity, paediatrics, community health, drug and alcohol services, dental care, psychiatric and psychological services, physiotherapy and cancer treatment.

For services such as cancer therapy, eligible patients from Bowral and surrounding Southern Highlands villages have a transport service available to take them to Liverpool Hospital for treatment. The development of more outreach clinics is the next step. Before the honourable member gives notice of another motion she should get her facts straight. She claimed that this Government has failed to maintain adequate orthopaedic services at Bowral hospital. In the five years that this Government has been in office it has increased its orthopaedic budget at Bowral hospital by 230 per cent. What does the honourable member consider to be an adequate service? Perhaps this is more an indictment of how poorly served the people of Bowral were by their previous member—John Fahey, a former Premier.

When the honourable member gave notice of this motion in November 1999 she said there were 35 patients on one surgeon's waiting list, and that resulted in some of them waiting nearly three years for surgery. The area health service has done some research. On 18 November 53 people were on the waiting list for orthopaedic surgery. However, 37 of them lived not only outside the honourable member's electorate but outside the boundaries of the area health service—some as far away as Tumut and Bega. No patient had been waiting for more than 12 months and only six had been waiting longer than six months.

From September, patients from Bowral who need ophthalmology treatment will be able to access services locally. A full ophthalmology service is now available at their local public hospital. Under this Government, the community of Bowral and surrounding districts is well served by health services. Bowral does not have just one hospital; it has two. It also a community health centre. In 1996 the new Southern Highlands Private Hospital opened. That private hospital is located within Bowral hospital. Both hospitals work together in a collaborative way to share and complement services. The people of Bowral have a public hospital, a private hospital and a community health centre. What luxury! Many rural communities are struggling just to get a general practitioner. So this Government has done a great job in the Bowral region.

The community health centre and library are close to public and community transport links, making it easier for people to get there. Community health is about treating the whole person in the whole community. People in this area have access to modern facilities and a wide range of community health services—aged care assessment, child and family counselling, diabetes and podiatry services, oral health care, early childhood services, nutrition advice, drug and alcohol counselling, palliative care, sexual assault counselling, speech pathology, women's health care and some mental health services. That does not sound to me like neglect of health services in the Southern Highlands.

Is it neglectful to spend \$2.5 million on the redevelopment of Bowral hospital? Is it neglectful to increase the hospital's recurrent budget by almost 50 per cent, to boost its orthopaedic budget by 230 per cent over the last five years, to open a new community health centre, and to provide a greater range of services for more people to be treated closer to home? This Government has not neglected the people of the Southern Highlands. It is apparent that there are high-quality health services available to people in the honourable member's region.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [12.18 p.m.]: I find it quite disgraceful that the honourable member for Heathcote parroted off a litany of words that were written for him. All that the honourable member needed to do was stand on the steps of Parliament House today and listen to nurses talking about the plight of our hospitals. Those nurses angrily voiced their views about the actions of this Government. The nurses who were standing outside Parliament this House were saying, "Shame on you, Bob!" and "Not happy, Bob."

Mr McManus: Can we talk about Bowral?

Mrs SKINNER: Yes, you would like to talk about Bowral. I am talking about conditions generally in south-western Sydney, including the conditions that thousands of nurses have been striking about today. They are protesting this Government's failure to meet the needs of people in public hospitals. The Parliamentary Secretary has waffled on about increased funding to hospitals. The reality is that the health budget has increased every year since time immemorial. There is nothing new about that. I expect that will continue, no matter which party is in office. The telling point is that this Government has cut the proportion of funding to health from 25 per cent of its total budget in 1997-98—four years ago—to 22 per cent of the total budget this year. That is why we have a crisis in our hospitals. That is why nurses are fed up with having to work double shifts, as the honourable member for Southern Highlands said. They are fed up with some shifts not being staffed at all. They are fed up with beds being closed and with patients being forced to wait too long.

The rally outside Parliament today was not staged only by nurses. I spoke to a number of doctors and other health and hospital workers who are supporting their nurses this morning. These doctors spoke about patients having to wait too long for treatment, not only in our emergency departments—very sick people who are far too sick to go to a general practitioner's [GP's] practice—but also in hospitals. They are waiting longer than they should. Elective surgery and elective medical patients are waiting longer than they should. In the South Western Sydney Area Health Service, to which my colleague has referred, 6,522 people are waiting for elective surgery. That compares with 4,507 when the Carr Government came to office on the promise that Mr Carr would cut hospital waiting lists or resign.

The Parliamentary Secretary has the gall to say that this Government has done better. It has failed its own standards. It failed to meet the promise made by the Premier. On top of that, the number of people in the South Western Sydney Area Health Service waiting for elective medical treatment is 1,585 compared when 467 when Labor came to office. The South Western Sydney Area Health Service is 210 nurses short, with a further 263 positions being occupied by agency or pool staff. Those figures come from the Government's web site. I have not made them up.

Mr O'Farrell: Are you sure the Government has not made them up?

Mrs SKINNER: The Government may have understated the case. That is often what it does, particularly in relation to waiting lists. One of the area health services confessed to me that it is no longer counting a lot of surgery or procedures on the waiting list. So, we cannot even rely on the waiting list figure, as terrible as it is. The figures produced for the Bowral hospital by the Government in the hospital comparison data books tell the story. The 1994-95 data book, the yellow book as it is known, shows there were 257 full-time staff. In 1998-99, the last book, there were 242 equivalent full-time staff. That is why fewer patients are being treated at Bowral hospital. That story is repeated in hospitals throughout the State, particularly in the smaller district level hospitals, which also have a cloud hanging over their heads because of the Government's greater metropolitan hospital plan. There is a proposal in that plan to reclassify and downgrade a number of hospitals.

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [12.23 p.m.]: We have been waiting two years to bring on this motion but we still do not get to see the Minister for Health. One would have thought this motion warranted his attention, and even that of the Premier. Is it any wonder that thousands of nurses were outside Parliament today protesting how miserable their lot has become, all calling out "Not happy, Bob."?

Mr McManus: Why don't you tell us why you neglected Sutherland hospital in your time?

Mr KERR: I am glad the honourable member has raised Sutherland hospital. Ron Phillips, as health Minister, had on the board considerable improvements.

Mr McManus: On the board?

Mr KERR: Yes. That was going ahead, but under this Government it is now getting fewer beds. The hospital is being shortchanged. I was with the honourable member for Mosman at Sutherland hospital when we heard about the conditions the Government has allowed. Labor has been in government for five years and it still has not lodged a notice of alibi about Sutherland hospital. What is going on there is a disgrace. Is the honourable member going to criticise Ron Phillips in this House? Nobody can criticise Ron Phillips as health Minister.

Mr McManus: I would.

Mr KERR: You should go outside the House and make a statement about Ron Phillips. Let us put an end to that. What we are seeing outside the Parliament today is a manifestation by people who do not strike, whose very nature mitigates against striking because they are there to help people.

Mrs Skinner: They are desperate.

Mr KERR: They are desperate, as the shadow Minister says. Recently I was told of a constituent who was in terrible pain and wanted to get an MRI x-ray. It was only because of the intervention of her GP, Dr Corbett-Jones, that she was able to have that done earlier than normal. Her story is replicated hundreds of times throughout the shire. The honourable member for Heathcote knows that, because I have sought his assistance for a number of elderly people.

Mr O'Farrell: Did he give it?

Mr KERR: Yes, he did. But he cannot fix everybody. They were only a small fraction of the number. He did fix them, but he was never in any danger of being booked for speeding! Many honourable members know what is occurring in the hospital system. Even Labor members say they are fighting the State Government over nurses. That was publicly said by our Labor candidate: "I am fighting the State Government." Hospitals are this Government's responsibility and it cannot duckshove that responsibility. Why are nurses leaving, feeling undervalued and unable to provide the level of care they strive for? In Sutherland hospital, in Bowral hospital and in hospitals throughout the State why is it becoming harder for nurses to maintain a safe environment for both patients and staff, as more and more nurses leave the profession?

A major study of 10,000 nurses who had left the profession showed that conditions are deplorable, that even theatre nurses, who are required in emergency operations to have a quickness of wit, had to work double shifts and labour under poor conditions hour after hour. It is certainly hard labour under this Government. No wonder people are not happy. We heard about a veins specialist who is not available to treat patients at Sutherland hospital. What is the honourable member for Heathcote doing about that? What announcements has he made about that? That is affecting many people in his area, my area and right across the shire. Yet we get silence. All we are given is a litany of statistics. There has been a continual increase in health spending in this State since 1856. The Government is spending more money, but the issue is how it is spending that money. [Time expired.]

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.28 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the honourable member for Southern Highlands in her efforts to draw attention to the failings of the State Government's health and hospital system. It is important at the outset to make it clear that public health is a State responsibility. Contrary to what the Federal Labor Party is deceptively trying to imply at the present time, the condition of hospitals in this State, whether in Bowral, Cronulla, Sutherland shire or on the North Shore, is the responsibility of Premier Carr and Minister Knowles and not the responsibility of Federal Minister Wooldridge.

I applaud the honourable member for Southern Highlands for bringing this motion forward. However, it is a disgrace that this motion has come on about two years after notice of it was first given. One wonders how many more people have had to be subjected to waiting lists and waiting periods at Bowral hospital. Indeed, one wonders what consequences those waits have had on the health of those people in the two years in which the honourable member has been unable to debate this motion because of the Government's intransigence in allowing private members' business to be dealt with on Thursdays.

I simply make the point that yesterday during question time the Premier sought at great length to make some observations about his so-called economic management of the State. At the outset of his answer he said that upon its election to office the Carr Government had two objectives to fulfil. Did he speak about the clear promise given on the North Coast of New South Wales by the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Carr, and the then shadow Minister for Health, Dr Refshauge, to halve waiting lists or to resign—a commitment that they claimed during the 1995 election campaign was given in blood and would be fulfilled?

Mr Greene: A core promise.

Mr O'FARRELL: The honourable member for Georges River is being helpful when he says it was a core promise. Was the second commitment the Premier referred to in question time yesterday the abolition of tolls on Sydney's western roads? The answer is no. As I said a moment ago, the Federal Labor Party is practising deceit on electors in this State and across the country in terms of health. From the outset of the Carr Government, the Premier and the Deputy Premier, and now the Minister for Health, sought to deceive people. In electorates across the State, including electorates represented by members opposite and by Independent members, health services have degraded. As a proportion of the State's budget, expenditure on health has dropped under the period of the Carr Government. As a proportion of total budget outlays, health expenditure in this State has fallen from 25 per cent to 22 per cent. Those figures are not mine; they are the figures of Michael Egan, who puts the State's budget papers together every year.

Not only am I concerned about the impact of cuts and the reduction of the total health budget at Bowral hospital; I am concerned about the impact of funding cuts on local hospitals across the State, including the Royal North Shore Hospital and the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital located at Hornsby. Not a week goes by when I do not receive complaints from people trying to receive treatment in those hospitals who talk about the poor services being provided. They are not criticising doctors and nurses or those who run the hospitals; they are criticising the level of resources being made available to those hospitals. When one goes to Royal North Shore Hospital and sees the royal North Shore private hospital alongside it one gets the stark contrast of the services being provided by the public sector, which is the State Government's responsibility, and the services being provided by the private sector through the royal North Shore private hospital.

After all, the point is that the Government, through running down the health system, is encouraging a movement from public health to private health. Essentially, the Government is privatising health care in this State, in the same way as it is privatising security and safety. We are being forced to install home alarms in our dwellings because of inadequate policing. It is no coincidence that hospitals like royal North Shore private hospital are growing up to fill a gulf and a void caused by the Government's mismanagement of health and its failure to keep at the fore health expenditure as a proportion of total government outlays. The honourable member for Southern Highlands should be congratulated on moving this motion.

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [12.33 p.m.], in reply: I thank my colleagues the honourable member for North Shore and shadow Minister for Health, the honourable member for Cronulla and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for their contributions to this debate, their support of health services at Bowral hospital in the Southern Highlands, and their defence of nurses across the State who are suffering so terribly at the moment. I was intrigued by the contribution of the Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Health, who referred to funding and upgrades. The honourable member for Cronulla made the important point that health funding has increased every year since 1856. We expect nothing less. Honourable members expect the health budget to increase and they expect their electorates to receive their fair share of that increased funding. I expect nothing less than a fair share of that increased funding for the Southern Highlands electorate.

At a time when the Carr Government has record revenue, something would be wrong if funding did not increase. However, health funding as a proportion of the total State budget has reduced, and the Parliamentary Secretary did not talk about that. The Parliamentary Secretary described our local health services as a "luxury". That term will come back and haunt him day after day after day. The people in the Southern Highlands electorate are not looking for luxury in terms of health services; we are looking for a fair deal. We are looking for high-quality, reliable health services with convenient access. We are looking for doctors who are able to do their best work in decent conditions. We are looking for a properly paid, properly supported and properly rested nursing staff who can do a quality job. We are looking for local services so that health care for people who are suffering from diabetes, cancer, or ear, nose and throat difficulties does not become a major expedition in their daily lives. Health care in the Southern Highlands electorate is a major expedition.

I remind the Parliamentary Secretary that admissions at Bowral hospital have reduced from 6,571 to 6,290, and staff have reduced from 257 to 242. That is why so many nurses were protesting outside Parliament House today. In any year thousands of people must travel to Liverpool Hospital and other hospitals in Sydney to access health services. They are not necessarily specialist services; they are services that could be delivered locally if the Government was willing to provide them. People are waiting one year or more for orthopaedic surgery. The medical indemnity issue at Bowral hospital is still unresolved. One local orthopaedic surgeon met with the chief executive of Bowral hospital last Thursday—the issue has been ongoing for at least two or three months—and a commitment was made to increase elective surgery.

However, that will not increase the number of elective surgeries to within striking distance of previous levels. It will not be a massive increase but it will be enough to get elective surgery patients back on call from 8 October. Another doctor at Bowral hospital, Dr Harbison, will have to become a staff specialist rather than a visiting medical officer. That will help in a technical way to address the indemnity problem but it is not a permanent solution. It is a bandaids fix, an administrative fix. The Carr Government and the Minister for Health still cannot solve the problem. Dr Harbison's indemnity insurance premium is now \$65,000. The honourable member for Wagga Wagga is concerned about the likelihood of Wagga Wagga having only one obstetrician by the end of the year for the same reason—failure to solve the medical indemnity problem.

I have received disturbing news about a doctor who is looking at withdrawing his services from Bowral hospital unless several issues are addressed, including operating theatre hours and establishment of a surgical ward. Negotiations with the hospital were held, and apparently those improvements were delivered within three months. The doctor said that operating theatres are doing only a half or a quarter of what they should be doing. The theatres are fully staffed for a full period but operations cannot take place because of insufficient money being allocated for things such as orthopaedic appliances. So money is being wasted. Bowral hospital has had trouble filling dental and physiotherapy positions. Morale among the local nursing staff is low. They will be fascinated to hear that they work in luxury. I think everyone in the Southern Highlands electorate will be fascinated to hear that the Government describes Bowral hospital as "luxury". There are many improvements to be made and the health Minister must attend to them. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

[In division]

Mr Fraser: A problem has arisen with the new pagers. The honourable member for Lismore did not receive a pager and he cannot hear the bells. He is apparently in his office. I ask that you allow the bells to be rung again to give him time to get to the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I direct that the bells be rung again.

Ayes, 34

Mr Armstrong
Mr Barr
Mr Brogden
Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Collins
Mr Debnam
Mr George
Mr Hartcher
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humpherson
Dr Kernohan
Mr Kerr

Mr McGrane
Mr Merton
Ms Moore
Mr O'Doherty
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Oakeshott
Mr D. L. Page
Mr Piccoli
Mr Richardson
Mr Rozzoli
Ms Seaton
Mrs Skinner

Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Stoner
Mr Tink
Mr Torbay
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Webb

Tellers,
Mr Fraser
Mr R. H. L. Smith

Noes, 49

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [12.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) urges the Minister for Roads to immediately begin planning for improvements to the operation and capacity of the intersection of Duffy Avenue with The Esplanade and Chilvers Avenue, Thornleigh, and for the widening of the rail bridge at Duffy Avenue.
- (2) notes that the Government's sale of the Ormond site in 1998 to a developer planning 100 homes on the site has made the need for this project even more urgent.
- (3) notes that despite Labor's promise in the 1999 election campaign no money was set aside for this project in this year's budget.
- (4) calls on the Government to provide a guaranteed time line for funding this project.

The Government has finally had to face the music on the issue of the Duffy Avenue bridge. I have raised this matter with the Government on myriad occasions since the 1999 election campaign. I have raised it in this House on the following dates: 2 June 1999, 25 June 1999 in the budget debate, 17 September 1999—my wedding anniversary—in the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, 4 May 2000 on a motion about capital works expenditure in the Hornsby electorate, 26 May 2000 in the budget debate, and on 2 November 2000 again on a motion about capital works expenditure in the Hornsby electorate. I gave notice of this motion on 10 November 1999. More than 500 motions on the business paper of this House have yet to be debated, but the Government will not allocate the time. Therefore, we are debating my motion—notice of which was given on 10 November 1999—on 18 October 2001.

It is two years since I foreshadowed the motion. Today the Government must face the music in relation to the work on the Duffy Avenue rail bridge. During the election campaign of March 1999 the Thornleigh Community Centre organised a meeting at which local candidates could express their policies for the Westleigh-Thornleigh area. Scott Cardimardis—a Hornsby councillor at the time, a member of the Australian Labor Party and its candidate for the seat of Hornsby at that State election, and now a senior staff member for the Government in the office of the Minister for the Environment—said, "I have spoken to the office of Carl Scully"—the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Transport—"and there is \$600,000 'ready to go', for this project to proceed." He was promising a Government contribution of \$600,000 for work around the Duffy Avenue bridge.

Mr O'Farrell: Surely it was qualified.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that that statement must have been qualified. He used to represent that area. He and I changed electorates at the 1999 State election, and I picked up different areas to represent. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I share a concern about this issue. For many years the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has raised this matter with the current Government, as I have. The candidate in question was asked at the meeting whether his promises were contingent upon his election as the member for Hornsby. He said, "Yes. All of our promises are contingent on me becoming the member." Later during the campaign, when he copped an absolute pasting in the local press for making contingent promises, he said, "No, no, this was not an attempt to blackmail the electorate. That's not the case. My promises will stand." So we have two statements from the Australian Labor Party: either the promises were contingent upon it winning the seat or they were not. Honourable members can take their pick from either statement.

Nonetheless, the promise and the statement made on behalf of the Australian Labor Party was that \$600,000 was ready to go for this project. After the election I raised the matter in the House, on the occasions I have already mentioned, with the Minister for Roads. On one occasion—in fact, I believe it was the day on which I gave notice of this motion: 10 November 1999—the interjection, which is all we have had from the Minister for Roads, was, "What promise?". That is the only response we have had from the Government to our inquiries. I wrote to the Premier about a number of matters. The Premier came to my electorate and addressed a business lunch. He had nothing whatsoever to say to the people of the Hornsby electorate. At the business lunch, in front of all the business people in Hornsby, I asked the Premier, "What are you going to do for the Hornsby electorate, Mr Premier? Tell us about your plans for this electorate." His response—

Mr O'Farrell: It was a lie.

Mr O'DOHERTY: No, it simply was to insult and denigrate me. His response led to a headline on the front page of the *Advocate* that I will never forget: "All we want is a fair go Mr Carr". The people of Hornsby were horrified by the arrogance and rudeness of the Premier, and so too was everybody at the business lunch. I wrote to the Premier asking him about this \$600,000 promise. This is what he said in his response to me many months later:

The proposal to spend \$600,000 on road works in Duffy Avenue, Thornleigh and related roads was raised last year on the basis of an approach to the RTA to fund the works. This was acknowledged by you in your election material. The decision on whether to proceed with these works rests with the RTA.

I want to know what the Premier means by "This [promise] was acknowledged by you in your election material." Yes, it was. I said that the Labor Party had promised to fund this bridge, so let us see whether it comes up with the money. Did it come up with the money? Two years later it still has not come up with the money. The Premier has acknowledged that there was debate about this and that it was raised with the Roads and Traffic Authority. His final say on the matter is, "The decision on whether to proceed rests with the RTA." He adds that money might be available under the REPAIR program, but it turns out that under that program something like only \$170,000 annually was made available to Hornsby council and has been used for other projects.

The point is that Hornsby council has proceeded to plan the works for this bridge. This bridge is a critical link for all the people who live in the area, which includes Thornleigh, Westleigh and Normanhurst. Because of the State Government's planning policies, Hornsby council has had to increase densities in those areas. The State Government has sold a significant parcel of land—the Ormond site—and received millions of dollars, none of which has come back to my electorate. Not one cent has been returned to my electorate. Now there are 100 home sites on that former Ormond site in Duffy Avenue. The increased density in that area will result in at least 200 more cars. The increased density resulting from that State Government land sale alone justifies the Government making a contribution to this project.

The council is proceeding with the works and expressions of interest have been called for. It expects next year to let contracts for the work on the bridge, yet there is no money from the State Government. However, the situation is made worse because the State Government plans at some stage in the very distant future to quadruplicate the main northern rail line—in reality it is just doubling the number of lines already there. If anyone can work out what quadruplicate is would they please explain it to me? That work is planned for the never-never, presumably after it finishes the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link and the high-speed link from the Central Coast—projects that stand in the queue before the Duffy Avenue rail bridge. However, the Government has said to council, "I'm sorry, you're going to have to pay when we quadruplicate the rail line. You are going to have to pay to increase the size of the bridge when we [the Rail Infrastructure Corporation] increase the size of the rail line."

This matter has been debated backwards and forwards in correspondence and discussion between the Government and the Rail Infrastructure Corporation for some months. The best the Government can do at the moment is to offer about \$170,000 for work that the Rail Infrastructure Corporation alone has to do. That work has to be done in any event, so that money is not a giveaway to the council. Now the suggestion is that the council's forward liability for work on the quadruplication of the bridge might be limited to a fixed period of time. If that is the best the Government can do, we have to try again. We need the Government to come up with the money it promised, that is, \$600,000. That money was available in March 1999. Why is it not available today? It is a simple proposition.

If the Government does not come good with its promise, a couple of things will happen. First, the people of Hornsby will continue to recognise Labor's duplicity and the outright lies it told during the election campaign in March 1999. It is a fundamental issue of integrity—not only for the then candidate, Mr Cardamatis, who has since disappeared from Hornsby and lives somewhere else in Sydney, but also for those who have come after him. One example is Susan White, a Labor-elected member of the council. Until recently she was the deputy mayor. What has Susan White been able to do to get the Government to come good on its promise? She is well aware of the promise that was made; it has been a matter of open discussion in my electorate for many years. Apparently Susan White has not been able to do anything to get the Government to come good on its promise. Each time I have raised the matter with the Government I have not received a substantive response.

I will not be happy with a response that simply says that the Rail Infrastructure Corporation will make some concession to Hornsby council relating to rail works associated with the quadruplication of the line or future work on the bridge which may become necessary because of the quadruplication. The matter is more fundamental than that. It has to do with a government that has forced greater densities on Hornsby. It has sold a parcel of land to increase the densities in Duffy Avenue and, therefore, has an obligation to increase the road infrastructure in the area. It has a moral obligation to come good on its promise of providing \$600,000, which was ready to go in March 1999 but has disappeared into the vapour since that time.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE UPON ROAD SAFETY

Report: Responses of Government Agencies to Recommendations in Staysafe Reports of the Fifty-first Parliament

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [1.03 p.m.]: The report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety documents the responses of government agencies to the 22 Staysafe committee reports tabled from 1995 to 1999, the period of the Fifty-first Parliament. In all, the Staysafe Committee made 134 recommendations in 13 of its 22 reports during the Fifty-first Parliament. Those recommendations addressed a myriad of issues arising from inquiries that examined the driver licensing system in New South Wales, pedestrian safety, the need for adoption of a general urban speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour, driver fatigue, drink driving and drug driving, illegal street racing, the development of national road traffic laws, and road safety administration.

As well, during the Fifty-first Parliament the Staysafe committee commenced an annual review of road safety activities, completing reports for the years 1994 to 1997 inclusive. The Staysafe committee also hosted five seminars or conferences and issued a report of the proceedings of each of those meetings. As has been established in earlier reviews of the Government's response to the Staysafe committee's findings and recommendations, which are set out in Staysafe 23 of 1992 and Staysafe 33 of 1996, it is clear that the committee's various investigative mechanisms yield outcomes that are highly influential in the development of policy and practice to reduce road trauma in New South Wales.

The Staysafe committee's formal inquiry process, which is extensive and consultative, results in findings and recommendations that are usually well received. I believe that is an important part of the committee's role. All of the reports produced by the committee over the 20-odd years since its establishment have been well received. That demonstrates that members of Parliament have a commitment to improving road safety in New South Wales. The reports of inquiries over the period 1995 to 1999, the implementation of the Staysafe committee's recommendations regarding 50-kilometre urban speed limits, as set out in Staysafe 34 of 1996 and Staysafe 40 of 1997, and the revamping of graduated driver licensing rules for new drivers, as set out in Staysafe 37 of 1997, should result in improved road safety outcomes for New South Wales.

The implementation of the 50 kilometres per hour urban speed limit resulted from a recommendation of the committee that was tabled in the previous Parliament. That recommendation received enormous resistance

from throughout the State, particularly from country areas and the outer metropolitan areas of Sydney. As people looked at the issue more closely they realised that a reduction in the urban speed limit from 60 kilometres per hour to 50 kilometres per hour would ensure improved safety, a reduction in accidents and the trauma associated with them, and a reduction in the number of people killed on the roads, which would be a great benefit for the community.

The Staysafe committee comprises members who represent all areas of the State. The 50-kilometre per hour urban speed limit was supported by all members because it was felt that the implementation of the speed limit would improve road safety. I congratulate all members of the committee, who at various times had to argue in their communities and the surrounding communities in favour of the committee's recommendation. Ultimately, they were successful. Almost the entire State now has a 50-kilometre per hour urban speed limit, and that has been implemented through consultation with local councils throughout New South Wales.

In my electorate of the Central Coast, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council implemented 50-kilometre per hour speed limits throughout the entire area. I congratulate the former Mayor of Wyong Shire Council, Fay Brennan, and the former Mayor of Gosford City Council, Chris Holstein, on agreeing to implement the 50-kilometre per hour urban speed limit throughout the area at the one time. That resulted in a tremendous saving, but the implementation of the speed limit required an enormous amount of commitment and drive from local government. I am pleased that the Minister for Local Government is in the House, because it is clear that local government is extremely important to the success of implementing State Government policies on both road safety and other issues. I know that the Minister has a strong commitment to local government and has always been a strong defender of local government in this House.

The Staysafe committee's annual reviews of road safety activities, an initiative of the Staysafe committee of the Fifty-first Parliament, have begun to yield important benefits. For example, the committee was able to document that the Road Safety 2000 program, which sought to achieve a strategic reduction in the overall number of road fatalities and serious injuries in New South Wales had plateaued or stalled. Under targets endorsed in late 1995 by the Premier and the Minister for Roads, the Roads and Traffic Authority was committed to taking all necessary action to achieve a road toll in New South Wales of fewer than 500 road deaths and 5,500 serious road injuries by the end of 2000. Sadly, we now know that these road trauma reduction targets were not achieved. The road toll was 20 per cent more than the predicted level for the end of the year 2000, and there were more than 600 road deaths in New South Wales.

Through annual reviews of road safety work by Government agencies, the committee was able to pursue appropriate lines of inquiry about specific aspects of road safety, management and administration that promised better integration and collaboration across the major portfolios involved in activities related to road safety. By doing so, the committee was able to maintain a consistent focus on Government's policies and its efforts to address road trauma. The Staysafe Committee's seminars and conferences offer an opportunity to promote more open interaction between Parliament and the community. The policy of the Carr Labor Government of allowing the facilities of Parliament House to be used to examine issues related to improving road safety in New South Wales and Australia is strongly supported by the Speaker. The opportunity to develop partnership arrangements with outside professional and industry organisations is an added benefit of the seminar process. The committee has found that the seminars can serve as catalysts for road safety research, development activities, and the development of significant areas of policy.

The Staysafe committee appreciates the efforts of Ministers with portfolio responsibilities associated with road safety to provide the committee with the most complete and up-to-date information regarding the response of Government to the recommendations made in Staysafe reports Nos 28 to 49 during the period 1995 to 1999. I am pleased to have had the assistance of my colleagues on the committee from both the Government and the Opposition. The honourable member for Bega, the Opposition Whip, who is serving his third term as a member of the Staysafe committee, and other members such as John Jobling, the Opposition Whip in the upper House, bring continuity and corporate knowledge to the role of the Staysafe committee. I value highly their deliberations.

Two new members of the Staysafe committee, the honourable member for Keira and honourable member for Georges River, have made valuable contributions to Staysafe reports during the present term. I am pleased to chair the Staysafe committee because of the attitude of all members towards achieving positive road safety outcomes for the whole of the State. I commend the members of the secretariat: the director Mr Ian Faulks, committee officer Ms Violeta Brdaroska and assistant committee officer Ms Carolyn Allen, who I understand now works permanently in Parliament House in another area. Staysafe has a good team who work well together and produce good results for the whole of the State.

Mr R. H. L. SMITH (Bega) [1.13 p.m.]: I will speak briefly on the Staysafe report relating to the responses of government agencies to Staysafe recommendations during the Fifty-first Parliament. I agree with the chair of the committee that the biggest advantage of the Staysafe committee is the bipartisanship support it receives from all parties in both the upper House and the lower House. Many recommendations of the Staysafe committee are politically unpopular at the time they are made. For example, any government would have found it difficult to introduce random breath testing for alcohol or the compulsory wearing of seatbelts. However, with a positive response from all parties to the Staysafe committee's recommendations it has been possible to bring in changes that have saved many lives.

The willingness of many country councils to implement the committee's recommendation for a 50-kilometre speed limit in urban areas surprised me. It reminded me of the time when the speed limits were changed from miles per hour to kilometres per hour. At that time the speed limit was increased slightly to 60 kilometres an hour, but it has now been brought back to 50 kilometres. That is a safer speed at which to travel in urban areas, and it will also reduce noise. The responses of government agencies to Staysafe recommendations are far better than they were previously. Government agencies now report back to the Staysafe committee in a co-operative way, having put a great deal of effort and thought into their responses. That is of great benefit to the committee.

Report noted.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE UPON ROAD SAFETY

Report: Traffic Control and Safety in the Vicinity of Schools

Part 1: Major Recommendations and Summary

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [1.16 p.m.]: In the past two decades the Staysafe committee has made some landmark reports and recommendations. The honourable member for Bega has referred to some of them. He referred to random alcohol testing, the compulsory wearing of seatbelts and the 50-kilometre per hour urban speed limit. The report on road safety in and around schools is a landmark report. The committee visited schools throughout New South Wales and found that the issue was of enormous concern to the community. Normally, the media who attend the meetings of the committee are looking for a news story, but on one occasion a reporter from Channel 7 took me aside and talked to me about this issue; it was matter of concern to him as a parent.

The journalist gave me a detailed analysis and told me why he thought this inquiry was so important. Normally, news journalists treat politicians and some certain issues with a deal with cynicism, but this issue cut through all that bias and prejudice in an amazing way. We had similar experiences throughout the whole of New South Wales. Everyone agreed that something should be done. Even though this matter is controversial in some ways, the community told us that this report should be adopted. That has not been the case with all of the committee's reports.

As I said earlier, school communities across New South Wales have been concerned for some time about road safety in and around schools. Every member of Parliament is aware of that. The concerns are typically perceived as risks or hazards to which children are exposed. Schoolchildren are among the most vulnerable of road users. The specific characteristics that make schoolchildren in need of particular attention are their age and cognitive immaturity, especially in children younger than 10 years of age because they do not have peripheral vision; their lack of experience as independent users of the road safety system; and the frequency of their use of the road as passengers or pedestrians, particularly for travel to and from schools.

The Staysafe committee heard evidence to the effect that in some local council traffic committees more than 50 per cent of traffic management and control issues relate to school safety issues—a big issue in the community. I am surprised that a report of this nature was not commissioned earlier, given that community concern. The tragic death of Ella James and the serious injury to Corrine Fielitz outside Bulli Public School in mid 2000 acted as a flashpoint for the outpouring of this long, low-boiling concern. Staysafe committee members determined from the reactions in their own communities that only the independence of a Staysafe inquiry would satisfy those communities.

Immediately after the tragic death to which I referred earlier the honourable member for Keira, who is in the Chamber, pointed out to me that this inquiry was long overdue. He said that it should be taken up immediately by the committee. All other committee members, including the honourable member for Georges River and the honourable member for Bega, who are in the Chamber, emphasised that this issue should be taken up immediately on behalf of the community. Members of the committee and every other member of Parliament know of this concern in our communities. Too often school communities have come to us and expressed concern about these problems. Currently, there are insufficient mechanisms or processes in place to deal with these issues.

I commend the honourable member for Keira for promoting this issue. I commend all other members of the committee for immediately endorsing the motion moved by the honourable member. The committee met and discussed these issues and set the parameters for its inquiry. We then engaged in the biggest inquiry ever undertaken by the Staysafe committee. We travelled the length and breadth of New South Wales. We held hearings in Sydney, on the South Coast and North Coast, in the west and the Far West and on the mid North Coast. The inquiry was a bottom-up inquiry. We asked members of the community to tell us about their concerns and how to resolve them. We wanted them to tell us how to solve road safety problems in our community.

In broad terms the issues identified by the Staysafe committee addressed matters such as dealing effectively and efficiently with traffic control and safety around schools, the critical role of local traffic committees in addressing local communities and the road transport system, community education about road safety around schools, the Safer Routes to School program and the important Road Safety Officer program. When that program was initiated no-one realised its importance. It is pleasing to see the Minister for Local Government in the Chamber. He would be aware that that program is another example of the strength of local government.

The program will assist in achieving good outcomes for our community. The State Government cannot work effectively without local government partnerships, a policy that the Minister for Local Government is always pushing in this State. Basically, that program was the catalyst for many of the committee's recommendations. Members of the committee had much direct interaction with the local community and local government. In general, local government is responsible for most road safety facilities around our schools. The partnership between local government and road safety officers is essential. Local government had a direct connection with the Roads and Traffic Authority in relation to that jointly funded program.

The Minister for Roads has guaranteed funding for the Road Safety Officer program for another decade. The committee also addressed a new black spot funding program and the need for school precinct management systems. When we visited local communities we established that there was no linkage between the school and other facilities in a school precinct. I will let some other members of the committee refer to the many examples of that. Some school precincts do not interlock with nearby schools, preschools, community halls, nursing homes, hospitals and so on. Road safety issues are designed only for a school and do not interlock with other community services within that precinct.

The Staysafe committee report recommends three dozen follow-on actions to address both physical and procedural deficiencies associated with effective and safe traffic control around schools. In practice, responsibility for the effective management of traffic movements and safety around our schools resides with several State government agencies and local government, as well as different educational sectors. Accordingly, the committee has organised its report and recommendations to clearly identify responsible agencies and those parties that must have an input into, or be consulted in relation to, the recommendations. Agency-specific issues and responsibilities have been identified for the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Urban Affairs, the Department of Transport, the New South Wales Police Service and local government. A whole range of issues must be addressed. I invite those honourable members who are in Chamber today to speak to those issues.

I want to emphasise one matter that is fundamental to this report. Every recommendation made by the committee came directly from the community. These recommendations are not the inventions of bureaucrats, professionals or people pushing a particular barrow. These sensible and logical recommendations are the recommendations of the community, and they should be implemented. I congratulate everyone associated with the committee hearings: the members of the committee, the committee secretariat and, most importantly, the school communities that participated, drafted submissions and turned up at committee hearings. I thank everyone who attended our hearings throughout this State. Only with their co-operation and assistance have we been able to compile this important report on road safety in New South Wales.

Mr R. H. L. SMITH (Bega) [1.26 p.m.]: The report of the Joint Standing Committee upon Road Safety on road safety in and around schools is divided into four parts. Part 1 deals with the major recommendations and the summary. Part 2 deals with the full technical report and all of the recommendations. There are 33 recommendations in part 1 and a total of about 80 recommendations. Part 3 deals with the edited transcripts of witnesses' evidence. Part 4 deals with summaries of the submissions received.

As has been pointed out by the chairman, this report had its origin in the tragic death of Ella James at Bulli Public School. It is disappointing that the committee needed that trigger to get it going. As the chairman

said earlier, this report is long overdue. It is the most extensive report that has been published by the Staysafe committee. I compliment all members of the committee on the effort they put into this report. Every school throughout the State had an opportunity to present evidence or submissions to the committee. The committee, which travelled extensively throughout New South Wales, held public inquiries and received submissions.

Schools from the northern part of my electorate were asked to come to Shoalhaven City Council at Nowra. The Ulladulla schools made a wonderful presentation. In the southern part of my electorate hearings were held at Bega Valley Council chambers. Schools on the southern end of my electorate gave wonderful submissions to the committee, and I congratulate all of them. I understand how intimidating it may be to come before a joint standing committee of the New South Wales Parliament. I commend all the people who spoke on behalf of their individual schools. It was well done and the contributions were very much appreciated by the committee.

Other schools and electorates, even though their local members may not have been on the Staysafe committee, would congratulate the representatives on their submissions. Some of the recommendations—there are thirty-something in the report—that seem to have major effect in my area include whole-of-day speed restrictions in school zones. At present the situation is confusing because of bus pick-up times and so on. Schools start and finish at different times. There is no uniform time. Motorists have to read the 40-kilometre an hour signs and work out whether it applies at the time. Staysafe thought that the speed restrictions should apply all day so that they would be simpler for people to follow. It will be interesting to see whether the recommendation about colour coding is taken up by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] and other authorities. They are relatively difficult to move on colour coding, believing that the present coding should be followed. It would make a tremendous difference if signs were colour coded so that motorists know exactly where the school zones are. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [1.31 p.m.]: I dedicate my contribution to this debate to the late Ella James and Corrine Fielitz and their families. As has been said in the debate, the inquiry and report come about following an accident in June 2000 at Bulli primary school. I thank members of the committee and the committee secretariat, who picked up the issue of holding an inquiry of this nature and worked collectively as a team to produce the report and its major recommendations. It was a very comprehensive inquiry. As the committee chair, the honourable member for The Entrance, and the honourable member for Bega have done—I expect that the honourable member for Georges River will also do so when he speaks—I acknowledge the contributions made to the inquiry by school communities around the State. The contributions, and the preparedness of people to talk frankly and openly with us, have led to a report that makes a lot of sense. Its recommendations should be acted on.

On the key aspects of the report, first I make a plea for school communities and the broader community to work together to solve a real issue at every school in this State. I can say that without any fear of contradiction that every school in this State has a problem with road safety in its precincts or vicinity. Many of the problems are a result of the wrong and frightening things that parents do. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

When we inspected locations we saw parents doing U-turns over pedestrian crossings. Parents do crazy things outside schools. They park their vehicles across pedestrian crossings. They stop in "no stopping" zones, park the car and go in for an interview with a teacher. They park in bus zones. They speed and they double park and triple park outside schools. Many other aspects add to the problem, but my plea is to ask school communities to examine the problem. When committee members were in the electorate of the Minister for Local Government at Ulmarra on the Pacific Highway outside the public school we were almost wiped out when on a pedestrian crossing. There was almost a series of by-elections.

Mr Woods: Very fortunate.

Mr CAMPBELL: It was fortunate that we were fit and athletic and jumped out of the way of a heavy vehicle that came thundering along the highway and would have cleaned up the lot of us. But it also may well have collected a disabled school student who was on the pedestrian crossing in a wheelchair. I plead with the community generally but to school communities in particular, especially parents, to understand that they contribute to the problem. Some of the recommendations in the report have been mentioned by my colleague the honourable member for Bega. Colour coding of signage within the vicinity of schools would highlight that people are in a school area and they need to take more special care. The chairman also mentioned that we need to look at these locations as precincts and not just put in place facilities for one school when 50 metres up the road is another school and 50 metres along the road is a preschool and another 100 metres along the road is a retirement village, next to which is a private hospital.

We need to look at it as a precinct. That responsibility will rest with the local traffic committees. I want to take a stick to traffic committees. One of the things that came out of the work of the inquiry was that traffic committees pontificate without including the community. School communities—parents and citizens and principals—are not told what happens to their requests or suggestions. The traffic committee sits in splendid isolation and makes recommendations. If the school community is lucky, when the report goes to the local council a councillor might pick up the issue and run with it. Traffic committees have a great responsibility in this process and they need to get their act together and refine their processes of involving the community and reporting back to the community as to what they do.

While I am taking the stick to traffic committees I urge the city of Wollongong traffic committee to take note of my continuing representations in regard to Bulli High School, Woniora Public School, Woonona Public School, Woonona High School, East Corrimal Public School, Fairy Meadow Public School, Pleasant Heights Public School and Mount Ousley Public School. I am working very hard with all those school communities to get the traffic committee to realise that the nonsense of the warrant system has to stop. The traffic committees have to understand that these theoretical warrants and the way they measure what is needed in a particular location are outdated and unrealistic. There should be commonsense.

Anyone who looks at those schools I have mentioned in the electorate of Keira will realise that something needs to happen outside of this age-old system that is enshrined in what is called the yellow book, a copy of which most traffic committees do not even have. Local communities, local councils and local traffic committees have a lot of work to do. Without doubt the recommendations in the report provide the necessary framework for that work to be done. I look forward to pursuing the recommendations at a local level and to ensuring that they are implemented around the State.

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [1.40 p.m.]: As far as the general community and members of the Staysafe committee are concerned there can be no more important issue than the safety of students in and around schools. It is hoped that traffic control measures now in place will assist in ensuring the safety of students. This morning at 8.15 I visited a local school to discuss with the local representative on the Kogarah traffic committee, Mr Arthur Hardiman, who works extremely hard on my behalf, the provision of safety measures around that school. In that regard I invited the deputy principal of that school and the president of the local parents and citizens association to meet with us on site. A representative of the Roads and Traffic Authority also met with us at the school.

As the Staysafe report stated, specific measures need to be implemented for each school. The only way they can be implemented effectively is through site inspections and consultation with the community. The honourable member for Keira referred to that in his contribution. He also referred to the role of parents. As a former school principal, at committee hearings I frequently commented that parents seem to have the belief that at 3.00, 3.15, 3.30 or whenever a school finishes, they should be able to pick up their child about 2.5 centimetres from the school gate.

The parents in vehicles try to congregate as closely as possible to the school gate, which, of course, provides enormous difficulties for teachers as they try to enable students to exit safely from schools. The police are involved in this safety issue. My local police superintendent, Paul Lowe, is extremely co-operative when I contact him to organise for police to visit schools and ensure that the traffic control measures are implemented correctly. I refer specifically to the 40-kilometre per hour zones and making sure that parents do not double-park around schools and thus create traffic hazards.

The community was involved in the compilation of this Staysafe report, and that is reflected in the fact that more than 400 submissions were received and 230 witnesses addressed the committee. As the report was being compiled, I learnt many things. I received a representation from Mrs Carmel Fisher from St Declans primary school asking for traffic measures to be installed in the school's precinct including Penshurst Public School and Penshurst Girls High School. During that process I learned that a 40 kilometre per hour zone could be implemented on arterial roads and State roads. With that knowledge I was able to ensure that Forest Road and Penshurst Street around those three schools became 40 kilometre per hour zones. Local school communities appreciate the fact that the Staysafe committee has been responsible for the implementation of specific traffic control measures and, most importantly, has come forward with recommendations that will be most effective in the future.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**Annual Report 1999-2000**

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [1.45 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the 1999-2000 Annual Report of the Public Accounts Committee. Since 1984 the committee has tabled an annual report in Parliament. The Committee does not have a statutory requirement to produce an annual report. However, it has been seen as an avenue to inform the wider community about its work. In spite of the disruption caused by ongoing staff shortages created by the restructure of the parliamentary committee system, my first year as chairman was quite productive. The committee tabled four reports in the period 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000 and laid the foundations for many more.

One of the reports we released in 1999-2000 was the Peer Review of the Audit Office of New South Wales, which was undertaken pursuant to section 48A of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983. The review serves to ensure the work of the Auditor-General remains accountable and of the highest standard. Under section 48A, the committee is required to appoint a reviewer to carry out this detailed examination of the functions and operations of the Audit Office. Professor Allan Craswell, from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Sydney, was appointed reviewer by the committee.

The terms of reference included a review of the management of the audit function, the management of human resources, the adequacy and management of technology, the conduct of financial audits and the conduct of performance audits. The review compared the performance of the Audit Office with best practice of public sector auditors in Australia and overseas, including best practice in British Columbia, the National Audit Office in the United Kingdom and the General Accounting Office in the United States of America. The review found, generally, that the Audit Office was well managed. Nevertheless, the report identifies and targets important areas for improvement and constructively prescribes ways in which the operations of the office may be made more efficient and effective. The report recommended better staff training to improve management and operational effectiveness of financial and performance audits.

Apart from initiating its own inquiries, the committee is required to follow-up matters raised by the Auditor-General in his reports to parliament. In fulfilling its obligations to follow up audits undertaken by the Auditor General, the committee embarked on three follow-up reports. The first was a follow-up of the Auditor-General's report on the financial disclosure of the WorkCover scheme statutory funds. The financial disclosure of the WorkCover scheme statutory funds was raised in volume three of the Auditor-General's report to Parliament for 1999. The Auditor-General is concerned about the substantial net or unfunded liability of the WorkCover scheme statutory funds and has expressed concern that no agency has responsibility for the net liability. The Auditor-General is also concerned the scheme's accounts are not consolidated in the State's accounts, or even recorded in the notes of those accounts.

The committee concluded that the net liability was not appropriately disclosed and ownership of the scheme could not be determined under the legislation. This situation conflicts with the practice of accrual accounting, which asserts that accumulated liabilities and the associated risks are likely to be better managed if ownership is clear. The committee recommended that the Government clearly determine the ownership of unfunded liabilities and implement remedial measures to control more effectively the scheme's deficit. The committee also recommended that once ownership and control are determined, appropriate accounting treatments be applied to facilitate the proper reporting of the unfunded liability. In the interim, an explanatory note should be included in the total State sector accounts outlining the accumulated deficit and the reasons for it not being consolidated in the accounts.

Recent legislation passed by the Parliament introduced measures to increase compliance with premium obligations. Such measures will be beneficial to the effective control of the scheme's deficit. However, there are still more changes required and the committee will maintain a watching brief on this issue. The second follow-up concerned cost control in the Department of Juvenile Justice. The Auditor-General's report of November 1999 raised concerns about the effectiveness of financial management within the department. Budgetary targets had not been met and there were variations in financial and operational indicators that could not be readily explained and were evidence of inefficiencies in the department.

The committee concluded that the budget allocations by Treasury had contributed to the lack of financial discipline within the department by creating the expectation of supplementary budgetary relief. This expectation was realised annually for the past eight years. However, the committee also concluded that poor

financial systems and internal reporting had contributed to the department's poor resource management. The committee was informed that the department was incurring the budgetary problems due to the high level of fixed costs associated with detention centre budgets. Further, the Minister for Juvenile Justice had agreed to form a finance committee within the department with representation from Treasury to improve financial management.

The committee supports initiatives that encourage improved financial management. It came to the view that Treasury and budget dependent agencies such as the Department of Juvenile Justice should sign off each year on an approach to be applied to monitoring and revising annual budgets. The aim is to improve communication between Treasury and line agencies. The third follow-up report concerned the long-term financial viability of the Waste Recycling and Processing Service. The Auditor-General's report of December 1999 revealed that the Waste Service of New South Wales was making losses through its recycling facilities. Further, the service was exposed to increasing competition through the expansion of the activities of waste boards. The audit report also observed that increasing profits from the Waste Service's operation of solid waste landfill are not consistent with the Government waste minimisation policy and targets.

The committee concluded that the objectives of the Waste Minimisation and Management Act 1995, which established the Waste Recycling and Processing Service, are not well aligned with government regulation and jurisdiction of waste activities. The committee believed this stems from the potential conflict between the policy objectives of waste minimisation and the increasing corporatisation and commercialisation of the industry. The committee made a number of recommendations with a view to improving alignments and links within the existing waste industry framework. Since our inquiry the legislation has been reviewed, with a report tabled in the House in June 2001. I am also happy to report to the House that the Minister is in the process of a major restructure of the waste industry regulation. Hopefully, those inconsistencies in the policy objectives and commercialisation will be able to be aligned and the Government will be better able to achieve the outcomes it is seeking.

Another development in 1999-2000 has been to ensure that the committee's reports from the current Parliament are available on the Internet. This will enable easy access for the wider community. Further, Parliament has created a database that enables members of the public to send submissions to committee inquiries via email. Legislation governing the committee was also amended during 1999-2000 to increase the number of members from five to six. The great strength of the committee has always been its strong bipartisan approach to its work. I would like to thank my fellow members for their co-operation.

I would also like to draw to the attention of the House the strong regional representation on the committee. The committee has a strong focus on that. Three of the six members come from rural and regional areas in New South Wales, which is relatively unprecedented for this committee, and they make a substantial contribution as a consequence of their background. As noted, during 1999-2000 staffing levels were strained, requiring research support from officers seconded from government departments. The committee would like to thank all officers who worked with it for their skill, dedication and team spirit.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Industry Assistance

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [1.54 p.m.]: The committee's report on industry assistance followed up a previous performance audit by the Audit Office. The report by the Audit Office sought to improve procedures in the Department of State and Regional Development and to ensure it received the maximum benefit for each dollar of assistance. The committee's inquiry pursued these issues further and covered some additional areas, such as the department's arrangements for regional development.

Overall, the committee found that to date New South Wales has avoided much of the wastage and many of the excesses of other governments in Australia and overseas. On a per capita basis the department's budget is modest and this appears to have imposed some measure of discipline. In addition, New South Wales enjoys many competitive advantages over its rival jurisdictions. For example, it has most of Australia's banking head offices, regional headquarters and international business arrivals. These advantages have allowed the department to attract investment cheaply. The success of the New South Wales Government in restraining corporate welfare provided by the Department of State and Regional Development is to be commended. This result is largely the work of New South Wales Treasury.

Given this positive initial finding, the committee sought to improve some aspects of the department's operations and help it get the maximum return for each dollar spent. The first topic in this regard is performance

measurement. The committee was concerned that the Department of State and Regional Development was presenting data on outputs, that is work done, rather than outcomes, that is results achieved. The committee's view is that the department should be presenting data on its effectiveness. For example, the department runs the Women in Business Mentor program. It aims to give businesswomen role models and advice from other women who have succeeded in a traditionally male area. The department performance indicator is that 336 women participated in the program in 1999-2000. However, this statistic does not indicate whether the program helped the participants. A better approach might be to consider what proportion of participants changed their business strategy? Did any of the participants who own their own business achieve improved growth?

These sorts of statistics come closer to showing whether the Department of State and Regional Development has made a difference. The committee recommended the department develop meaningful performance indicators for its programs. These indicators should be published in the annual report and budget papers. The committee found a similar issue in the department's business attraction programs. In these programs the department typically gives payroll tax concessions to businesses when they invest or establish operation in New South Wales. The Department of State and Regional Development commissioned a benchmarking study to compare its operations with seven other industry agencies overseas and interstate.

The department performed the best in the study. It generated the most investment per dollar of budget expenditure. It also had the smallest expenditure for each job facilitated. However, most performance indicators need to be interpreted rather than taken as a straight-out measure of effectiveness. As I mentioned earlier, New South Wales has many competitive advantages, which has made the department's job a lot easier to attract investment. To a large extent the benchmarking study reflects New South Wales' attractiveness. The department needs to take a different approach and ensure it is making an appropriate comparison.

The committee sought a better way to measure the department's effectiveness. There are two main factors that the department needs to take into account. The first is the alternate uses that could be made of the resources involved. If a potential project is only going to take resources away from another development, this needs to be considered. The second factor to take into account is the likelihood that the project would have located in New South Wales anyway. If a project generating 100 jobs was 50 per cent likely to locate in New South Wales without financial assistance, and the department offered assistance and the project came to New South Wales, the department has, in fact, attracted 50 jobs, not 100 jobs.

The committee recommended that the department, in developing its performance indicators for its investment attraction programs, should discount investments in relation to alternate activities and the likelihood that a project would have located in New South Wales anyway. Although the department might develop targets for its investment attraction programs, it is difficult to determine whether they are reasonable. The committee wanted to establish more objective benchmarks for the department. We agreed that the department should establish internal business units in the investment attraction division and compare performance between them, given the staff and funding available to each. One of the advantages of the scheme is that it places extra pressure on staff to seriously consider whether a project really warrants financial assistance. The more jobs and investment they can generate without assistance, the more it will put them ahead of other business units. The other advantage is that the department will be encouraged to determine relative effectiveness of staff against attracting funding. It may be more efficient to reduce the financial incentives and increase staff, or vice versa. Such an examination has not occurred to date.

This discussion of investment attraction and measuring the department's performance raised some other issues during the inquiry about the realities of attracting investment. The role of industry departments in attracting investment within the economy is often overstated. Treasury said in evidence to the committee that the amount of investment attracted by the Government's main attraction fund is reasonably small compared with the \$20 billion to \$30 billion attracted across the whole of New South Wales in one year. This investment is attracted not by government incentives but by business opportunities and the economic fundamentals in New South Wales.

Economic research supports Treasury's view. The main factors that companies look for in making fixed investments are market access and market share, access to raw materials, access to a low-cost, skilled work force, a well-developed local infrastructure, an efficient and honest public sector, and political stability. As an example, the committee's report quoted Jake Scott, son of Ridley Scott, who shoots advertisements in Sydney for overseas clients. Jake Scott expressly stated that his reason for shooting here, what brings him back, is not the low Australian dollar—which is similar in effect to a tax concession—but the city, its crews and their attitude to work.

During evidence the committee heard from many sources that financial incentives do not drive investment. On the contrary, companies want to see swift action from departments to help them access the inputs they need. Regulatory reform and cutting red tape are more useful to companies and last longer than payroll tax concessions. In addition, the committee heard evidence that the majority of investors find that New South Wales, rather than the department, makes contact with them. The bulk of the remainder comes through the Commonwealth Investment Commissioner program. Once again, this places the role of the department in its proper perspective.

The final matter in the report I want to discuss is the role of the Department of State and Regional Development in the export of government services. Australia is a developed country and its public agencies operate at a standard comparable with international best practice. Developing nations often make use of this expertise, especially through aid programs. This trade constitutes 2 per cent of total Australian exports. The Public Accounts Committee has long expressed its support for a public sector corporation to manage the export of government services. Such an arrangement combines the prestige of government and improving access to markets with commercial pressure to make a profit. South Australia and Victoria have used such a model to good effect in the past.

However, New South Wales has chosen to manage these exports through the public service. At the end of 1998 a Government Services Export Unit was established in the Department of State and Regional Development. One person resources this unit, and the committee found that it could be no more than a referrals and reception service. Some agencies have responded to this lack of central authority by creating their own commercial corporations to manage the export of their services. For example, Aus Health International Pty Ltd now manages the export of government health services in New South Wales. At least in this case there is some pressure to operate commercially, and its performance is reported separately.

The committee examined some data and found that New South Wales' performance in exporting government services could be improved. As a proxy for the performance of New South Wales the committee used the State's share of the AusAID budget. The New South Wales share was below what might be expected, given its population. By comparison, Victoria and South Australia had shares of the AusAID budget well in excess of their share of the Australian population. Although this measure is probably only one component of a proper performance indicator, it suggests that New South Wales has to make up ground in the export of government services. It also suggests that creating government-owned corporations has given Victoria and South Australia an advantage in this market.

Accordingly, the committee recommended that the Government establish a state-owned corporation to manage the export of government services. Alternatively, the committee recommended that the Government require all relevant agencies to establish their own corporations to manage the export of their services. The committee made a total of 27 recommendations designed to improve the department's performance, and I trust that these proposals will prompt a thorough evaluation of the department activities.

Report noted.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Mills) left the chair at 2.05 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

CIRCLE SENTENCING

Ministerial Statement

Mr CARR (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Citizenship) [2.15 p.m.]: Today I can report that Nowra has been chosen as the site for a trial of circle sentencing—as far as we know, an Australian first. Circle sentencing is a community-based alternative to conventional sentencing. The program originated within the Indian community in Canada 10 years ago. The New South Wales Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council recommended we try it here. The Aboriginal people of Nowra welcome the opportunity. This will be a two-year trial, fully evaluated, to start before the end of this year. Circle sentencing is one response to the fact that Aboriginal people are 10 times more likely to be sentenced to gaol.

There is a key difference between circle sentencing and a normal court. It is that the community plays a fundamental role in deciding the sentence and seeing it carried out. The magistrate decides on whether an offender is eligible for circle sentencing. However, elders also have a say. Circle sentencing may take place in a court, but it can also occur in a community hall. All participants sit in a circle: the magistrate and lawyers, the

offender and victim, elders, relatives and other community members. Unlike a normal court, all participants are invited to speak. There is no legal jargon or technical argument. All proceedings are in plain English. Everyone has a say.

Together the circle discusses the crime and agrees on a sentence. This may be a curfew, training or employment, abstaining from alcohol, or starting a drug treatment program. It may be repairing damage to property, apologising to victims, community service orders, fines or financial recompense. The sentence plan is subject to the magistrate's final approval. It can become a condition of bail. The circle is reconvened several months later to check on progress. If the offender has failed to meet the conditions, the circle may be abandoned and the offender sentenced in a regular court. This approach restores a community's authority and capacity to deal with crime. The offender is made to account for his or her actions in front of respected elders, relatives and community leaders. For Aboriginal people, this is much harder than appearing before strangers in a normal court. A Canadian judge who briefed Australian lawyers on the scheme said:

I have had a number of offenders tell me that had they known how tough it would be they would have opted for gaol instead.

Circle sentencing focuses on community-based sentences. However, the circle may also decide that gaol is the most suitable option. The chair of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council, Winsome Matthews, says there will be cases where a circle court will choose gaol whereas a normal court would have chosen community service. The elders know the offender and his or her family. They know about the crime and its impact on the community. They are well-equipped to advise on the sentence. Circle sentencing restores responsibility to the community—in a partnership with the criminal justice system. Local magistrate Doug Dick has welcomed the trial as an addition to the range of sentencing options available. He says community involvement will help to address one of the greatest risks of injustice, which is, "a breakdown in communication".

The trial will investigate whether circle sentencing is successful in increasing the reporting of crime, in improving confidence in the justice system, in providing a voice for victims, and in reducing crime. Circle sentencing is the latest in a line of innovative justice programs in New South Wales that includes drug courts, youth justice conferencing and restorative justice schemes. It has received our support because we want not only a tough justice system but a fair one.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove—Leader of the Opposition) [2.20 p.m.]: This is the first occasion that a member on this side of the House has responded to a ministerial statement in relation to Aboriginal issues about which we have not been given a briefing beforehand. I express my disappointment at that, because the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has been consistent in ensuring that the Opposition was aware of his statements about Aboriginal issues. They are significant issues and have been dealt with in a bipartisan manner. I am disappointed that the Premier has not shown the same courtesy.

While the Opposition would encourage any initiative to ensure that justice is fair to all in New South Wales, we will watch with great interest the whole concept of circle sentencing. The difficulty we have with all these ideas is that they are imported. They are fine overseas but they do not necessarily work in an Australian context. So, we will watch with interest what the Premier has proposed. We will watch how the trial works and how it is assessed. We need to make sure that justice in New South Wales is fair for all. In doing so, we need to make sure that no particular concessions are given to one group in the community that would disadvantage any other group. We also need to make sure that those who are deemed by the community at large to be worthy of prison sentences, for example, receive those sentences.

So, while we acknowledge the need to trial different methods of justice in New South Wales, we have to understand the principle of justice. As I explained to the young men from Year 9 at St Ignatius College earlier today when they asked me what justice means, the principle of justice means that it is fair for all in the eyes of the law. We want to make sure that this sort of sentencing is fair for all in the eyes of the law. We would be grateful for a proper and complete briefing on this procedure. It is obviously significant within the Aboriginal community but we would like to know how it fits in with the justice system at large, and I look forward to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs doing what he has done previously and briefing us on what is obviously a significant issue but one that I would have thought should have been discussed with us before it was announced in the Parliament.

NORCO CO-OPERATIVE

Ministerial Statement

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [2.22 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of honourable members the situation of Norco Co-operative in Lismore.

There has been no shortage of evidence that the industry has experienced some turmoil following deregulation of the national dairy industry last year. Many members would be aware that the industry restructuring has been a painful experience for many dairy farmers in this State and in other States. Norco Co-operative was facing an uncertain future only 12 months ago. Its prospects for continuing profitably and expanding were not rosy, to say the least. However, I am pleased to say that with a considerable amount of good management and a loyal farmer base the co-operative has turned itself into a real success story.

In light of deregulation and the extremely low prices farmers were being paid for their milk, Norco started a "buy local" campaign, and it has been extremely successful. In addition, the co-operative has reduced its debt load by some \$14 million in the year to June 2001, from \$27 million to \$13 million. The board has plans in place to achieve further debt reduction in the current financial year. One reason for the success was the identification of surplus facilities that were sold, such as the co-operative's Casino site, which was sold to Fast Freeze International. Norco not only received a substantial cash injection but also maintains a 50 per cent equity in Fast Freeze, which produces frozen products for the export market.

The Fast Freeze joint venture has improved substantially over the past 12 months, with the low Australian dollar and the foot and mouth disease outbreak in Europe boosting demand in the export market. It has also achieved considerable success in the difficult Japanese market. Norco has also been awarded the first cream import licence issued by the United States of America to an Australian company. In fact, Norco has strengthened its alliances and joint venture relationships with Pauls in the packaging milk business and with Streets, Sara Lee, Baskin Robbins and Dick Smith in ice-cream manufacture. These relationships are proving a solid platform for Norco business.

The dramatic improvement in the business outlook of Norco Co-operative is only one part of the story. As the Norco Co-operative knows, it would be nothing without its suppliers—the dairy farmers of Lismore and the surrounding districts. Norco has ensured that returns to farmers have been optimised, and plans to pay an average farm gate price of 33.5¢ per litre in the coming year—up from 27.17¢ per litre during 2000-01. The co-operative plans to undertake a much-needed \$2.4 million upgrade of its ice-cream manufacturing facilities in the coming year. It will do this with a State Government payroll tax rebate worth \$400,000 and a \$1 million grant under the Dairy Regional Assistance program, which is funded by the 11¢ per litre consumer levy. In conclusion, I commend to the House the outstanding efforts of Norco Co-operative and its farm suppliers. On behalf of all members I wish them continued success in the future.

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [2.26 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I support the Minister in recognising the success of Norco Co-operative, which has been based in Lismore since 1895. Currently, Norco employs 249 permanent staff and 60 casual staff. This year it showed a profit of \$2.67 million, compared with a loss of \$4.5 million last year. This echoes what the board, management and staff have been able to achieve during the past 12 months with support from outside. As the Minister said, Norco is well supported by 238 suppliers from Beaudesert to Nambucca in the south. Norco still has 18 rural store outlets from Dungog to Brisbane, and it has 50 per cent ownership in the joint Norco-Pauls venture. The turnaround has allowed co-operative members to maintain the factory at Raleigh, which is an important part of the enterprise.

As the Minister said, the joint venture with Fast Freeze at Casino has enabled the co-operative to be the first Australian company to export fresh cream to America. The Coalition joins the Government in congratulating Norco. However, I must point out that the co-operative has been supported by the \$990,000 provided to Fast Freeze by the Federal Government through the Dairy Regional Assistance program, as well as the \$1 million presented to Norco last week by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson. I pay tribute to the Federal Government because its continued support, together with the payroll tax support provided by the Carr Government, has helped Norco to become a stronger organisation on the North Coast. I place on record the Coalition's congratulations and appreciation to the chairman, Greg McNamara, the board members, and Bernard O'Brien, the staff and the suppliers of Norco, who have done a tremendous job, with community support, in re-establishing Norco as the major dairy co-operative on the North Coast of New South Wales.

PETITIONS

Centennial Park and Moore Park Commercial Use

Petition praying that the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act be amended to provide for effective public consultation and full public disclosure of all commercial activities and leases, received from **Ms Moore**.

Centennial Park Dogs Off-leash Area

Petition requesting that Federation Valley, Centennial Park, be reinstated as an off-leash area for dogs, received from **Ms Moore**.

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 in Moore Park, received from **Ms Moore**.

Beat Policing

Petition calling on the Government to focus policing strategies and resources on beat policing, received from **Mr Debnam**.

Surry Hills Policing

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

Inner East Sydney Policing

Petition praying that the House prevents the closure of Woolloomooloo, Paddington, Redfern and four other inner eastern suburbs police stations and praying for adequate police resources, including uniformed foot patrols, in the inner east area, received from **Ms Moore**.

Eastern Suburbs Police and Community Youth Club Closure

Petition praying that the House stops the Board of the Police and Community Youth Club New South Wales Ltd from closing and selling the Eastern Suburbs Police and Community Youth Club, received from **Ms Moore**.

Inner East Sydney Police Resources

Petition praying that there be an immediate increase in police resources in the inner east, that there be an increase in the uniformed police foot patrols to deter crime and that an effective police recruitment drive be developed to properly resource community policing, received from **Ms Moore**.

Inner East Sydney Police Local Area Commands

Petition praying that the amalgamation of local police commands in the inner east be opposed, that Redfern, Kings Cross, Surry Hills and Paddington police stations be upgraded, and that an effective police recruitment drive be developed to properly resource community policing, including uniformed foot patrols, 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**.

Malabar Policing

Petition praying that the House notes the concern of Malabar residents at the closure of Malabar Police Station and praying that the station be reopened and staffed by locally based and led police, received from **Mr Tink**.

Randwick Police Station Downgrading

Petition praying that the House notes the concern of Randwick residents at the major downgrading and possible closure of Randwick Police Station and praying that the station be staffed 24 hours a day by locally based and led police, received from **Mr Tink**.

Genetically Engineered Food

Petition praying that the House suspends the commercial release and trials of genetically engineered crops, supports the implementation of mandatory labelling of food derived from genetic engineering and funds independent scientific research to investigate the potential risks to health and the environment, received from **Ms Moore**.

Chatswood High School

Petition asking the House to support the retention and refurbishment of Chatswood High School, received from **Mr Collins**.

Vaucluse Electorate School Closures

Petition requesting funding for public schools and opposing the merging of local schools, received from **Mr Debnam**.

Tumut Regional Roads Upgrade

Petition praying that regional roads in the Tumut area be upgraded and that a regional roads summit be conducted, received from **Ms Hodgkinson**.

Parramatta to Chatswood Rail Link

Petition requesting the Government to re-exhibit the revised environmental impact statement containing changes to the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link, received from **Mr Humpherson**.

M5 East Tunnel Ventilation System

Petition praying that the Government review the design of the ventilation system for the M5 East tunnel and immediately install filtration equipment to treat particulate matter and other pollutants, 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**.

Eastern Distributor Tunnel Ventilation

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

Queenscliff Geographical Names Board Classification

Petition praying that the House reinstate Queenscliff as a suburb with the Geographical Names Board, received from **Mr Barr**.

Manly Lagoon Remediation

Petition praying that funds be made available to assist in the remediation of Manly Lagoon, received from **Mr Barr**.

John Fisher Park

Petition praying that the Government supports the rectification of grass surfaces at John Fisher Park, Curl Curl, and opposes any proposal to hard surface the Crown land portion of the park and Abbott Road land, received from **Mr Barr**.

Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust

Petition praying that the House reinstate the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust as soon as possible, received from **Mr Rozzoli**.

White City Site Rezoning Proposal

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

Fishing Industry Compulsory Buy-outs

Petition praying that the House reject the compulsory buy-out of fishers and defer all fishing policy changes for a year, received from **Mr Souris**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

NURSES INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is directed to the Premier. With wards being empty in our hospitals because of a shortage of nurses and with many nurses being forced to work double shifts just to cope with the crisis in our health system, why is he refusing to meet his promise that, under Labor, the hard work and dedication of nurses would be "adequately recognised and rewarded"?

Mr CARR: The agreement signed only 18 months ago on nurses salaries provides a 16 per cent wage increase from January 2000 to June 2004. The agreement was reached with the Labor Council of New South Wales in conjunction with major public service unions. The first two pay increases have been delivered. In the first half of 2003 wage rises totalling 9 per cent are available—a 4 per cent wage increase at the start of the year and, just six months later, a 5 per cent increase. I am advised that this places our nurses in a better position than those in any other State. I am advised that the Nurses Association intends to bring a special case application before the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales. Justice Hungerford made the point at a 16 October hearing that no action should take place in the absence of an award application.

NURSES INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Mr McMANUS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. What is the latest information on the current negotiations with the New South Wales Nurses Association?

Mr KNOWLES: At the outset I place on record the Government's appreciation for the Nurses Union and its undertaking to ensure adequate staff to maintain patient safety during the course of today's industrial action.

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

Mr KNOWLES: I can report that right around the State our hospitals are being adequately—

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

Mr KNOWLES: I pay tribute to the efforts of the Nurses Association. As the Premier said earlier, when the Government sought to have this action averted last Tuesday in the Industrial Relations Commission, Justice Hungerford made it clear in his remarks that, "the stoppage [today] was unnecessary, and it ought not take place". Justice Hungerford issued a plea to the union to bring its matter before the commission rather than taking stop-work action. I am therefore very grateful to the Nurses Union that late yesterday afternoon an application was finally lodged before the umpire, despite having sought for that application to be lodged five weeks ago in the commission.

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

Mr KNOWLES: We can now finally move forward, which is what is important. Nobody wants to see patients caught in the middle of industrial unrest. We all want to find a solution to assist the nursing profession

and underscore their efforts and the high regard in which they are held. The only way we will do that is through proper processes in the Industrial Relations Commission. It is important that the community understands that we already have a wages agreement with the New South Wales Nurses Association on behalf of every public sector nurse in this State. The agreement was signed on 2 March last year, just over 18 months ago. It is an agreement for four years. The agreement provides for a 16 per cent wage increase.

By the end of the agreement, and indeed most of the way through the agreement, the wage increase places the pay rates of New South Wales nurses ahead of the pay rates of every other nurse in any other State or Territory in this country. That agreement was signed in good faith by all parties—the Government, the nurses, other health unions, the Public Service Association and, indeed, the Trades and Labor Council. It formed the blueprint for the resolution of the salaries negotiations for teachers and police.

Mrs Skinner: Radiotherapists?

Mr KNOWLES: The agreement specifically provides that in the event of a dispute the Industrial Relations Commission, the umpire, is the place to resolve it. It also specifies that while the dispute is being resolved normal work practices are to continue. That is the agreement; that is what was signed 18 months ago, for four years. My commitment then, as it is now and as it will continue, is to work with the New South Wales Nurses Association to resolve these negotiations by working together within the rules. No-one denies the value of nurses. No-one denies the nurse shortages are replicated around the nation, and indeed around the world. It is a matter of fact. The current wages agreement was designed with the union to address, at least in part, some of these issues. That is why, in good faith, we all negotiated a 16 per cent increase and a four-year wage agreement, just 18 months ago. Everyone signed up.

Issues of relativities, numbers, wage rates and conditions were all on the table 18 months ago, and everybody signed. Back then, the relative wage rates between nurses and other professions such as physiotherapists were identical to the relativities that exist today. If relativities are a problem now, they should have been a problem then as well, yet we all signed the agreement, including the Nurses Association. The conditions and shortages in nursing have varied only marginally since the agreement was signed 18 months ago. Certainly the relativities have not changed at all since that time. Of course, what will never change is my commitment to continue to work with the Nurses Association, as I have done from the minute I became Minister. I have met with the union time and time again.

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

Mr KNOWLES: For example, members would be aware of the comprehensive roadshow I did side by side with the leadership of the Nurses Association in high schools right around the State, and to work with nurses in an attempt to deal with the issue of nursing recruitment. A raft of strategies are in place, negotiated jointly, to assist in dealing with a chronic national and international problem. Let us not pretend for a moment that there is no agreement, that it was not signed off in good faith by all the parties. It is an agreement that provides a 16 per cent wage increase, making this State's nurses the highest paid of any nurse in any State in the country.

I want to address the interjection about radiotherapists—a suggestion that in some way we have broken the deal for radiotherapists. That is not true. In the context of the agreement, an agreement has been reached with the Health and Research Employees Association to vary the wage rates for radiotherapists. We all know that there is national shortage of radiotherapists. The House may be interested to hear that the Canadian Government has stopped training radiotherapists. That Government is now poaching radiotherapists from other countries around the world, including Australia. In New South Wales, the University of Newcastle is the establishment that trains radiotherapists. We have negotiated an agreement with that university to double its intake.

Importantly, in the context of the agreement we have made some breakthroughs to increase salaries, subject to some trade-offs by the union and radiotherapists—for example, an increase in working hours from 35 hours a week to 38 hours a week for new employees, and a new category of staff, the radiation therapy assistant. In the context of the memorandum of understanding, the agreement signed 18 months ago by the Health and Research Employees Association and the Nurses Association was ratified in the right place: the Industrial Relations Commission.

RURAL HOSPITALS FUNDING

Mr SOURIS: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. How many other country hospitals in New South Wales are facing the same funding crisis that is faced by Orange District Hospital, where nurses are being forced to hold fundraising events in their own time to buy essential medical equipment, such as mattress overlays and a respiratory and heart rate monitor?

Mr KNOWLES: In the context of a massive increase in health funding and a three-year budget outlay of a \$2 billion cash injection, increasing our overall budget in recurrent expenditure from \$6.9 billion over a three-year period to what will be, at the end of the next financial year, \$8.1 billion—we are now spending about \$7.7 billion—country New South Wales gets a massive increase in health funding.

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

Mr KNOWLES: I remind the House that that funding is substantially more than was proposed originally by the National Party in the campaign to the last election.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the National Party to order for the second time. I call the honourable member for Gosford to order. I place the honourable member for Bega on two calls to order.

Mr KNOWLES: The mid-west is now receiving its fair share, as is every other area health service in the State, particularly the areas traditionally underfunded under the administration of the former Coalition Government. The three-year rollout of a \$2 billion cash injection into health—

Mrs Skinner: Triple accounting.

Mr KNOWLES: The honourable member for North Shore said "tricky accounting."

Mrs Skinner: I said "triple accounting."

Mr KNOWLES: It is identical accounting to the Commonwealth Government funding under Peter Costello. If we are talking about allegations of tricky accounting, let us look at Peter Costello. It would not be bad accounting if the Commonwealth Government, under the Australian health care agreement, would deliver to the States and Territories the \$694 million we have been shortchanged—almost \$250 million of that under the health care agreement. Let us think about the tricky accounting with Bronwyn Bishop. We heard today about her allocating bed licences in aged care.

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

Mr KNOWLES: Bronwyn Bishop is special. She has allocated 5,600 bed licences. Of course people cannot sleep on a piece of paper.

Mr Stoner: Point of order: Standing orders require that answers given are relevant to the question. The Minister is rabbitting on about aged care which has nothing to do with the problems of nurses in this State.

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

Mr KNOWLES: I received a legitimate question about country New South Wales and health funding. I reply that under our budget allocations they are substantially more than were promised under the National Party policy in the lead-up to the last election.

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

Mr KNOWLES: His policy is an extra \$100 million a year for rural health rescue package. The Government is applying \$517 million in three years versus just \$400 million from the Coalition in four years. That is my response to that puerile point of order. In the big shift of funds into rural and regional New South Wales we have adopted the policies set out in none other than the Sinclair report. Big shifts of funding into rural communities are to build such things as multipurpose services. If members of the Coalition want to ask me a question about the multipurpose service and what the Commonwealth Government has adopted, I would welcome it.

The multipurpose service is a joint proposal between the State and Commonwealth. We build them and the Commonwealth funds the aged care beds. They are special because they allow elderly people in country towns to spend their final days in the town where, chances are, they have grown up and raised their children. We are waiting now on a raft of multipurpose services to be ticked off by the Commonwealth, not just because we are in caretaker mode, but because the Commonwealth Department of Aged Care simply does not care. On any test, we have done more for health in rural communities than the Coalition proposed or ever did.

FESTIVAL RECORDS STUDIO A

Mr THOMPSON: My question without notice is to the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning. What is the latest information about Festival Record's studio A at Pymont?

Dr REFSHAUGE: Today I announce that I have approved an interim heritage order on the Festival Records building at Pymont, which includes Studio A. I have made the decision when Sydney City Council is currently considering a development application from Festival Records proposing a major refurbishment of all the office space and studios. That would mean the demolition of the historic Studio A, which occupies a unique place in the history of the Australian music industry. The Festival Records building was built in 1939 and is listed on the Sydney regional environmental plan as a heritage item. The building is recognised as a heritage item. Studio A was built in 1967 and is not currently listed as a heritage item, but there can be no doubt that Studio A reflects the history of the Australian recording industry from the late 1960s to the present.

Mrs Chikarovski: Johnny O'Keefe.

Dr REFSHAUGE: Peter Garrett from Midnight Oil has described studio A as a "truly unique facility similar to the Abbey Road Studios in London and it would be highly desirable if its heritage and creative legacy were protected in any planned development site". Some of the recording artists to use the building include, as the Leader of the Opposition said, Johnny O'Keefe, the Delltones, the Bee Gees, Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, Cold Chisel, Olivia Newton-John, silverchair and Kylie Minogue. Studio A was the site of another international hit—Peter Allen's famous recording of *I Still Call Australia Home*. Studio A featured prominently in the recent outstanding series on the ABC, *Long Way to the Top*. The Bee Gees recorded *Staying Alive*, the anthem of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs Chikarovski: Sing it!

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is your political anthem. I am sure the honourable member for Coffs Harbour remembers Midnight Oil recording *Redneck Wonderland*. Because my old pal, the honourable member for Pittwater, is aspiring to be the Leader of the Opposition, I am sure he remembers Kylie Minogue singing *I Should Be So Lucky*. I must admit Marcia Hines singing *I Just Don't Know What to do With Myself* reminded me of the honourable member for Willoughby. When one looks at the influence of the recording artists I have mentioned, the cultural heritage of Studio A and this building becomes evident. It has even been used by the Wiggles who are now an international phenomenon in children's entertainment. Studio A has also been used by jazz groups, classical musicians and for the recording of film scores.

Film scores recorded in the building include the score for Australian movies *Looking for Alibrandi* and *Mullet*. The studio is not only important because of its links to the Australian music industry, it also demonstrates a high degree of technical achievement. The studio was the first in Australia to install a 24-track recording console in 1974. This Neve desk, which is hand built, is believed to be one of only two surviving in the world. Although it uses older analogue technology, the studio is still in demand because of its superior sound properties created by the combination of the Neve desk and the building which, music sources advise, has unique acoustic properties that would be difficult to replicate. I have been told that Studio A has a unique sonic signature which makes it desirable for recording and is markedly different in character to modern digital consoles, particularly for retro music.

As I have said many times, heritage is not about stopping development. It is about striking an appropriate balance to protect our past and to progress our future. This Interim Heritage Order gives some breathing space so that the Heritage Office can work with the owner and Festival Records to determine whether the building and Studio A are of State or local heritage significance. We can also look at the possibility of continued studio use and opportunities for tourism. I have been advised that if Studio A were retained, it would save at least half a dozen direct jobs, as well as many other jobs indirectly associated with the recording industry and musicians.

If the studio were to be retained it would also prevent these jobs going to Melbourne which has the only other comparable facilities. Music industry sources have advised that the loss of Studio A would mean a reduced role for Sydney in the Australian recording industry. Studio A is part of our musical history and it is important that we take the time to make sure we have all the facts about its heritage significance, and that we make the right decision about the future of the site.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS ACCESS

Mrs SKINNER: My question without notice is to the Minister for Health. Why were emergency departments closed to all ambulances, except those carrying patients with life-threatening conditions, for the equivalent of 45 days at Prince of Wales Hospital last year, 33 days at St George Hospital, 30 days at Westmead Hospital and 21 days at Nepean Hospital?

Mr KNOWLES: The question relates to restricted access to emergency departments. There has been a great and dramatic improvement in restricted access. In comparison with 1999-2000, in 2000-01 restricted access hours were down by 21 per cent. In comparison with 1998-99, in 2000-01 restricted access hours were down by 13 per cent.

Mrs Chikarovski: How do they compare with 1995?

Mr KNOWLES: I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that they are a lot better. If she wants to ask me a question on the statistics I will be happy to answer it.

Mrs Skinner: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member for North Shore seeking to take a point of order? The Minister has finished his reply.

Mrs Skinner: I attempted to take a point of order before the Minister finished his answer.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Is the honourable member seeking to ask a supplementary question or is she seeking to take a point of order?

Mrs Skinner: A point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: The Minister has finished his answer.

BUSHFIRE STATISTICS

Mr PRICE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. What is the latest information on the bushfire season?

Mr DEBUS: As always, Country Labor members in this House, who take a keen interest in the bushfire season, are solid supporters of the Rural Fire Service. New South Wales bushfire authorities are warning that we face a potentially difficult fire season. The forecast for the next three months by the Bureau of Meteorology is for generally above average temperatures particularly in the south-west of the State. The rainfall in that region is also generally predicted to be lower than average. The bushfire danger period normally runs from 1 October to 31 March, although that can be varied according to local conditions. A number of northern New South Wales local councils commenced their bushfire danger period as early as late August this year.

With a high fire danger in place for today, I inform the House that, since 1 September this year, the Rural Fire Service has responded to over 200 significant bushfires, particularly in the north, the Hunter and the central and eastern regions of this State. A total of 40,000 hectares has already been burnt in wildfires around the State. Major fires occurred recently in Copmanhurst, Taree and Kempsey. I am pleased to report that damage to property has been limited because of the effective response of our fire services and other land management agencies. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the dedication of our emergency service volunteers.

Throughout last year land managers and fire agencies took advantage of favourable weather conditions to complete hazard reduction burning and other fire mitigation works in preparation for the coming season. Last year, 589,000 hectares were hazard reduced; more than 16,000 kilometres of fire trails were upgraded and

maintained; additionally, 34,000 kilometres of road and rail easements were subjected to slashing to reduce fire risk. In the past five years we have worked hard to reduce the threat of bushfires by undertaking hazard reduction operations on 2.7 million hectares of land. In that same time, 330 kilometres of road, rail and powerline easements have been slashed to reduce fire risk.

It is important to remember that, each year, there is only a small window of opportunity for hazard reduction burning. It has to be carried out under specific weather conditions, which generally occur between March and September. The weekend of 22 and 23 September saw the Rural Fire Service undertake some 50 important hazard reduction burns across the State, many in conjunction with land management agencies, such as State Forests and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This operation occurred around the Clarence Valley at Brooms Head and Fineflower; in the Coffs Harbour area at Nana Glen; around Coolamon and June; in the Wollongong area; in the Hawkesbury; around the Central Coast, especially Gosford, in the Great Lakes and Lake Macquarie areas; and, closer to Sydney, around Baulkham Hills, the Blue Mountains, Sutherland, Wollondilly and Warringah.

As we enter the traditional bushfire season only limited opportunities remain for further hazard reduction burns to be completed. So the Rural Fire Service is shifting its focus to bushfire suppression, particularly at this time in the year in the north of the State. I take this opportunity to remind the community that the most frustrating aspect of the bushfire season is the number of fires that are deliberately lit either by people committing arson or by people simply ignoring fire restrictions. It is an unpleasant circumstance that our firefighters must turn out, very often to risk their lives, as a result of mindlessly irresponsible behaviour by some members of the community. It is worth reminding honourable members that people who maliciously light fires face up to five years imprisonment and up to \$110,000 in fines.

Over the past seven years the Government has particularly concentrated on redressing a funding imbalance for the Rural Fire Service that had been left by the Coalition. Under this Government, a total of \$550 million has been allocated to the Rural Fire Fighting Fund. That compares with less than \$200 million that was allocated by the former Coalition Government over the same period. The Government, particularly through its Country Labor members, is committed to further ensuring that fire brigades around the State continue to improve their equipment and the resources they need to protect rural families. I am pleased to be able to confirm that our volunteers are now better equipped, better trained and better supported as a result of the policies of the Government and of Country Labor.

REGIONAL AIRLINES

Mr TORBAY: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Has the Minister and the Government considered what impact the \$10 levy will have on the viability of regional airlines throughout New South Wales?

Mr SCULLY: As honourable members would be aware, thousands of Ansett workers recently lost their jobs.

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

Mr SCULLY: Unfortunately, thousands of country residents across New South Wales were anxious about their air services. In fact, those services ceased to exist for several days. I am pleased to report that many of those services have been reinstated. Many of Hazelton's services have been reinstated, thanks in part to the Premier's commitment of \$3 million to Hazelton airlines. There have been many vocal participants in relation to this issue.

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

Mr SCULLY: Let me give credit where credit is due. The honourable member for Northern Tablelands has taken a keen and bipartisan interest in this issue, as has the honourable member for Lachlan. It is a shame that his leaders have no interest in this issue. At least the honourable member for Lachlan has been fair dinkum about this issue and we have had a good dialogue about it. The Minister for Local Government, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, the honourable member for Dubbo and Country Labor are all interested in, and have debated, this issue. I have been trying to get a message through to John Anderson. The taxes, charges and fees that are affecting regional airlines need to be addressed by the Federal Government.

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

Mr SCULLY: John Anderson has been on his motorbike, in his four-wheel drive, on foot and on horseback. He has travelled all over New South Wales trying to convince everyone how concerned he is about country people. He has not yet answered the question. What will he do about Federal Government taxes and charges as they apply to regional airlines? What will the Federal Government do about Civil Aviation Safety Authority fees, landing fees, the excise charges on avgas, the special taxes that apply when aircraft are being bought and sold? All honourable members know that the cost of Federal Government taxes and charges amount to 11 per cent of the operating costs of regional airlines. That is absolutely disgraceful! Every time someone gets in a regional airline Peter Costello has his hand in their pockets. He is making a motser from regional airlines.

This is a fair dinkum question by a fair dinkum member. He is entitled to ask what is going on when the Deputy Prime Minister cannot even address the question of taxes and the imposts on regional airlines. I would not call him an airhead, but he should be answering the question "What are you doing about Federal Government taxes and charges?" Far from removing the yoke on the backs of these regional airline operators, far from taking the imposts off them, he has added more. We have all heard about workers entitlements and what this side of politics has been trying to drive home to these characters. It is a shock to them that we have the gall to suggest that annual holidays and long service leave should be protected. We would like to think that these are motherboard notions, but we have to convince them that men and women in this great country should have their accrued entitlements protected. The Federal Government has given a guarantee, having been pushed into a corner, a \$500 million commitment, and imposed a \$10 levy.

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

Mr SCULLY: The Federal Government has not told the people of New South Wales or country Australia that the \$10 levy that is imposed every time someone buys an air ticket has also been imposed on country air travel. The \$10 levy is not just on people travelling in the cities. However, there are some small exemptions, for aircraft with less than 16 seats. As the honourable member for Murray-Darling will know, that levy will apply to 99 per cent of country air commuters. So, just about everyone who is travelling in country New South Wales will have a \$10 levy imposed. I ask again of the Deputy Prime Minister, while he is hooning around the State trying to convince people that he is interested, what is he doing about the viability of regional airlines?

The honourable member for Northern Tablelands should tell his constituents that the special \$10 GST on air travel is alive and well. It is a GST. Let the worm turn on the Deputy Prime Minister! Honourable members will remember that during the debate between John Howard and Kim Beazley the worm went straight down, a 90 per cent drop, at the mention of the GST. I had never seen my 12-year-old son laugh so much as when it dropped through the floor and disappeared from the television screen. The levy is a GST. Members opposite do not like hearing this. It is a collection tax. When people book their airline tickets they have to pay their \$10 fee. It is no cost to the Federal Government and just about everyone who buys a ticket in regional New South Wales has to pay the \$10 Peter Costello, John Howard and John Anderson tax.

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

Mr SCULLY: If my recollection is correct, a review is going on about services to Inverell and Glen Innes. The results of the review will not come out until after the Federal election. The honourable member for Northern Tablelands had better watch out, because he knows what will happen to those air services unless he keeps the pressure on the Deputy Prime Minister to deliver the goods.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The answer to the question has caused some dialogue between the Minister and members of the Opposition, which the Chair was prepared to ignore. The Leader of the Opposition has already been called to order. She is supposed to show some leadership, and the Chair cannot let her behaviour pass without comment. I appeal to the Leader of the Opposition, who receives special dispensation in relation to interjections, to use her position in a more dutiful way than she is at present.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on three calls to order.

Mr SCULLY: The honourable member for Northern Tablelands needs to appreciate that with respect to this \$10 levy, which is supposed to assist the raising of \$500 million, Air New Zealand has put in

\$150 million. The levy in country Australia will raise only about 12 per cent of the \$500 million. The Commonwealth Government should be saying to country New South Wales and country Australia that it will not levy those passengers, that it will pitch in a few more dollars to ensure that country New South Wales is not ripped off, as it currently is with those taxes and charges.

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

CABRAMATTA ANTI-DRUG STRATEGY

Ms MEAGHER: My question without notice is to the Premier. What is the Government's response to the Opposition's statements on the Cabramatta strategy?

Mr CARR: This is very interesting, and I would like to share it with the House. Overnight there has been the sneakiest little change on the part of the Opposition. Not in any sense could it be described as open. It is a sneaky little about-face. It is so sneaky that you could be repelled by the details. Honourable members know what the Opposition was up to on Tuesday night: This is essential background to our tale. On Tuesday night in this House, to his eternal disgrace, the honourable member for Epping attacked the Police Integrity Commission. He attacked the commission and the commissioner. He was not apologetic about it; he just laid into the Police Integrity Commission. So, overnight the position went from attacking the police commissioner to attacking the Police Integrity Commission, the standing royal commission established by this Government after the police royal commission, which is able to inquire at all times into allegations of police corruption.

The honourable member said that the Police Integrity Commissioner owed the Opposition an explanation. As if a serious person and a serious organisation owes an explanation to this mob about anything! In the meantime, members opposite were asking us to believe that the word of a corrupt cop is to be believed over the view of the Police Integrity Commission. That is extraordinary! Here is someone who aspires to be Minister for Police attacking in this Parliament the Police Integrity Commission and the Assistant Commissioner of the PIC. That is reckless and juvenile behaviour.

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

Mr CARR: Can you imagine a shadow Minister, who aspires to be Minister for Police, saying that the Police Integrity Commission is to be the subject of attacks and denunciations by the Opposition in this Parliament? This morning there is a very interesting, half-covert changing position. I was in my office listening to the ABC News.

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

Mr CARR: The Leader of the Opposition was quoted to this effect:

The comments from the opposition leader come as new drug studies found a fall in heroin use in Cabramatta ... The New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics yesterday revealed that the heroin drought and law enforcement at the street level had caused a decline in heroin use.

She was further quoted as saying:

We need to ensure that effective policing strategies mean police on the streets hassling street dealers across the State, not just in Cabramatta.

In other words, overnight, Cabramatta's plan is lauded as a success, as a template for police action in other parts of New South Wales. What a turnabout!

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

Mr CARR: The Opposition is now saying that what the police are doing in Cabramatta should be replicated in Kings Cross. What a little turnabout!

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

Mr CARR: As the Australian Broadcasting Corporation says, this is an endorsement of the Cabramatta strategy. Now we want the Leader of the Opposition, on behalf of the Liberal and National parties, to say to the Greater Hume Region Commander Clive Small and his police team: Congratulations on a job well done. The

Leader of the Opposition will now be saying that the police out there deserve to be congratulated for using the powers given to them by the Parliament, which came into effect on 1 July.

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

Mr Tink: Point of order: Have the guts to give Tim Priest the credit. Tell us about Carr's corrupt cops. Give Tim Priest some credit, and give us an explanation about Carr's corrupt cops.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the honourable member for Epping from the Chamber.

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

Mr CARR: Isn't he a little charmer! What a great advertisement for the North Shore branch of the Liberal Party!

[Interruption]

Did the honourable member for Baulkham Hills say something? He was prisons Minister for four months before the Coalition Government realised he was a dud. He was in and out like a fiddler's elbow. What is he the shadow Minister for—energy, education? What is he doing on the front bench? In this mood, I think the House is united in saying to the Leader of the Opposition: In the spirit of your recent remarks and your sneaky little comments this morning, what about a big congratulatory message to Clive Small and Frank Mansell? What about saying to the Department of Community Services team, those splendid people who are health professionals, the Department of Housing workers and the Gateway program schoolteachers: Well done! Good job! Keep up the hard work in difficult circumstances. Despite all the criticism at the time and the Coalition's opposition here and in another place, what about saying that the drug house legislation was well timed and well drafted? The Leader of the Opposition did not seem to understand in her comments this morning that that legislation has statewide effect. It does not apply only in Cabramatta; it has statewide effect.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will remain silent.

Mr CARR: I do not want to be critical of anyone. Parliament exists to be a chamber of joy, a chamber united in the delights of good policy, which generally it has been since those momentous events of early 1995 when the people of New South Wales changed for the better. Enough of this harping negativity. My colleagues wish just once to hear a positive comment from the Leader of the Opposition. We just love to hear positive comments, and here is an opportunity. In terms of Cabramatta, given what Don Weatherburn has had to say and given the Leader of the Opposition's sneaky, grudging comment this morning—it should have been expressed with wholehearted warmth and enthusiasm—the next invitation to the Opposition is to say something in a similar spirit about the Police Integrity Commission and those honest police to whom we owe so much.

KEMPSEY DISTRICT HOSPITAL MENTAL FACILITIES

Mr STONER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Does the Minister stand by Mid North Coast Area Health Service statements that a mother's claims that her mentally ill son was forced to wait at Kempsey District Hospital from 7.00 p.m. until midnight last Thursday for an assessment, only to be told that she would have to drive 3½ hours to take him to Newcastle, were mischievous?

Mr KNOWLES: Whether or not the statements were mischievous, I am happy to have them further substantiated.

Mr Hartcher: Why don't you run the hospitals properly in the first place?

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

Mr KNOWLES: It is an excellent question that deserves a fair answer. I am tempted to give the honourable member for Oxley a fair answer but his colleague the honourable member for Gosford is making a goose of himself. I have seen the press clippings that contain the assertions made by area health service staff and they can be accountable. However, whether or not that is in the context of the inquiries that are going on

following the closure of ward 149 at Kempsey hospital, which follows the death of a patient there, I am happy to have those matters looked at in the context of the overall WorkCover and coronial inquiries, as well as the independent mental health inquiries into the future of the Kempsey unit. The Kempsey mental health unit has provided a service to local communities for many years. Now it is the subject of inquiries because of the recent and tragic death there.

I have visited the hospital on two occasions and interviewed the staff and various interested personnel about the future of that unit. I have their views. However, it is appropriate that the unit remain closed until the independent reviews are completed. I have conveyed that view personally to the mayor of Kempsey to her satisfaction, and she understands that that is the case. No-one would want to re-open the unit until the inquiries are completed. The objective is to ensure that the big increases in mental health funding that have gone to the mid North Coast since we began redistributing health services, with a big expansion of facilities at Coffs Harbour and the new unit under construction at Manning Base Hospital—

[*Interruption*]

If the honourable member for Coffs Harbour wants to turn this into a little political dig, let us do so. However, this is a legitimate question from a local member about the allegations of an area health service employee. I am happy to have the allegations checked but in the context of the events that have been widely covered and the subsequent inquiries, it is appropriate that the Kempsey unit remain closed until those inquiries are completed. That may mean some disruption of services locally for local residents, but let us not pretend for one moment that there has not been an enormous investment in new mental health services on the mid North Coast. A new hospital is being built at Coffs Harbour. The Coalition Government proposed to build that hospital in two stages, but Ron Phillips could not get it done.

Mr Fraser: That's a lie and you know it.

Mr KNOWLES: If the honourable member checks the budget papers he will see that the intention was to build the new hospital in two stages.

Mr Fraser: That's a lie.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will remain silent.

Mr KNOWLES: The first thing we did was bring stages one and two together and build a \$53 million project, which has turned into a \$80 million project. Why? That happened because the additional stage was built to provide additional mental health beds for that region. What else is happening? At the other end of the same region, at Manning Base Hospital at Taree, as I speak another brand-new acute mental health care unit is under construction. After years of National Party representation and non-delivery of services in the North Coast by former Ministers of Health, not one but two new mental health care units are under construction and nearing completion within the next two months, with the opening of the Coffs Harbour unit just weeks away. I make no apology for the closure of the Kempsey unit at this point. There has been a tragic death that is subject to investigation—several investigations. The process will take as long as it takes because it is being done independently.

Mr Stoner: The people are suffering while you run around with red tape and reports.

Mr KNOWLES: If the honourable member is saying that he would like me to interfere in an independent inquiry into the death of a patient in a hospital, he should put that on the record; otherwise, I think almost anyone else on this planet would suggest that an independent inquiry is the way to go.

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

Mr KNOWLES: I will not interfere in an independent inquiry into the death of a patient in a mental health unit. The investigation will take as long as it takes because that is the nature of a coronial inquiry. If the honourable member for Oxley disagrees with that, he should document his disagreement in *Hansard* and have a go at the Coroner. Now the honourable member can ask his supplementary question.

Mr STONER: I ask a supplementary question. In the light of the Minister's answer, will he now respond to the letter from the patient's mother and apologise to her for area health service claims that she has been mischievous?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a supplementary question.

HOMESHARE NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr McBRIDE: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing. What is the latest information on how Homeshare New South Wales helps to bridge the generation gap?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The answer to the question the Minister has been asked could have consequences for any electorate represented in this House. Members have a duty to remain in the House while the Minister answers the question.

Mrs LO PO': Honourable members may be aware of an innovative program that is operating in New South Wales and helping to bridge the generation gap by encouraging older and younger people to flat together. In May last year I launched a pilot project called Homeshare New South Wales. Originally a 12-month pilot program, Homeshare New South Wales has been hailed a success and will be kept alive with extra funding of \$340,000 over the next two years. This concept is a partnership between the Government and the Benevolent Society, which manages the program. Homeshare New South Wales makes a real difference to the lives of older people who feel alone and who would like some assistance around the home. Under the program, older people provide accommodation rent-free to a younger person in exchange for companionship and assistance around the house. By "assistance", I mean that each week the younger person gives 10 hours of help—such as shopping, gardening, cooking, cleaning and washing—in return for accommodation at no cost.

The householders and home sharers take part in a detailed face-to-face interview and are asked to provide personal references. They are matched according to their compatibility, including lifestyle, attitude and tastes. Once that has been identified, the two people meet and, through a co-ordinator, negotiate an agreement which lists the tasks and responsibilities of each party. Since Homeshare New South Wales began in New South Wales we have had many successful matches. I will cite just one example—although I know of a whole series of examples—because I am sure that honourable members do not want to be informed of more than one. The example involves Mary and Phyllis—I am not using their real names.

Mr Hazzard: Mary and Phyllis?

Mrs LO PO': Or Thelma and Louise—the honourable member can have a choice! Mary and Phyllis were matched through the Homeshare New South Wales program. Mary was a first-year student at the University of New South Wales studying social work. As a country girl, she was excited at having the opportunity to study in Sydney, but the cost of accommodation and the difficulty of fitting in with a part-time job were proving to be very difficult. Mary was also missing her family in the country and was keen to develop a family for herself in Sydney. Mary's mother saw a television news story about Homeshare New South Wales when it was first launched and suggested that Mary should ring.

Phyllis, who is housebound, also saw the story and realised that this project offered her the opportunity to have some companionship and to get some basic chores done around the house. Since suffering a stroke two years earlier, Phyllis had been housebound and was feeling incredibly lonely. Mary helped Phyllis by preparing a small evening meal for her each night. She also watered the garden and did the laundry. Mary benefited by having a nice, big furnished room in a safe, clean house which is only a stone's throw from the university. The program is a concrete example of the way in which this Government is providing organisations such as the Benevolent Society with the means to continue this good work. I commend to the House the outstanding work of the Homeshare New South Wales Advisory Committee, whose members give their time and wide-ranging skills to develop this program on an entirely voluntary basis.

Questions without notice concluded.

FOUR CORNERS PROGRAM ON NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE CORRUPTION

Ministerial Statement

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [3.36 p.m.]: I advise the House that the Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission [PIC], Commissioner Griffin, has advised me that the release of material to *Four Corners* was lawful and done after careful legal consideration. Clearly the Opposition should now unreservedly apologise to the PIC and its membership.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [3.36 p.m.]: In the absence of the shadow Minister for Police, I point out that neither the shadow Minister for Police nor the Coalition has attacked the integrity of the Police Integrity Commission [PIC]. The Coalition has raised several questions which we would still like to be answered. We stand by those questions and we still want them answered. The Minister should answer them on behalf of the PIC.

WATER SAFETY

Ministerial Statement

Mr WATKINS (Ryde—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Corrective Services, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.37 p.m.]: The arrival of summer reminds us that the risk of drownings or water-related accidents increases. For some years now the State Government has worked closely with organisations that are dedicated to reducing the risk of drownings. That important work has witnessed a general decline in the number of drownings over the past five years. Today I am pleased to announce that the interim New South Wales training report, which has been prepared by the Royal Life Saving Society New South Wales for last summer, shows a continuation of that decline. Drownings decreased by 7.6 per cent from the previous year—that is, a reduction from 79 drownings in 1999-2000 to 73 drownings in 2000-01. In fact, drowning deaths have decreased by 20 per cent over the past five years. A major contributor to the decline has been the co-ordinated action of the New South Wales water safety task force.

The task force includes 16 peak water safety government and non-government organisations that have worked co-operatively to develop the New South Wales Water Safety Framework 2001 to 2003, which I am pleased to officially release today. The framework is a task force initiative. Investigations have revealed that drowning is the most common cause of injury-related deaths among children aged four and younger in Australia, with 48 per cent of these deaths occurring in backyard swimming pools; that males aged 15 to 29 are nine times more likely to drown than are females in the same age group and, unfortunately, a high proportion of this group had a positive blood alcohol concentration; that drownings are disproportionately high for people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people from rural and remote areas, and tourists; and that people who live more than 50 kilometres from the coast represent 40 per cent of all drowning-related deaths in Australia.

In the next three years, the task force will focus on three target areas. First, a major review of existing policy, legislation and guidelines in relation to water safety New South Wales, with the review unit identifying gaps in existing legislation and making recommendations for amendments or new legislation to improve safety. Second, a comprehensive public awareness campaign and education programs to focus on groups who are most at risk of drowning, including improved education for people who deliver water safety services. Third, improved research into new drownings and deaths by drowning to inform the task force and Government and to ensure that strategies remain on target while work continues on the reduction of risks associated with water activities, including the identification of risks in aquatic environments, the establishment of standards for water safety education and design, and the management of water. In addition, the SafeWaters campaign will appear on major metropolitan and regional television networks over the busy Christmas and Easter holiday periods to highlight important water safety messages.

In addition, this year the New South Wales Government has allocated an additional \$1 million to water safety, bringing the total funding in this area to a record \$3.5 million. In total, more than \$1 million has been allocated to Surf Life Saving New South Wales, the Royal Life Saving Society, New South Wales branch, and Austswim New South Wales to assist with the provision of vital safety and rescue services. In recognition of the importance of learning to swim, an additional \$50,000 has been allocated to Austswim New South Wales to increase the number of swimming instructors in the State. Austswim New South Wales has identified areas of importance, with an additional 16 courses to be conducted in November this year in the western, Riverina, north-west and South Coast regions to help boost the overall number of instructors in specific areas of need. The Department of Sport and Recreation will again conduct the Swimsafe Learn to Swim Program after 27 years. About 1.5 billion participants have completed the program, which will start again this month and continue until February next year. I am sure all honourable members will agree that with this combined approach we would hope for a continued decrease in the number of drownings in this State.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [3.42 p.m.]: It is appalling that the Minister for Sport and Recreation would make a ministerial statement on an issue as fundamental as New South Wales drownings without providing any bipartisan briefing. That sort of conduct has been a huge problem under the Carr Government. Three years ago the water safety task force was set up. The task force struggled to get any funding at all from the Government to address the issues it had been set up to investigate. The history and tradition of this place is that fundamental issues that relate particularly to the safety of young people but also to the safety of the broader community are addressed on a bipartisan basis. Some years ago when this Parliament debated pool safety fencing, the Coalition Government discussed the matter with the Opposition in a bipartisan way. Because the Minister for Sport and Recreation did not get a question up in question time today—he has reached the stage where, unfortunately, his colleagues will not let him have a question during question time—he came into the Chamber at the end of question time when the House was almost empty and delivered a ministerial statement.

Mr O'Farrell: Kevin Greene wouldn't have done it that way.

Mr HAZZARD: No, Kevin Greene would not have done it that way. When the House was almost empty, the Minister came into the Chamber and announced some recommendations and some extra funding that he says will make a difference. If the Minister were fair dinkum about reducing the number of drownings, he would be serious about discussing the matter with the Coalition in a bipartisan way. The shadow Minister was not briefed on this issue. Indeed, none of us were briefed on it. The Minister should have brought the matter to the attention of the Opposition. Today the Premier made announcements about Aboriginal affairs. The problem with the Ministers of this Government is that they have now become absolutely arrogant. They no longer believe in fundamental decency. The community is getting more and more angry at the Government's lack of management, decency and integrity and its absolute arrogance. It is appalling that the Minister has dealt with this matter in this way. He should ensure that the Coalition knows exactly what is happening and that he has our support.

Mr Watkins: Read it!

Mr HAZZARD: The Minister is offering a report across the Chamber now, after he has already made the announcements in the House. I remind the House that the water safety task force was established in 1998-99. In the previous year there had been a large number of drownings in New South Wales. The number of drownings was a huge problem and the community was concerned. At that time I, as the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, and the Coalition were briefed on the issue in a bipartisan fashion by the former Minister for Sport and Recreation, Gabrielle Harrison. She was limited in what she could do because, unfortunately, she did not have the clout in Cabinet.

Mr Watkins: Thank you.

Mr HAZZARD: The Minister does not have any clout either. He comes into the Chamber at the end of question time—Tail-end Watkins they call him—and presents all this information to us. I am simply saying that the funds should have been allocated three years ago—not now. I would like a proper briefing for the people on the water safety task force. That task force used to brief me all the time and tell me that what was happening was not what they wanted or what was needed. And what did we get? We got those big ads on television showing fences, but it took two years to get there. The Government needs to get serious about water safety, and a good start would be to approach the matter in a bipartisan way with the Coalition. [*Time expired.*]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Membership

Motion, by leave, by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That Mr Torbay be appointed to the Standing Committee on Public Works in place of Mr Windsor, resigned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 23 October at 2.15 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Divisions and Quorums: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that, from the determination of priority of the motions for urgent consideration until the adjournment of the House, no divisions or quorums be permitted.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Renewable Energy Generation

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.46 p.m.]: The continual and increasing threat of global warming makes the issues dealt with in my motion a top priority for the Government, as it should be for the Commonwealth Government and the Opposition.

Health Services Funding

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [3.46 p.m.]: The motion for urgent consideration of which I gave notice earlier today relates to an issue that confronts every person seeking health care in this State, every person on a waiting list for elective treatment, and every person who has been turned away from our emergency departments. It affects each one of the nurses who has been on strike today, rallied in the communities and marched outside this Parliament. It is a fundamental responsibility of the State Government to provide health care services in our public hospitals for the benefit of the people of this State. No-one knows that better than the Government. In February 1995 the Premier, as the then Opposition leader, said:

People understand the distinction between State and Federal politics. People know that State governments are responsible for running a hospital system.

Mr O'Farrell: Who said that?

Mrs SKINNER: That is what Bob Carr said in 1995 just before the State election. The Premier was right: the people of this State do understand who is responsible for running public hospitals, and they believe they should have a right to have their complaints heard and debated in this Parliament. That is why this motion should take priority. This motion draws attention to the fact that in this year's budget the Carr Government has reduced health spending to 22 per cent of the total budget. I refer to a table produced by the Treasurer and set out at page 4 of Budget Paper No. 2. That chart can be compared to a similar chart prepared for the 1997-98 budget papers, which shows that 24.8 per cent of that year's total funding was allocated to health. So the Carr Government has cut its priority on health.

Mr Martin: You have verified that, have you?

Mrs SKINNER: I have it in my office, in case you have not bothered to keep the budget papers or you cannot go look them up because you do not know how to. Those budget papers show that in 1997-98, 24.8 per cent of the total budget went to health, and that this year the figure was reduced to 22 per cent. That is why nurses are marching outside this place. That is why a record number of people are waiting for treatment in hospitals for both elective surgery and elective medical treatment. That is why a record number of people have now been waiting for treatment for more than 12 months and nearly 10,000 patients in emergency departments are waiting for treatment longer than they should. That is why ambulances are now being turned away from hospitals at a much increased rate, more than 6,000 hours each year compared to 2,000 hours in 1994-95 when the Coalition was last in office. That is why I am receiving correspondence on the issue from nurses such as Edweena Hall from Sutherland Hospital. Edweena Hall wrote:

Do you realise what it's like as a nurse to have a patient admitted to the ICU section, fully unconscious where we put them on a mechanical ventilator only to realise that ventilator doesn't work properly, so you try another one, which doesn't work properly and another one with success.

Mr Anderson: Point of order: The honourable member for North Shore knows full well the rules of the House. We hear them most days. She is not talking about urgency at all; she has gone into the subject matter of her motion. During question time the Opposition asked three questions of the Minister for Health and one question of the Premier on this matter. The honourable member for North Shore continues to talk about the substance of the motion, not about the urgency of the matter. I ask you to bring her back to the matter before us, which is whether her motion is more urgent than the motion of which the Minister for Energy has given notice.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mrs SKINNER: Edweena Hall, the Nurses Association union representative at Sutherland Hospital, will be pleased to know that this House does not think that this matter is urgent or that her views about what is happening in our public hospitals should be heard. She will be interested to know that members of the Government have not got the guts to debate this motion.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

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

Noes, 35

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION**Urgent Motion**

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) supports efforts in New South Wales to lead the nation in sustainable practices and in renewable energy generation; and
- (2) recognises regional New South Wales will benefit from renewable regeneration such as wind farms, hydro and solar through job creation, tourism and investment.

The major thrust of scientific opinion now indicates that global warming will have a profound impact on natural and human systems. Global warming has the potential for large-scale and possibly irreversible impacts on land and sea temperatures, rainfall, and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as cyclones and droughts. As with many issues, the Commonwealth Government has shown a complete lack of vision and leadership on greenhouse gas emissions. It has continued to ignore this emerging threat to our economy, environment and lifestyle. The Prime Minister has done little to raise awareness about the need for Australia to take early action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, it does what it does best: it scaremongers. In policy terms, John Howard is in denial.

Clearly, this is a key international issue and one which Australia cannot afford to sit back and watch. It is pleasing to know that Federal Labor is on the front foot in the Federal election campaign in relation to this issue. We must participate in and encourage the adoption of approaches that will provide the greatest reduction of greenhouse gases at the least cost to the community. Every indication is that early action is required to address greenhouse gas emissions and to position our society to maximise emerging economic opportunities. The Carr Government, therefore, has been at the forefront of international efforts to address the adverse impacts of climate change. We have also demonstrated that there are advantages in new investment and job creation in positioning New South Wales to address global warming at this early stage.

The Carr Government is the first government in the world to give legal recognition to the ownership, sale and management of carbon rights. We undertook the first trading of carbon credits in Australia and have entered into a partnership with the world's largest power company to grow forests to combat global warming. The contract with the Tokyo Electric Power Company means new jobs and investment in rural communities. We are also working with key financial sector players to position Sydney as the Asia-Pacific trading centre for carbon credits and other environmental services. A perfect example of this is a unique agreement between Integral Energy, State Forests and the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning [DUAP] to plant five hectares of threatened Cumberland woodland in western Sydney. Integral Energy is paying for the project, DUAP has donated the land, and State Forests is providing expertise—a showcase of co-operation and partnership.

Seeds have now been collected for the project. I am advised that planning will start before the end of the year. This planning will have great outcomes not only for biodiversity; these trees will also absorb carbon and help to tackle greenhouse gas problems. The Energy Smart Business Program is yet another of this Government's achievements. This year the Premier outlined how chief executive officers from some of the nation's largest companies have formed the Premier's Forum to provide leadership on greenhouse issues. The first companies to line up—AMCOR Australasia and the Commonwealth Bank, and other companies as they join periodically over time—will meet with the Premier each year to measure their success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Over the next five years the program is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost one million tonnes and save industry \$85 million on energy bills.

I am also proud of the recent initiative to further develop the burgeoning renewable energy industry in New South Wales. The New South Wales Sustainable Energy Development Authority has developed a new guide for setting up wind farms which outlines who is who in the clean, green energy sector. It outlines decision makers, developers and investors, and it will provide invaluable information for land-holders committed to making a difference in this area. We have all the components for delivering to New South Wales the biggest and best examples of wind farms in Australia. Twenty-five monitoring sites are already in place around the State. They are gathering data on where the most consistently windy locations are situated in New South Wales. Together with a generous development fund, professional advice, seminars across New South Wales and a distribution of the handbook, I look forward to more success stories such as the wind farms at Blayney and Crookwell.

In Blayney the 40-metre white windmills that straddle the crest of the local hillside exist side by side with livestock and agricultural production. That project was the result of direct government investment. The honourable member for Bathurst, who was present on the day of its opening, is aware that local people were proud of their environmental contribution. More important, they were proud of the positive injection of capital from this project into their local economy. The honourable member for Murray-Darling knows how solar farms have achieved similar results in his electorate. The opportunities for job creation are equally important.

A number of speakers in this debate will provide more detail about those issues. However, I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the Government is looking at how Australian workers can manufacture multimillion dollar turbines and other plant and equipment that is currently imported from Europe. The greenhouse debate will not move forward until the Commonwealth accepts that it must assess greenhouse policy based on practical programs and outcomes. It must take account of costs and the direct benefit to the community. That is exactly what New South Wales is seeking to do.

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [4.06 p.m.]: I support the urgent motion moved by the Minister for Energy. The Coalition is aware of the need to produce sustainable and clean energy. The Minister referred to the wind turbine farm at Blayney. Blayney is not located in my electorate, but those wind farms are: they are a wonderful sight to see when one is travelling down the highway. Many people believe that wind turbines need strong winds to enable them to operate. They do not. Wind turbines can be controlled and speed monitored. The wind farm at Blayney is a tourist attraction. Blayney council established an area off the side of the highway to

enable people to safely view the wind turbines as they are generating clean, green power. The turbines look good as they are going around, as hydro plants do, but at this point the cost of wind turbines and hydro plants cannot compete with the cost per kilowatt of coal-fired generators.

The larger users of energy are going through a second round of contracts for the supply of electricity, some businesses having been quoted double the figures that they were quoted following deregulation. The power generated from turbines, solar and hydro plants is now becoming more competitive. I hope that there is a large increase in the generation of such power over the next decade. I am aware that the Government would be supportive of any increase in sustainable energy generation to ensure that New South Wales remains competitive. One of the great advantages of the deregulated electricity industry is that it has made our manufacturing industries more competitive. It has enabled them to compete against exports and enhance export opportunities.

What are the attractions of alternative energy sources? They do not all receive 100 per cent support from the community. Some people tend to complain about everything. I see nothing unattractive about the wind farm at Blayney, but some people complain about the noise as the rotors turn around. They complain about reflections and claim that the turbines visually pollute the landscape. I believe that wind turbines are a great advance on open-cut coalmines and some of the older coal-fired generators that used to spew out smoke and pollution. Thankfully, much of that pollution has been cleaned up. It would not matter whether one had a factory or an electricity generator. Someone would object because, supposedly, they are unattractive. This morning a CSIRO officer briefed members of this House on the future of energy, and I wish to put on record a couple of paragraphs of his speech this morning. He said:

Wind energy has grown steadily over the last two decades with an estimated 20,000 megawatts of capacity having been installed in the world at present. World growth rates have been extraordinary with annual rates in excess of 30 per cent in recent years. Some 3,100 megawatts of wind power were installed in 1999, 4,000 megawatts last year and at least this amount is estimated for this year. Investment in the global wind energy industry has been estimated at an annual \$26 billion.

The potential in Australia and New South Wales looks good with government legislation assisting market growth. However, the domestic potential will be unlikely to see as strong a growth compared to the rest of the world due to the more favourable market conditions and demand for renewable energy in the rest of the world.

Partly contradicting what the Minister just said about the lack of support from the Federal Government, he went on to say:

The outlook for the wind energy in Australia and New South Wales is strong. Favourable market drivers are in place which increased Australia's installed capacity from a modest 11 megawatts in 1999 and 33 megawatts in 2000 to 55 megawatts this year. Of this installed capacity, about 17 megawatts were installed in New South Wales including Australia's first grid connected wind farm. The Federal Government's renewable mandate has emerged to be the main driver for continued market growth. Other incentives such as Green Power, New South Wales electricity licence conditions and customer contestability play important supporting roles.

He added:

However, the Australian energy industry must overcome significant market limitations if it is to achieve the market growth predicted for the rest of world. Market impediments such as complex environmental planning and regulatory issues, network access, high cost finance, the relative fossil fuel to renewable energy price and the dissemination of information to the public must be managed if the wind energy business is to keep up with the world energy market.

Various alternatives are emerging as investigation and research continues into alternative energy. Wind turbines are going on their own and are going into the grid. We have known about hydro energy for a number of years. Our Snowy Mountains scheme is something we have long been proud of, although overall it is only a small contributor to the New South Wales and Victorian electricity grids, supplying at the maximum about 6 per cent. Small hydro plants are on the Burrendong Dam and the Wyangala Dam. I have often wondered why it took some 20 years after those dams were built before hydro plants and outlets were added to them. However, they are now in place, running quite successfully and contributing to the grid.

There are experiments in the use of hydro and wind power in tandem. Wind power may run the pumps to pump water to the top of the hill during the night or during low demand periods and then the water runs back down and generates power during the day, as it does in the Snowy Mountains. All the alternative fuel power supplies still have to compete against coal, whether that be the vast resources of black coal in New South Wales or the brown coal from Victoria. Coal is still the cheapest form of power, although it is environmentally unacceptable and produces polluting greenhouse gases. We all acknowledge that they have to be reduced if we are to be a responsible country, so we must reduce greenhouse gases as much as we can.

Deregulation of the New South Wales and Australian electricity industry has made New South Wales far more competitive. We need to get that balance between the supply of coal-fired energy as against greenhouse energy. Last year Orange City Council agreed not to purchase any green power because of its cost. The year before it agreed that 10 per cent of its supply would be green power. One hopes that by the next round of contracts, green power will be far more competitive and once again Orange City Council and a number of other councils will enter into contracts to ensure that they purchase some green power, thereby setting an example. There are vast changes throughout the world. In some instances green power is replacing coal-fired generation and, probably more acceptably, replacing nuclear generation. We need to be at the forefront, and we totally support the aim of the Government to put New South Wales there.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CRONULLA ELECTORATE CRIME

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [4.15 p.m.]: I want to speak tonight about law and order in my electorate and in the Sutherland shire. I have conducted a survey about people's concerns and I am happy to make the findings of that survey available. The survey has been invaluable in ascertaining residents' views on crime. After all, local residents who share the artificial intelligence web over the back fence have the keenest interest in understanding their own neighbourhoods. They alone know exactly what goes on across the whole of my electorate.

Although the Cronulla area has many crime concerns, the survey results indicate that Cronulla does not have a monopoly on crime. Areas with hotels caused the greatest concern about alcohol-related, antisocial behaviour, and proactive security and preventative measures should be increased in these areas. Hopefully time will enable me to talk about what many people consider to be no-go zones on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Together with Cronulla, the Caringbah precinct rated very highly in residents' concerns, followed by Miranda and Sutherland, where my constituents go. All unlit areas raised fear among residents. That demonstrates that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the adoption of crime prevention measures through environmental design principles in public areas.

Transport areas, including railway stations, taxi ranks and parking lots, rated highly among residents' concerns. The restriction on transportation is a major deterrent to people venturing out at night. It is unacceptable that essential public areas can be taken over by an undesirable element to the extent that movement by the general public is paralysed by fear. Further study is necessary to examine ways of reclaiming these areas.

The findings on burglary, with 41 per cent of all homes being burgled, are unacceptable. It is no surprise that 41.9 per cent of people do not feel safe in their own homes and that those that do feel safe have to lock themselves in with dogs, alarms and deadlocks. The fact that 73.7 per cent of people said they would use force to defend themselves is indicative of a growing anger and resentment that our lifestyle is being overtaken by the criminal element. Fortunately, in my electorate people would only use reasonable force to protect themselves.

Respondents are supportive of the value and work of local police but want a stronger, more visible police presence with an emphasis on community policing. Cameras are no substitute for a strong police presence. I turn now to the no-go zones on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. I am grateful to the honourable member for Port Macquarie, in his role as shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, for his work with clubs and hotels. Clubs and hotels share police concerns and want to ensure that their customers are free to venture out at night and enjoy their amenities.

While many residents cited Cronulla Mall as a no-go zone due to the publicity it has received, all areas of Cronulla were considered out of bounds, including the beaches. Monro, Dunningham and Gunnamatta parks were frequently mentioned, with comments that better lighting was required. Other no-go zones included Prince Street, Beach Park, Arcade Lane, Surf Lane, the beaches, McDonald's Cronulla, back lanes and the Esplanade, and a number of other areas that I will make available publicly. More security is required in the vicinity of hotels. I have mentioned a number of places and I will publish others. No concern was expressed about areas surrounding licensed premises.

Lighting in council car parks needs to be upgraded. The major areas of concern are the multistorey car park at Cronulla, the Coles car park at Caringbah, and private shopping centre car parks such as at Woolworths,

Westfield Miranda and Southgate. If the mayor and Sutherland shire councillors are genuinely concerned about public safety and not simply using closed-circuit television as a political gimmick they will take immediate action in relation to car parks, which are of great concern to the public. The mobility of people is largely based on having safe car parks.

METROPOLITAN PRIDE AWARDS

Ms ALLAN (Wentworthville) [4.20 p.m.]: My comments this evening also have a Sutherland bent. However, unlike the previous speaker my comments are a little more positive and of value to the community as a whole. Tonight the Metropolitan Pride Awards night will be held at Sutherland. About this time last year Sutherland won the Keep Australia Beautiful's overall metropolitan pride award, which gave it the right to host the awards evening this year. At 6.00 p.m. tonight several hundred people, including the honourable member for Miranda and me, will visit Hazelhurst retreat and then attend Sutherland Entertainment Centre for the presentation of the awards.

The special guest this evening will be the Minister for Local Government. Keep Australia Beautiful has been concerned about metropolitan pride for many years. In the past few years it decided to build on its highly successful Tidy Towns program by establishing a comparable program for larger urban and metropolitan areas within New South Wales. Sydney, Newcastle and the Illawarra have been targeted for awards. We have pursued this program and campaign with support from both local and State governments and the private sector.

This evening a number of award categories are sponsored by government and the private sector. Government sponsors include the New South Wales Heritage Office, for best heritage management by a metropolitan council; Landcom, for the sustainable communities award; and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, for the urban wildlife habitat restoration and renewal award. Among our private sector sponsors are Multiplex, which is joining us again to sponsor the community facilities award; Cleanway, for the community environmental initiatives award; and the Beverage Industry Environment Council, for the waste minimisation award.

Without these public and private sponsors, and without the wholehearted support of local government throughout metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, these awards simply would not progress. Councils in those areas are strongly supported by local community groups. In many instances the community groups and schools in various urban areas that do the work qualify for interest in these awards.

I must admit—and I will not give anything away—that I inadvertently had an early glimpse of the list of award winners, and I am pleased to note that they are widely spread across the three major metropolitan areas in New South Wales. That means that Sydney suburbs across the board are well represented, as are the Illawarra and Newcastle. I think we will see a great deal of delight on the faces of councillors when the awards are announced and presented.

An overall award winner will also be announced. As I said, Sutherland won the overall award last year, and Parramatta won the year before that. I am pleased that the honourable member for Bathurst and the honourable member for Miranda are in the Chamber. The honourable member for Bathurst sits on the board of Keep Australia Beautiful, of which I am the chair. Together, we work with others around the State to develop community pride in New South Wales.

A relatively new award will be announced tonight. Sister city relationships between councils throughout the State attract an enormous amount of negative publicity. We have developed a metropolitan pride innovation award that has come out of a sister city relationship between the city of Hurstville in southern Sydney and Barraba and Manilla shires. That sister city relationship has resulted in a major environmental project. Hurstville City Council has been working closely with rural councils to develop certain measurable environmental gains. In this case the projects have included widespread tree planting. Some 500 native trees have been planted in stages around Split Rock Dam, which is nearly 500 kilometres north of Hurstville but close to the Manilla and Barraba shires. I congratulate those councils.

NATIONAL PARKS ACCESS FEES

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [4.25 p.m.]: I raise a matter of concern that relates to the International Year of Volunteers. A constituent of mine who has been a long-term member of the State Emergency Services [SES] contacted me recently to ask why he could not access national

parks in the Forster-Tuncurry and Great Lakes area without paying a fee. He noted that members of the Rural Fire Service can access national parks without paying a fee, and he felt that the amount of volunteer work that SES workers do to assist the National Parks and Wildlife Service in my area should warrant SES workers accessing national parks without paying a fee. My constituent does not have a bone to pick with members of the Rural Fire Service; he accepts that they can access national parks without paying a fee.

My constituent wants to access a national park because he is a keen fisherman and fishes on Seven Mile Beach. He must enter Bootie Beach National Park to get to Seven Mile Beach. Although the distance from the road to the beach is only about 200 metres, if that, my constituent pays \$6 to park his car in the national park each time he goes fishing. I wrote to the Minister for the Environment to ask whether SES workers in the area could access national parks without paying a fee, in line with members of the Rural Fire Service. The reply I received from the Minister assisting the Minister for the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt, upset me. She said that free access would not be given to SES workers, although she acknowledged the work they do. She also acknowledged that members of the Rural Fire Service have free access to national parks in recognition of their assistance with fires in national parks.

My constituent told me that in recent years local SES workers have done more than 1,000 person hours of work in national parks. For example, in September last year local SES workers were on stand-by to evacuate Seal Rocks during the Old Gibber fire. That involved 36 person hours. They also evacuated Seal Rocks and provided logistical assistance in the same manner, which involved 94 person hours; and they provided helibase support, logistical support and a communications operator for the Alderley Creek and Boundary Road fires, involving some 60 person hours. They have also assisted in vehicle recovery from beaches in national parks, Clean Up Australia programs in national parks and searching for lost people in national parks. The Minister's reply is quite demeaning in relation to SES workers searching for lost people in national parks. In a letter dated 29 August the Minister said:

The usual search and rescue activities undertaken by State Emergency Services (SES) volunteers are at the request of police and are for the purpose of rescuing lost or injured persons—

Here is the punch line. I am sure all the SES volunteers will be happy to hear this—

In these circumstances volunteers are not required to pay for entry to national parks.

It is outrageous that the Minister has trivialised the matter. People who risk their lives carrying out search and rescue operations do not have to pay to enter national parks! Members of the National Party think that is very petty-minded. Members of the National and Liberal parties are totally opposed to fees being charged for entry to national parks, and those fees will be abolished when the Coalition forms a government. The fees are a classic example of this Government's discrimination against workers and people who use national park areas.

[Interruption]

A person can drive along the Eastern Distributor for \$3.20, but a person who wants to drive into a national park must pay \$6, which makes roads in national parks probably the most expensive toll roads to be found anywhere. I am interested to note that the honourable member for Lake Macquarie is interjecting.

Mr Martin: No, that is wrong. He is the member for Swansea.

Mr J. H. TURNER: Quite frankly, that shows how much impact the honourable member for Swansea has had on this House. The honourable member for Bathurst interjects. I would like to know how he will tell his SES workers that they will not be able to get into national parks unless they pay a fee of \$6.

Mr Martin: I have already dealt with that. We are getting a different response. I will show you how to do it.

Mr J. H. TURNER: All State Emergency Service workers in Bathurst will have to pay \$6 to enter a national park and they will not be able to enter unless the fee is paid. Moreover, if they want to go fishing, they will have to pay \$6. The honourable member for Bathurst should be sensible. This problem should be rectified and this Government should recognise in the International Year of Volunteers that State Emergency Service workers perform outstanding work. It is quite petty and wrong to penalise them for the sake of receiving a \$6 entry fee.

BATHURST ELECTORATE WIND FARMS

Mr MARTIN (Bathurst) [4.30 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the very important matter of wind farms that produce energy. Today's debate as a matter of urgency on consideration of sustainable and renewable energy sources has been interrupted, so I take this opportunity to point out that the Bathurst electorate is an especially big player in the field of green power supply, and increasingly so as time passes. There are two wind farms in the Bathurst electorate, one at Blayney that has been developed by Eraring Energy, and the Hampton wind park, which has been developed by a private owner and is the first privately owned wind farm in New South Wales, or indeed Australia.

The wind farm at Blayney, which was opened by the Minister for Energy in December last year, uses state-of-the-art technology and has 15 of the most powerful turbines in the country. That makes it one of the largest and most efficient operations in Australia. With a 10-megawatt capacity, the farm will produce enough power to meet the annual electricity needs of 3,500 average Australian homes, or a shire the size of Blayney. New South Wales is already home to more than a third of the nation's total renewable energy generation, which is worth approximately \$4.9 billion and employs almost 5,000 people. Over the lifetime of the wind farm at Blayney, it will be responsible for reducing by more than 400,000 tonnes the emission of carbon dioxide compared with conventional coal-fired power generation. That is the equivalent of taking almost 88,000 cars off the road.

Many people who are involved in farming industries have already reaped the benefit of the development of alternative energy power generation because land-holders are paid a fee for the use of their land. Electricity generated on Blayney land by wind farmers is purchased by Country Energy, which provides electricity to customers who participate in its green power scheme. The wind farm at Hampton is unique not only because it is the first privately owned wind farm in Australia but because it has been developed by the Litchfield family, who previously were traditional sheep graziers on their property at Hickory Hill. The Hampton project is a first, and represents a \$2.4 million investment in the area, which is 25 kilometres south of Lithgow. I am pleased that property owners such as the Litchfields are tackling global environmental problems by assisting in the reduction of greenhouse gases and that they are finding innovative local solutions. By their participation, they have also made farming enterprises more viable.

The project has been supported directly by the State Government, Integral Energy, the Sustainable Energy Development Authority [SEDA] and other national organisations. Two 660 kilowatt wind turbines have been constructed on the 500-acre property and are up and running. The location of the wind park just off Jenolan Caves Road, which is part of this State's premier tourist route to the Jenolan Caves, makes the project a stand-out tourism attraction for the public. Those turbines are clearly visible if one looks in the direction of Victoria Pass near Mount Victoria across the magnificent Kanimbla Valley into the Cullenbenbong-Ganbenang area.

Some people have suggested that the turbines constitute visual pollution, but that is far from the case. One would have to stand among the turbines on a wind farm to understand the special feeling one gets from them. It is quite eerie because there is something majestic about them. Wind farms are becoming very popular, particularly the wind farm at Blayney, which has 15 turbines situated near a castle in a very scenic area. A picnic area is located close by and the wind farm is becoming a very significant tourism attraction in the area. The Litchfield's development of their farm has been a way for them to reach out to other people in rural areas.

The Black Springs area near Oberon has been investigated with a view to offering local land-holders an opportunity to take advantage of this innovative scheme. There are plans to construct a whole string of turbines from Black Springs across to Cherry Tree Hill on the Great Dividing Range and along the Castlereagh Highway towards Mudgee. That will make an important contribution to the production of clean energy in this State. I am delighted that others are going to follow the lead of Hugh Litchfield and his father, Ian, and become involved in this enterprise. Farming properties will be more viable and local land-holders will be making a significant contribution to this very important industry.

HORNSBY HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [4.35 p.m.]: On this day when nurses rallied in Macquarie Street to complain about a lack of response from the Carr Labor Government to their just complaints, I take this opportunity to support nurses, particularly those who are employed at the Hornsby hospital and who rallied outside Parliament House. Together with my Opposition colleagues, I believe that nurses are entitled to a better deal. The Coalition supports their claim and supports the nurses at Hornsby hospital who recently took industrial action over concerns related to understaffing.

Recently surgery had to be cancelled at the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital and Community Health Services because nursing staff refused to undertake any action that could be described as non-nursing duties, including mopping theatre floors and emptying laundry bags. The concern of nurses is not with hospital management but, rather, with the Carr Government. Everybody knows that there is a shortage of nurses in New South Wales, and Hornsby hospital has its fair share of problems associated with that shortage. Nurses want to be able to staff the hospital properly and see it operating at its true capacity. That is by no means the only problem at Hornsby hospital, but it is a significant one. Therefore the industrial campaign undertaken by nurses deserves the Government's attention and serious consideration.

Recently I visited the hospital accompanied by the shadow Minister for Health, the honourable member for North Shore, because I wanted to familiarise her with some of the issues I have been raising with the Government for some time. On that occasion we were able to meet with some of the senior staff, including Stephen Christie from the Northern Sydney Area Health Service. I thank the staff of the Hornsby hospital for their willingness to meet with us.

It has become very clear to members of the Coalition that from the time of the Government's election it has not been able to address the matters that I have raised. One of the first acts of this Government was to issue a report that suggested that Hornsby hospital would be either downgraded or closed. If my memory serves me correctly, in 1996 my community rallied to stop the implementation of those plans. All honourable members would know that the then Minister for Health, Dr Refshauge, was embarrassed into withdrawing the plan.

Since that time, there has been no adequate funding for the hospital and there has been no word from the Government about the future of the hospital. I understand that the Northern Sydney Area Health Service intends to retain the hospital as a metropolitan general hospital, but there has been no desperately needed confirmation of that from the Government. The people of my electorate are entitled to certainty about the future of the hospital that serves their community.

Why would they be worried about that? They are worried because the hospital has been underfunded by the Government, such that its facilities have become a real impediment to the level of service that staff are able to provide. I am constantly informed by my constituents that they care deeply for the staff at the hospital but they are desperately concerned about the level of facilities. For the information of honourable members, I will cite a couple of examples. The maternity unit is very much in need of repair. A couple of years ago the Board of Fire Commissioners said that the maternity unit did not meet fire safety standards and threatened to close down the unit. The hospital resolved the difficulty by deciding not to use the top floor of the maternity unit. No capital works were undertaken to bring the maternity unit up to standard; rather, it was just decided not to use the top floor.

The maternity unit is at the other end of the hospital from the operating theatres, so if a complication occurs during a delivery the patient has to be placed on a gurney and wheeled through covered walkways, not even within buildings but through covered walkways, for quite some distance. That may place those patients at additional medical risk and therefore that matter needs to be addressed in any upgrade of the hospital. Only four or the five theatres are working. We are told that theatre five has a scrub-up area within it and therefore it is not workable. Other theatres need to be upgraded, but they are small.

Doctors tell me that there are problems associated with theatres one and two. I am told that the air conditioning is on its last legs. The emergency department does not meet all of the benchmarks for emergency departments. In July this year, the latest figures available, the emergency department failed to see patients within time standards in two out of five of the triage categories, that is, "urgent" and "semi urgent". Its poor physical shape is of concern to my community. During the last election campaign the Coalition presented a \$30 million plan to rebuild that hospital, but the Carr Government has done nothing. It has not even provided any funding to bring the hospital up to an acceptable standard, let alone rebuild it. We need commitments from the Government and we need support for our community hospital.

POLICE INFRINGEMENT PROCESSING BUREAU

Mr PRICE (Maitland) [4.40 p.m.]: The establishment of the Police Infringement Processing Bureau in Maitland was a Government promise and initiative at the last election, and the building is now being constructed. Last Wednesday I was delighted to be involved with a number of staff members from the Parramatta office who visited Maitland and listened to a number of presentations and a welcome from the mayor, and to advise people of the opportunities available to them in Maitland and the lower Hunter. Some 22

existing employees of the bureau have indicated that they intend to live in Maitland, and another 29 indicated that they were prepared to consider relocating to Maitland. But obviously there were many questions to be asked. They came with their lists of questions, and the council not only provided answers wherever it could but also arranged for a further briefing by a private consultant who is an expert on the employment market in the lower Hunter.

We then adjourned to a bus that took us around Maitland city. We looked at a number of the real estate locations, answered questions on the spot as to the various aspects that concerned the families, particularly the opportunities for partners' jobs in the region, the quality and range of schools, the availability of Catholic, private and public schools, the available level of educational attainment, the proximity of the university, access by road and rail to metropolitan Sydney and to other areas. I think they were quite thrilled to hear how close Maitland is to beaches. Many of these people live in the western suburbs of Sydney, and they discovered that the beach is only a half-hour train journey away, that places like Port Stephens are only three-quarters of an hour away, that the Pokolbin and Cessnock vineyards and the associated tourist resorts and restaurants are only 45 minutes away.

Coming from a rather densely populated area in Sydney, it was quite a shock to a number of them to see Maitland, where the highways are adjacent to cows grazing in the paddocks, where there is open space and no high-rise development, where people actually walk and do not necessarily run, and where people can live in close proximity to a shopping mall and can park relatively easily, and have such a diversity of shops and commercial facilities. The location of the proposed Police Infringement Processing Bureau is directly opposite the Maitland court, at the corner of High Street and Alan Walsh Drive, and it is therefore centrally located. The building is an excellent concept and very much in sympathy with the old courthouse. From the bureau's point of view it is conveniently located directly opposite the courthouse, where the bureau is involved in servicing a lot of its documentation.

The staff agreed that that is a good idea, because they only have to walk carefully across the road, and I am sure that if necessary we could arrange for another set of pedestrian lights and a pedestrian crossing. However, I think they would be quite happy with the present facilities. It was tremendous to meet these people, to observe their enthusiasm and to be able to be part of the team that could answer the questions sensibly and logically for them, and to encourage them to seriously consider relocating to Maitland, not just for the sake of their jobs but for a wonderful lifestyles for them and their families. The bureau will be a great boon to Maitland city and, I believe, a significant job generator for the area because there are 150 employment opportunities. if only 50 people relocate to the area, there will be 100 jobs for local people, and that would be tremendous.

TUMBARUMBA EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.45 p.m.]: In the International Year of Volunteers it is important that communities recognise the great contributions that volunteers make. Tumbarumba honoured its volunteer emergency workers with a dinner and awards night last Saturday at which 98 people attended , including senior representatives of all local emergency organisations. The occasion was organised by the Rotary Club of Tumbarumba shire. Rotary President Terry McGregor said that the dinner was a fitting tribute to volunteers who provided Tumbarumba with the same mantle of safety enjoyed by those who lived in major cities. Reverend John Stead, in his role as police chaplain, opened proceedings with a prayer for the emergency service personnel who served in the New York tragedy. Pipers Rob and Mark Kuffer made a grand entrance prior to the serving of the meal.

Tumbarumba Shire Council awards were presented by Mayor George Martin, who is also chairman of the Tumbarumba shire emergency management committee. Mayor Martin spoke of the need for volunteers to provide the mantle of safety that could otherwise not be afforded in rural Australia. He praised the efforts of all those who worked at times of emergency with fire, rescue, storm and flood, and I support his comments. Council provided an award to David Saxton for his efforts as State Emergency Services controller. Another award was presented to Graeme Whinfield for his efforts as an ambulance officer and paramedic who has done so much for the community over so many years. The Corryong State Emergency Service has co-operated at incidents across the border, at Khancoban and with emergencies on the Murray River.

New South Wales Fire Brigades Zone Superintendent Roger Bucholtz spoke of the efforts of local firemen. Claps for 25 years of service were presented to Robert McLachlan, Chris Davey and Des Richards and claps for 15 years of service were presented to Warren Hulm, Jim Wright and Greg Widdison. Brooches were presented to wives Shirley, Bev and Janette. The Chief Superintendent and Regional Manager South of the

Rural Fire Service, Peter Ryan, spoke on behalf of the Rural Fire Service and congratulated the volunteers who had collectively served for so many years. Rural Fire Service awards were presented to Tumbarumba brigade—Bob Burgun, for 35 years service, Graham Burgun for 15 years service, Rex O'Brien for 50 years service, Barry McClellan for 25 years service, and Tom McClellan for 50 years posthumous service. Rural Fire Service awards were also presented to the Rosewood brigade—Joe Matto for 35 years service, Neville Beeby for 50 years service, and Syd Brown for 50 years service. Syd Brown also received appreciation awards for voluntary efforts at the Sydney Olympics and Paralympics.

Rural Fire Service awards also went to Brian Hastings of the Tooma brigade and he also received 15-year and 25-year medals. John McGrath of the Ournie brigade received certificates for fire fighting supervision. The superintendent of the New South Wales Police Service, Peter Dwyer, spoke of the efforts of Kevin Gabriel in his role as District Emergency Management Officer and presented him with a commemorative plaque. The evening concluded with a short speech from Terry McGregor, President of Rotary. I congratulate Terry McGregor on his great role as President of the Rotary Club of Tumbarumba.

I congratulate the Tumbarumba Rotary Club and the Tumbarumba Shire Council on their initiative to present these special awards. As I said, it is important that the community recognises the great contributions made by volunteers. In closing, I add my words of thanks and praise to all those people who have given so much to our communities in those years. I congratulate the Tumbarumba Shire Council under the leadership of Mayor George Martin and the Rotary Club under the leadership of Terry McGregor. They are a credit to their community. I have great pleasure in representing that community in this House.

RSPCA NOWRA BRANCH

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [4.50 p.m.]: I have great pleasure in speaking about the RSPCA and the work of the Nowra branch. We are all familiar with the good work that this organisation has done and is doing for the welfare of domestic animals, from the active promotion of caring for animals through to their rescue from dangerous situations. Pets are a major part of the lives of many Australians, with at least 9.5 million pets in New South Wales alone. More people have fish and birds as pets than dogs. Cats are the least popular—although the list does not include rabbits, horses, guinea pigs and the like. My wife and I are pet lovers. We have cats and a dog, which are as much a part of my home life as are my children, who are both grown up and have left home to live their own lives. The animals are great companions and bring great joy to the lives of many, especially the young and elderly. They are non-judgmental, loyal, do not answer back, and seem to provide solace at the end of a long and difficult day.

For many older people, they may be the only company they have to talk to and to share their days and nights. In fact, they are an integral part of their lives. Cats and dogs certainly have active minds. They are sensitive to the moods and actions of their human companions and have an intelligence that is impossible to measure. It is for those reasons that I cannot make sense of the inhumane acts of cruelty to animals about which we hear from time to time. One of the saddest examples I have seen in recent years is that of a dog tied up in a back yard without food or water, left to starve while the owners were away. That pitiful little dog was found barely alive, with big sad eyes pleading for help—the strength for barking long gone. He was taken to a vet and spent some time at the pound until he gained weight and became stronger. Eventually a kindly family took him in, and as far as I know he is living in that loving home today. That was an appalling situation which should never have happened. Yet the RSPCA sees such acts all the time—starving, abandoned, abused and tortured animals.

Like many, I hate to see any animal in pain. I believe that acts of cruelty seem more shocking to us because animals are, on the whole, quite defenseless. Thanks to the RSPCA, our animals have a formidable advocate and supporter, which has developed strict policies to help with the prevention of cruelty to animals. The Nowra branch of the RSPCA is 20 years old, and is managed by two full-time volunteers, a secretary, Cheryl Durand, and a committee of five volunteers. The branch deals with a high level of animal abuse. A number of the volunteers take many of those animals into their homes for recovery. They also take in abandoned animals until permanent homes can be found. A permanent inspector was appointed to the area about 12 months ago, who covers the area between Kiama, Sussex Inlet and the Southern Highlands.

On 7 October the Nowra branch held a gala day and walk at the Nowra Showground to celebrate World Animal Day. This year there were about 100 animals and about 200 people. A good turn out, although there were just over 200 animals the year before. However, the day was extremely windy this year. My wife and I took along our dog, a 13-year-old labrador. It was a terrific day, meeting with local pet owners and their beloved

animals. The walk was about five kilometres. I had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon to start the walk. There were fundraising raffles and stalls, with RSPCA merchandise. My dog had no problems with the walk, despite being a little overweight, but my fitness left a little to be desired. The funds raised, of course, go towards the work of the RSPCA across the Shoalhaven, caring for abandoned, neglected and mistreated animals. I have great admiration for the RSPCA because the work is done by a small group of dedicated human beings on tiny budgets who have the best interests of animals at heart.

I am sure that a lot more animals would be worse off if we did not have the RSPCA. It is so important for us all to be reminded of the value of pets. They are living creatures with feelings deserving of kindness, love and care. It does us no harm to have our consciences pricked from time to time, and I am pleased to support the RSPCA which does such a good job doing that. I add that our wildlife is also a concern for the RSPCA. While the needs are different, these animals can provide just as much pleasure through observation. We can all play our part in protecting wildlife by being aware of their situations and the need for their protection. I also note that the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are patrons of the RSPCA, and they deserve commendation for their interest. I congratulate the Nowra branch of the RSPCA on organising such an excellent day and on the work it has done in the past and no doubt will continue to do in the future.

LISMORE LAW AND ORDER

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [4.55 p.m.]: My support has been sought by Lismore City Council, the Police Service and Lismore Unlimited to work together to make the Lismore central business district a cleaner and safer place in which to live, shop, work and visit. Because of our combined effort, conditions appear to be changing for the better. One of the effects of having a greater presence of uniformed officers, both police and security personnel, and the closed-circuit television system is the greater incidence of offences being detected. To the credit of the broader community, urinating in a public place is not considered acceptable. Members of the Police Service hold the same view and are actively involved in reducing the problem by way of charging offenders when caught. Unfortunately, that process commits officers to a significant amount of paperwork and valuable time in court.

My assistance is sought to raise this issue in this House with a view to changing legislation, possibly the Local Government Act 1993, to establish a short title offence for urinating in a public place. That would allow police officers to issue an on-the-spot fine and thus significantly reduce the amount of time taken on each incident. Of course, offenders would still need the right to contest the fine through the courts should they wish. From discussions with police officers, the amount of time taken on these matters is a major issue and may also act as a deterrent in actioning reports as they are received of such offences occurring. The new licensing supervisor, Sergeant Steven Parry from the Richmond Area Command, has sent out a message through the press that states, "Don't urinate in a public place because you will be caught." Sergeant Parry's mission is to curb antisocial behaviour in the Lismore central business district.

To complement existing street safety cameras, Lismore police have increased the number of foot and mobile patrols as part of an ongoing proactive operation to clean up our streets and increase public safety. Particular attention is being paid to people choosing to urinate on the streets, and the police warn that offenders will be arrested and charged. In relation to alcohol-related crime, Lismore is on the higher end of the scale and the police certainly will not take a soft approach to offenders because they are undoing all the good work others have done in trying to promote the positive aspects of Lismore. Simply, if the city wants a satisfying result there has to be a combined effort of the whole community, including Lismore Unlimited, the Police Service and the council. I ask the relevant Ministers to consider this proposal, which has a lot of merit. Courts are clogged up enough without putting these so-called offences through the court system. I endorse the call for on-the-spot fines to be issued for these offences.

MOUNT THORLEY COALMINE EMPLOYEES DISMISSAL

Mr HICKEY (Cessnock) [4.59 p.m.]: Today I voice my support for the decision by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission regarding sacked mineworkers at Mount Thorley open-cut mine. The Mount Thorley operation, which is owned by Rio Tinto, is situated in the heart of the coalmining belt in the northern part of Cessnock electorate. That belt of mines provides the Hunter and the Cessnock electorate with a sound economic base. It also is a strong economic indicator for this State. Unfortunately, this economic base has been overshadowed by unsavoury industrial relations tactics used to undermine worker security and, therefore, the social and economic wellbeing of our communities. The Mount Thorley mine, which is a major employer in the area, attempted to use its corporate might to break union ranks and cause disharmony amongst workers in the community when it unfairly sacked 82 miners during November 1999.

Make no mistake about it: this is no negotiated restructure. Rio Tinto directors believed in their own self-importance when they bulldozed workers out of a job unfairly, unjustly and unreasonably. Workers were requested to put their tools in the sheds and they were frog-marched off the site. It is time that large multinational companies take stock and realise that this is Australia. No matter how hard John Howard attempts to undermine it, our Australian system of industrial reforms work to ensure that workers rights are protected. This system has been developed and defended over many years in consultation with unions, workers and honest employers.

On 17 September this year I was heartened to receive news that the deputy president of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission found that, after a protracted 2½-year legal battle, Rio Tinto had unfairly, unjustly and unreasonably terminated 82 miners from its Mount Thorley operations. What a win for justice! What a win for the workers in the Cessnock electorate! What a resounding success for the United Mineworkers of Australia! Her Honour, Deputy President Leary, determined that the jobs of the sacked workers who were represented in the five test cases were unreasonably terminated. Rio Tinto used its merit-based retrenchment system to forcibly terminate the jobs of those 82 employees. That augers well for the 77 other unfair dismissal applications that are still waiting to be finalised.

At this stage Her Honour, Deputy President Leary, has not yet decided on the remedy to be afforded applicants, but the writing will be on the wall for this profit-before-people company when this matter is heard before the commission on 12 November this year. I trust that justice will continue to prevail. This decision is a testimony of the strength and fortitude of mineworkers and their families who have been affected by the company's tactics. The Cessnock electorate has a proud history of taking the fight to mineowners and winning. This latest situation only builds on the community's resolve to ensure that mineowners who provide the manpower to allow companies to make huge profits are held accountable to the work force and to the communities in which they operate.

The vindication of employees by the Industrial Relations Commission will never compensate the sacked workers or the communities for the stress and damage caused by Rio Tinto to their families and community. Not one of the union members involved was not affected in some way. The company was wrong to sack them as it did. The facts stand for themselves. Many employees lost their jobs. As a result, many experienced financial hardship, relationships suffered and the community suffered. The local economy suffered as a result of this uncertainty. In short, the lives of these men were put on hold while the unions fought a long and hard legal battle for what was right and fair. Rio Tinto has been trying to improve its image as a corporate citizen in recent times. We in this House and the workers across Australia must always remember this decision. We must remind ourselves that companies like Rio Tinto are concerned only with profits and not people.

Mrs LO PO'(Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [5.04 p.m.]: As someone who was brought up by a coalmining family, I understand what these miners are going through. Miners, shearers, canecutters and wharf labourers forged the conditions which so many people take for granted. I congratulate the miners on their great win.

[Private members' statements interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Private Members' Statements: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mrs Lo Po' agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit a further seven members to make private members' statements at this sitting.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[Private members' statements resumed.]

CENTRAL COAST RAIL SERVICES

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [5.06 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the problems being faced by rail commuters on the Central Coast. The Central Coast is a growing area. With its beautiful waterways and unpolluted air—it is just an hour away from Sydney—it is an ideal place for families to settle. In fact, the

Central Coast is one of the largest commuter areas in Australia. Thousands of people travel to and from Sydney and Newcastle to work and home each day. Thousands of people rely on the trains to ensure that they arrive on time. A weekly ticket from Gosford to Sydney costs \$45. For that \$45, however, many commuters are forced to stand all the way from Gosford or Woy Woy to Central Station. That amount of \$45 is a lot of money to pay for the privilege of standing three hours a day to work and back.

In the last State budget the Premier promised \$270 million for new millennium carriages for Sydney trains. Not one cent was allocated for any new carriages for Central Coast trains. I received a letter recently from a constituent complaining about the state of the carriages servicing the Central Coast. He is a regular commuter and he catches the 6.48 a.m. Gosford to Sydney train via the North Shore line and the 5.48 p.m. Sydney to Gosford train via the North Shore line. My constituent states that, in the past several weeks, the carriages that have been used for these services have been ordinary Tangaras, not the purpose-built cars complete with toilet and water facilities that are supposed to service the Central Coast. He writes:

For such long journey there are no toilet facilities and seating is far less comfortable. In a lot of cases the seats are downright painful. Anyone with any kind of infirmity such as back, leg or knee injury or any pregnant women or the elderly are subject to this unique form of torture which previous civilisations would have been proud to inflict on their enemies.

He is not alone in his concern. Travelling for 90 minutes to work and 90 minutes back home each day on seats designed for short journeys is not pleasant, and that is not what commuters on the Central Coast were promised. I have been informed that the removal of the properly equipped carriages was a temporary measure that would last for three months while modifications were carried out. However, they are now unlikely to be returned until early next year—almost 12 months later. If the Government sees fit to allocate \$270 million for new carriages for Sydney services, surely it can work to ensure that the modified carriages for Tangara trains travelling between Gosford and Sydney are fixed expediently so that they can be used on that line.

Recently I wrote to the Minister for Transport about the issue of platform tickets. There has always been a platform ticket fee to discourage people from attempting to take a free ride. But the fee has now been set at \$1.50 per person. The people that this has affected most are carers of the elderly and the disabled. Carers are forced to pay \$1.50 just to assist the elderly and to ensure that they board the train safely. While the system of a tokenistic fee to discourage freeloaders should be maintained, the cost of a platform ticket should be more reasonable. Only recently, members of a family who assisted their elderly mother to Gosford station platform informed me that they ended up paying more for the two platform tickets than she did for her \$2 return trip to Sydney.

When I wrote to the Minister for Transport about this situation his initial response was simply to suggest that staff were always available to assist people down to the platform. I am pleased that the Minister now appears to be at least amenable to looking at the issue and at the use of smart cards for the payment of public transport fares. If this Government is at all serious about the Central Coast—and it should be as three of the four sitting local members are Government members—it should look at the problem of overcrowded and inadequate carriages during peak hours on the Central Coast line. For too long public transport needs on the Central Coast have been neglected. The Central Coast is a fast-growing and beautiful area and affords many opportunities not available in larger areas. This situation demands urgent attention before it becomes impossible for people to move to the Central Coast without resigning from their Sydney jobs. I call upon the Minister for Transport to review as a matter of urgency the services afforded to the thousands of commuters who leave from Gosford, Woy Woy and other stations around the Central Coast every day.

BANKSTOWN DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.09 p.m.]: An important function will be held in Bankstown on Saturday night: the fiftieth anniversary of the Bankstown District Cricket Club. The cricket club has been an institution in Bankstown since 1951. The legendary sporting heroes who have come through the club are testimony to its success. Graham Thomas was the first player from the club to play for Australia. He played with the club in 1958-59. Other players have included Ian Davis, legendary fast bowler, Jeff Thomson, Lenny Pascoe, Steve Smith and, most recently, Steve and Mark Waugh. As the member for Bankstown I am always extremely proud to emphasise the positives of Bankstown—and there are many. The Bankstown District Cricket Club is certainly at the forefront of them. Bankstown has always been a sporting community; its ethos is one of sport. Difficult times are often projected by the media in the most negative way without the real facts being put forward. Bankstown's sporting ethos has kept the community coherent. That is why I am reminding the House today of the importance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Bankstown District Cricket Club.

Since the formation of the club in 1951 it has won 35 premierships and produced 19 first-class players and seven test players. That success has culminated with current legends Steve and Mark Waugh. Steve Waugh is Australia's fortieth test captain. His appointment as captain has done a great deal for morale in Bankstown. Recently the home of the Bankstown District Cricket Club, Bankstown Memorial Oval, was used for the ING Cup matches. That is further testimony to the success of the club. Last Sunday New South Wales played Tasmania. It was an outstanding match to watch. We saw the achievements of the New South Wales team, particularly Bankstown's own cricket hero Mark Waugh, who set up victory for the New South Wales Blues against the Tasmanian Tigers. He hit a magnificent 123 in front of a crowd of around 3,500 people. While we hear some negatives about Bankstown—and a great deal of what happens there is unfairly portrayed—this is the positive side of Bankstown.

I want to mention some of the people who made Bankstown District Cricket Club the success it is. Ron Lockwood, who passed away only a few weeks ago, was a former mayor and a councillor for many years. Ron was very much a part of Bankstown District Cricket Club. The current president, Brian Freedman, has been around for a long time. Brian is a fantastic ambassador for Bankstown and for the cricket club. To give an illustration of the type of person he is, a few months ago, while he was adjusting the scoreboard during a local cricket match, he had a bad fall. He suffered severe damage to his hips and knees. He has been in hospital several times and even now is still on crutches, but he has never missed a local match. It is a real achievement that on Saturday we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the club, which is very much a product of the work he has done.

The secretary of the club is Martin Klumpp. Martin has also been a terrific worker for Bankstown and for the club. The Bankstown District Sports Club has played a large part in cricket in Bankstown. Kevin McCormick is the president of the club. He has the honour of having the main stand at the oval named after him: the Kevin McCormick Grandstand. All Bankstonians are proud when they sit in that stand and watch the best first-grade matches this country has to offer. The television coverage is fantastic. It shows a great ground and a crowd that is into the matches and particularly into supporting the New South Wales Blues. That would not happen if it were not for the camaraderie and sportsmanship of the people of Bankstown. I commend my remarks to the House and wish the Bankstown District Cricket Club all the best on its fiftieth anniversary celebration on Saturday evening. I shall certainly be attending.

PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [5.14 p.m.]: I rise tonight to talk about the Teachers Federation and like-minded people and to express outrage at the wording of a letter sent on 16 August from the New South Wales Teachers Federation General Secretary, John Hennessy, to the Israeli Ambassador to Australia. I will not read the letter into the record. I have only contempt for the wording in it and for the person from an allegedly reputable organisation who sent it.

In the letter John Hennessy says that his executive recently adopted a resolution on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the resolution being self-explanatory. He asserts that "... primary culpability for the current situation rests with the Israeli authorities as well as extremist elements within that community". In a later paragraph he calls on Israel to "... stop its policies of ethnic cleansing and apartheid". Later he talks about moving towards a settlement "... instead of leaving the US to act as a broker given its continuing bias towards Israel". He then says that settlement must be accomplished through negotiations. Obviously Mr Hennessy was not aware of the negotiations that took place between Clinton, Barak and Arafat a little more than a year ago and which were totally rejected by Arafat although they were acceptable to the rest of world.

The letter was written on 16 August, before the terrorist attack. In a further letter John Hennessy also wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 October in response to an article by Paul Sheehan which took him to task for his resolution. The letter says that under its rules the New South Wales Teachers Federation works for and promotes international peace and disarmament. Later the letter says it supports Israel's right to exist in peace and security and that the federation is proud of its record. This letter was written after the terrorist attack; the federation did not weaken its approach at all.

I now move to a press release from the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc., issued on Monday 8 October, which was after the terrorist attack. The press release read:

Mr Abbas Ahmed, President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils ... speaking from overseas [said] ... the US and British military attacks on Afghanistan ... was a sad day for the human kind and for those who aspire for lasting peace and justice in the world.

Later the press release read:

The global community must also look deeply at the underlying causes of terrorism in the world. Much greater and sincere effort must be made to find just and humane solutions to the many problems around the world and to bring about the healing of past wounds as a means of uniting mankind ...

I turn to today's *Daily Telegraph*, which reported:

Australian Arabic Council chairman Roland Jabbour describes the decision to send personnel to the conflict as "a major political disaster" and a "sad day for Australia".

"War is not the answer," Mr Jabbour said. "By aligning ourselves with the US, we will become a target for future terror attacks and be trapped in a war that cannot be won."

I suggest that honourable members look at the letter from the Teachers Federation. It is available from me or from the Teachers Federation. They should also have a look at the two other points I have mentioned and note the pattern of the Teachers Federation, the Islamic Council and the Arabic Council. I note also that it is the leaders of these organisations who are making those comments, not the members. At best, what has been said shows a failure of leadership; at worst it is an apology for terrorism.

I note in a letter I sent to the United States of America consul after the terrorist attack I said:

Australia and the United States of America share many values and certainly treasure our democracy, free enterprise and our open society. We therefore appreciate that the attacks were not directed solely at the people and institutions of the United States. The attacks were clearly intended as a declaration of war on all Western democracies and their citizens.

I then said:

We join you in praying our nations' leaders find the wisdom and strength to deliver a swift, strong and just response and to establish effective measures to deter similar acts of evil in the future. The fanatics responsible for these particular attacks and their collaborators worldwide must be made to hear our outrage and understand our resolve to protect our way of life.

This is about protecting our way of life. The Teachers Federation would do well to come with me to Israel, look at the way of life and the similarities between all western democracies around the world, including Israel, and then reconsider its position.

I have a number of letters written by teachers expressing concern with John Hennessy's original resolution and disgust that the organisation is not representing teachers at all but representing itself in a political game that it should not be involved in.

I congratulate the people in my electorate who are concerned about the media bias and its acceptance of anarchist and terrorist propaganda.

I recommend that the Teachers Federation, which clearly must be regarded as a captive of the loony left, reconsider its position.

I also suggest that the Minister for Education and Training consider the guidelines issued to the Teachers Federation and teachers in New South Wales relating to issues of concern. [*Time expired.*]

MIRANDA ELECTORATE CRIME

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [5.19 p.m.]: Tonight I shall talk about a survey and a subsequent meeting on crime across two electorates—the Federal electorates of Cook and Hughes, both of which cover my electorate of Miranda. A meeting was held in Sutherland on 8 October. This followed a survey that was sent to all constituents in the Federal electorates of Hughes and Cook. The meeting in Sutherland was attended by the Federal member for Hughes, Danna Vale, the Federal member for Cook, Bruce Baird, the honourable member for Cronulla and Senator Ellison. There are 160,000 constituents in the Federal electorates of Cook and Hughes. Guess how many of them attended that meeting on crime? Between 48 and 70 constituents attended the meeting. Constituents of Miranda who attended the meeting said that only between 48 and 70 people were there, even though a Federal Minister was in attendance.

No Labor members of Parliament, including me, were invited to attend the meeting, and no police were there. The honourable member for Cronulla did not put forward any policies, programs or suggestions. All he did was talk about the problems of Frank Walker and the Summary Offences Act. He is out of touch. He did not mention the fact that only three in 10,000 containers coming into this country are searched by Federal customs for drugs and illegal firearms. Danna Vale could not produce any statistics. She was too busy preparing for the Federal election. Bruce Baird produced some statistics which showed that less than 1 per cent of his constituents

responded to the survey. Is crime a major worry in Sutherland shire? One would not think so, judging by the small number of people who attended the meeting. The Federal members produced bodgie and dodgy statistics that have absolutely no validity. If crime is an issue it is certainly not an issue for the Federal Government, according to Senator Chris Ellison. And an article on page 9 of the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* of 9 October stated:

Mr Baird believes the most important issues in the upcoming federal election are: leadership, national security, the economy ... the environment, health and education.

Guess what Mr Baird did not mention? He did not mention crime! The Federal member is attempting to hoodwink constituents in Sutherland shire. What a farce! The dynamic pair of Bruce Baird and the honourable member for Cronulla are the Batman and Robin of Sutherland shire. What a joke! The meeting on law and order was a failure, just as Bruce Baird was a failure when he was the New South Wales Minister for Transport. Time and time again he has failed his constituents in the Federal electorate of Cook. Everyone in Sutherland shire should know that Bruce Baird and the honourable member for Cronulla voted against establishing the police royal commission. And here they are knocking our police. They should hang their heads in shame. They should support our local police, not knock them. If honourable members think that crime is not a State issue they should listen to this. In a letter dated 4 September 2001 Bruce Baird said:

Dear Mr Collier,

I have received an email from Michael King of Sylvania Waters, concerning serious crime and the legislative response to that issue.

I enclose a copy of Mr King's email for your reference.

Due to the fact that the issues raised by Mr King fall within State government jurisdiction I am forwarding his correspondence to you.

Although he says crime is a big issue for him, Mr Baird sends his correspondence to me. And he did not invite me or any other Australian Labor Party members to attend the meeting. What a joke! What a farce! The honourable member for Cronulla, who has been here for many years, continually complains about the lack of a fully operational and fully manned police station at Cronulla. He never bothers to talk to the local area commander, Reg Mahoney. If he did he might get this response, which I received from the police Minister:

I have been advised by Superintendent R Mahoney, Commander, Miranda Local Area Command that Cronulla Police Station is a fully operational Police Station providing a full range of policing services on a 24 hour basis.

Superintendent Mahoney advises that station staff, detectives, licensing officers, traffic officers, fingerprint gatherers, brief handling staff, the Crime Manager, Commander and administration staff are all permanently accommodated in the building.

The intelligence response team and bicycle response team are stationed at Cronulla. Again, the honourable member has not bothered to talk to Superintendent Mahoney. He complains about the closed-circuit television cameras. Yet again he is out of touch. People in the Sutherland shire want the cameras. The honourable member did not go to Perth to look at the cameras there. I went to Perth in my own time—I did not use taxpayers' money—to look at the cameras. Policing in Perth using the cameras is very effective. It is time Baird and his mate Kerr, the Batman and Robin of Sutherland shire, did something for the shire. They should stop creating fear and panic among people in the community in these uncertain times. It is time they woke up to themselves.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.24 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Miranda on raising this issue. I am amazed that problems associated with behaviour in his area are being highlighted during a Federal election campaign. Nevertheless, Bruce Baird is highlighting law and order problems. I had a reasonable amount of respect for him when he was a member of the New South Wales Parliament. Recently, he attended a function in Sutherland organised by the Wesley Foundation in relation to harm minimisation and gambling. Since the establishment of liquor consultative committees and liquor accords, the honourable member for Miranda is the only local member to get off his butt and do something about problems associated with liquor.

At another function some time ago the then Mayor of Sutherland shire, Councillor Schreiber, was complaining about law and order and antisocial behaviour. I told him that antisocial behaviour is linked to alcohol consumption, and that licensees need to work together. I even sent them all the material. The honourable member for Miranda, and only him, identified the problems with liquor outlets, under-age drinking, secondary services and noise complaints which occur in inner suburbs. I am amazed that the Federal member for Cook is only making that discovery now. Frankly, if there were a Rip Van Winkle award for being asleep, it would go to Bruce Baird on this issue. The honourable member for Miranda has done a lot of work and built up a lot of respect in the community for his work on liquor accords, which have resulted in a reduction in antisocial behaviour and street incidents, and I commend him for that. [*Time expired*]

C. G. PERRY AND CO. COMPENSATION AWARD

Mr FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [5.26 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of honourable members a problem for C. G. Perry and Co., Abattoirs and Butchery, of Repton. Some time ago some land owned by the Perrys was resumed for the Raleigh deviation. The Raleigh deviation was completed recently under the State Government, represented by the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, and the Federal Government, represented by Gary Nehl. I point out that neither of them attended a public meeting or had contact with Mr Perry, but they took credit for the result. Under just terms compensation legislation, these people were entitled to compensation for the land that was required to construct the road. Part of the property was a rock quarry. The RTA was interested in getting hold of the land, because it could use rock from the quarry for the deviation.

The Perrys went through a hell of a process to get just terms compensation for the proper value of their land. Eventually they went to the Land and Environment Court, where they were awarded \$1.164 million for the land and compensation for shifting the abattoir and closing the dams on the property. The RTA filled the dams with rubbish but it has failed to clean them out. During this time Ray Perry's mother died of cancer. The stress of this matter probably hastened her death. Many representations were made on behalf of the Perrys but to no avail. They then went through the legal process. Although the Perrys were awarded \$1.1 million, they lost the use of the quarry and they were forced to close the abattoir. All they have now is a retail butcher shop on Perry's Road, Repton. Big brother then stepped in: the RTA appealed against the amount awarded by the Land and Environment Court.

The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] appealed against the judgment and took the appeal to the appellate division of the Land and Environment Court, where the amount of the judgment was reduced. I find that quite disgusting, to be quite honest, because a stretch of road that cost \$26 million ended up costing \$72 million as a result of the incompetence of the RTA.

The RTA spends millions of dollars on projects but when a poor little owner of an abattoir and a butcher shop whose family has been trading for generations receives an assessment of loss, the RTA appeals against the amount that was justly awarded by a court and then wins the appeal. The amount claimed was reduced to \$660,353, but the situation gets worst. In addition to the \$400,000-odd that the Perrys lost, their own costs still had to be paid. As a result of an approach which was made to the RTA, the RTA advanced \$200,000 to cover legal fees. Part of a letter from Mr Perry states:

If we get 80% back on our costs that will be only \$584,000.00. Judgment \$660,000.00 plus costs of \$730,000.00 and after paying more legal fees we may get \$156,000.00.

The Perrys are now responsible for their own costs, including the costs they incurred as a result of the appeal lodged by the RTA, and the RTA's costs. The just terms compensation Act was never intended to run over the top of poor little people like the Perrys. When the Act was introduced, it was designed to ensure that ordinary people received just compensation and were treated fairly and decently by government departments. At one stage they were told that they had to clean out the dams. Part of their letter states:

I believe it is still R.T.A. problem as if the R.T.A. did not take our land we would not have had this problem, they have paid for the system in the compensation money.

All so a court order was served on the RTA "Exhibit 86" to clean out dams and drains on our land which were filled with mud during road construction, this has not been done to date.

The Perrys were paid a mere \$1.50 per cubic metre for fill but the fact is that the quality of the fill and rock that was removed from their property was worth far more than that. As I said earlier, the RTA has acted as Big Brother in this matter and has trampled all over these people. It must be remembered that originally the Perrys were assessed as being owed a debt of \$1,164,795.80 and now face the prospect of receiving only a net \$156,000. I call on the Minister for Roads to closely examine this matter and go back to the Perrys with an offer of settlement on just terms. In effect, these people have lost their abattoir, they are losing their butcher shop, they have lost their land and the productivity of the land, and they have also lost their money. For God's sake, deal with them decently.

OLD GREAT NORTH ROAD

Ms ANDREWS (Peats) [5.31 p.m.]: Mr Acting-Speaker, as the honourable member for Wallsend, you would be well aware that the Peats electorate encompasses some beautiful and spectacular scenery. This fact

was clearly evident at an unveiling ceremony which was held recently at Devines Hill in Dharug National Park. The ceremony coincided with the National Engineering Heritage Conference which was held in Canberra during the previous week. On Saturday 13 October Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, Governor of New South Wales, together with Mr Ian Pederson, who is the national immediate past president of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, unveiled a National Engineering Landmark plaque for the 240 kilometres long the Old Great North Road, which runs from Sydney to the Hunter Valley via Wiseman's Ferry and Wollombi.

This historic road was constructed between 1826 and 1836 under the supervision of colonial engineers by convict labourers, the majority of whom were in chain gangs. Those colonial engineers were Lieutenant Percy Simpson, Assistant Surveyor Henage Finch and Lieutenant Jonathon Warner. In recent years the Old Great North Road has been given greater prominence, largely due to work carried out by a number of volunteer members of the convict trail project group, which, up until recent times, has been led by Lorraine Banks. I am very proud to say that a number of the members of this group reside in the Peats electorate. The group has toiled long and hard to gain greater recognition for the Old Great North Road and Saturday's ceremony in many ways clearly showed that their efforts have been justified.

The guest of honour, the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, was clearly impressed with the restoration work that has been carried out on the road in the Devines Hill area in particular. She said it was most important that the period of construction of the road be recorded as part of this State's history. It was interesting to learn from Lorraine Banks' address that research is now being carried out on the lives of the 900 convicts who built the road. The research will hopefully reveal what the future held for many of the convicts: whether they were eventually released and what they did for the remainder of their years. That research should prove to be quite interesting.

Mr Peter Cockbain of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, informed the audience of the significance of the National Engineering Landmark. There are very few of them throughout Australia and I am delighted that a significant portion of the Old Great North Road runs through the Peats electorate. As a matter of fact, the oldest remaining timber bridge that is still in service on the Australian mainland is located very close to the Devines Hill area. The bridge was built in 1830 by convict labour.

The Old Great North Road is regarded as a major engineering contribution to Australia's early colonial settlement. It served the purpose of connecting Sydney to the rapidly developing farmlands of the Hunter Valley. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of two representatives from the Hunter Valley: the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development, and Mr Acting-Speaker, the honourable member for WallSEND. The Old Great North Road assisted in opening up and commencing the development of the new colony.

The Old Great North Road is regarded as the best remaining example of convict-built roadwork. Honourable members will also no doubt be interested to hear that its nomination for World Heritage listing on this basis is currently in progress. The electorate of the honourable member for Hawkesbury adjoins my electorate of Peats. He also attended the ceremony on 13 October and has been quite involved in the project for many years. He and I congratulated all those involved in this significant project, and congratulations must also go to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Mr Bob Conroy, Director, Central, National Parks and Wildlife Service, was the master of ceremonies and Mr Tony Horwood, area manager, Yengo, was in attendance, as were many other employees of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and all volunteers who have done a great job in helping to restore and maintain the Old Great North Road.

Last Saturday I was able to tell those in attendance that a stone from Clare's Bridge, which is part of the Old Great North Road, now stands as part of a national monument located at Mosman. Some time ago members of Parliament received an invitation to donate a stone of significance from their electorates to form part of a national monument that would celebrate Australia's centenary. I am very pleased that a stone from Clare's Bridge is now part of a national monument. I place on record my appreciation of all who have been involved in the project. I also note for the record that significant funding has been made available for restoration work of Federation from the Heritage Assistance Maintenance Program. [*Time expired.*]

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.36 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Peats for bringing this most important matter to the attention of the Parliament today. I recommend to honourable members a book whose publication was jointly financed by Tourism New South Wales and the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] entitled "Explore the Convict Trail". The book explains that the Old Great North Road extended north from Sydney to

the Hunter Valley and that the convict trail follows the route of the 240 kilometre stretch of road that was built between 1826 and 1836. Most of the road continues to be used; it offers an alternative, slower-paced scenic route between Sydney and the Hunter where one can explore the brilliant engineering works created by hundreds of convicts, many of whom were working in leg-irons. The book also states:

Why was it built

By the early 1820s the Colony was expanding rapidly and settlers began taking up land in the fertile Hunter Valley. Sailing ships were the only way people, goods and stock could get to and from Sydney. The settlers petitioned for a decent road. In 1825 Assistance Surveyor Heneage Finch was sent to survey a suitable route. He followed a number of aboriginal tracks along the ridgetops....

How was it built

The engineering techniques used to build the road were at the cutting edge of technology at the time, incorporating the latest European ideas. The work was labour-intensive and the equipment crude. Up to 700 convicts worked on the road at any one time - clearing timber, digging trains, blasting and shaping stone ...

I recommend the book. On behalf of the Government I ask the honourable member for Peats to congratulate all involved. The book displays a famous watercolour by Sofia Campbell which is published through the courtesy of the Mitchell Library. It depicts Newcastle in early settlement days and I invite people to explore Newcastle and the Old Great North Road. I encourage members of the public and honourable members of this House to do so. [*Time expired.*]

CROSS-CITY TUNNEL AIR FILTRATION

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [5.38 p.m.]: The cross-city tunnel approval granted this week by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning contains conditions that will be welcomed by my constituents, including traffic management in Paddington, public transport improvements, independent community liaison and a \$5 million contingency fund. However, despite some acknowledgement of air pollution concerns and a stated aim of improving air quality in the city, the tunnel ventilation system will have the same serious flaws as the Eastern Distributor and M5 East ventilation. Provision for possible later installation of pollution control systems is inadequate and I urge the Government to install pollution filtration on the cross-city tunnel during its construction and to immediately retrofit pollution control systems on the Eastern Distributor, the M5 East and all other major tunnel projects. I also call for a permanent ban on the release of pollution at tunnel portals, renewed focus on long-term public transport solutions for eastern Sydney, including light rail, and effective standards for deadly particulate matter.

Inner-city residents believe that the approved cross-city tunnel stack will be detrimental to local air quality and do not accept that pollution will be reduced because the approved stack is taller and has been moved slightly from the location proposed by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA]. The temporary moratorium on venting concentrated vehicle emissions from the tunnel portals provides no guarantee of long-term protection for Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and Rushcutters Bay, which is Australia's most densely populated area and is directly adjacent to and above the eastern portal. I raise these issues not only on behalf of my constituents but on behalf of all Sydney residents who are concerned that unfiltered road tunnels concentrate vehicle emissions around homes, schools and work places while failing to tackle the contribution of this pollution to Sydney's smog zone and growing incidents of asthma, lung cancer and leukaemia.

Pollution should be filtered rather than directed skyward if we are to achieve cleaner air and a reduction in costs for the health system. Filtration must be seen as a cost integral to the tunnel project rather than transferring the cost to the environment, the community or the health system. As point sources of concentrated pollution, road tunnel stacks contribute to poor air quality and lead to air pollution excesses in the inner city, where pollution levels already are high. Fine particulate matter, a major component of vehicle emissions, has no safe level below which adverse health effects are not observed. I am particularly concerned about attempts to justify the rejection of improved pollution controls on the grounds that effective technology has not yet been developed.

Based on testimonies from international experts at the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquiry, electrostatic precipitators are established, effective and economically viable technology that can remove more than 90 per cent of the most harmful particulate matter. In Japan and Norway, countries that have built more than half the world's long road tunnels, air cleaning equipment is used for in-tunnel visibility and to protect people living near the tunnels. The Norwegian experience suggests that technology would add little to construction costs and would reduce overall expenditure on road tunnels. As the RTA was noted for inconsistent

and contradictory evidence during the inquiry, I fear that pollution controls for the cross-city tunnel have been based on incomplete and inadequate advice. I fear also that the Government's position ignores other significant concerns underplaying the serious pollution impact of road tunnels.

Firstly, the RTA has denied that new expressways induce traffic—a fact confirmed by the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority [EPA] 1997 State of the Environment Report. New roads entice additional and longer trips, thereby increasing overall pollution levels and limiting the benefits of improved vehicle technology to reduce pollution. Transport planning and traffic management for the inner city must include long-term solutions that create a permanent shift away from private vehicle use, such as by extending light rail through inner and eastern Sydney. Secondly, current protocols for vehicle emission standards are inadequate. They do not include guidelines for particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometres and they do not ensure absolute minimum pollution levels.

Tiny particulates are extremely dangerous as they are known to be inhaled more deeply into the lungs. The General Purpose Standing Committee inquiry heard evidence that 70 per cent of vehicle emissions consist of this smaller particulate matter and that this level is increasing with new motor technology. The EPA must urgently develop standards for these small and highly dangerous particulates so that pollution information is meaningful. The attitude towards current pollution goals, demonstrated by the refusal to require filtration devices on tunnel stacks, seems to be to treat guidelines as a licence to pollute up to that level. This does not protect community health as no pollution level is without risk. Any increased pollution exposure leads to increased risk and we must control every source. The only responsible, long-term solution is to mandate the installation of the best available filtration measures on all major road tunnels.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.43 p.m.]: I will refer the contribution of the honourable member for Bligh to the Minister for Transport.

Private members' statements noted.

House adjourned at 5.46 p.m. until Tuesday 23 October 2001 at 2.15 p.m.
