

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 25 October 2001

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Report

Mr Speaker announced, pursuant to the Ombudsman Act 1974, the receipt of the annual report of the New South Wales Ombudsman for the year ended 30 June 2001.

Ordered to be printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion for Bills No. 5 [Local Communities (Brothels—Flexible Zoning) Bill] called on, and postponed on motion by Mr Torbay.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [10.03 a.m.]: I note that the manager of Opposition business is not in the Chamber. However, I will move this motion for consideration by the House later today. By leave, I move:

That on Tuesday 6 November 2001 standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business

1. At 10.00 am (Speaker takes Chair)
2. Government Business
3. At 11.00 am, the ordinary routine of business—
 - Ministerial Statements
 - Notices of Motions
 - Papers
 - Petitions
 - Placing or Disposal of Business
 - Formal Business
 - Committee Reports – tabling
 - Call for Notices of Urgent Motions
 - Announcement of Matters of Public Importance
 - Questions
 - Ministerial Statements
 - Motions for Urgent Consideration
 - Matter of Public Importance
4. Private Members' Statements
5. Adjournment of the House.

Tuesday 6 November is Melbourne Cup day. Many members have made commitments in and out of the city and in their electorates. But the Parliament will sit on that day. It will also sit on Wednesday and Thursday at the normal time and on the Friday of that week. The Opposition might want to say something on that when the motion is debated later today.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr O'Farrell.

**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT
(HONESTY IN CAMPAIGN MATERIAL) BILL**

Bill introduced and read a first time

Second Reading

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is important that members of Parliament seek to engage properly in the political process. Transparency should be combined with the accountability that is inherent in the Westminster system. This legislation has been made necessary by the failure of the State Labor Party during the Auburn by-election to maintain proper adherence to those two principles—transparency and accountability. On polling day during the Auburn by-election, when there was a significant swing against the State Labor Government across the entire electorate, cards and posters appeared, particularly around polling places, as follows:

IMPORTANT

This Saturday
Just Vote 1
for the candidate
of your choice

You don't need to number every square.

This card was deliberately designed to look as though it was an official message from the State Electoral Office. There was no party identification appearing on it. There was no attempt to associate it with the candidate for whom it was printed and whom it supported, the current member for Auburn, Mrs Perry. It was a clear attempt to deceive people. This bill is designed to ensure that such material cannot reappear. Under the State's optional preferential voting system voters have a choice of voting with just one number, filling out all the squares or filling out a number of squares providing they use sequential numbers. Not only did this message confuse and deceive voters in Auburn on polling day, it also confused people operating the electoral processes, people employed by the State Electoral Office on the day to conduct the election.

In a number of the polling places these little brochures were sitting on the returning officers' desks next to the rolls on which people's names were being crossed off. People in those booths had no idea that it was Labor Party election material and not an advisory issued by the State Electoral Office. When the honourable member for Wakehurst, Brad Hazzard, brought this to their attention they were extremely surprised and embarrassed about the whole issue. That shows the level of deceit to which the Australian Labor Party stooped in this matter. It sought to pass off its Just Vote 1 material as official advice from the electoral authorities.

Through this bill we want to ensure that that cannot occur again in relation to the Australian Labor Party, the National Party, the Liberal Party, and the Independents. We are all registered in one way or another under the electoral laws of this State. Political parties should be required to put a clear party affiliation on electoral material, whether it be posters, handouts, fliers or other material described as election material under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act. The Coalition thinks that the electors of this State deserve no less. It is important that electors understand exactly who is behind these sorts of messages broadcast during election periods. It is important that they are aware of the impact of these messages and those who will benefit.

I mentioned as a subsidiary issue that there would be less confusion if the State Electoral Office from time to time embarked on campaigns to educate people about the electoral processes, in particular the voting system. I am sure there are many honourable members who have had inquiries from electors around election time about the way that optional preferential voting systems operate. I know there were many inquiries during the recent State campaign about the way in which the voting system in the State's upper House operates. It should be incumbent upon us, as legislators who are responsible for putting together electoral processes that produce fair and honest elections, also to seek between elections to educate people about political processes. I believe that the State Electoral Office is failing in this regard. I suspect it fails not because its staff is reluctant to tackle the issue but simply because of lack of resources that would enable them to undertake that task. It is not a task that should be left solely to political parties.

I accept that funding is made available to political parties to engage in educational activity. But the heart of this legislation and the heart of my message is the requirement for the State Electoral Office to better explain the election processes, to regulate the way electoral processes are carried out, and to ensure that they operate more efficiently. This legislation will provide the State Electoral Office with increased powers to deal with political parties who want to deceive people by printing messages that appear to come from impartial electoral authorities when clearly the messages have a partisan purpose to mislead and to achieve an outcome that the voter, who may not be fully apprised of all the nuances of the process, does not actually intend. This is not the first time that I have had to speak in Parliament on this issue. The Labor Party is a serial offender when it comes to deception on polling day.

Mr Debnam: Recidivists.

Mr O'FARRELL: As the honourable member for Vacluse suggests, they are recidivists. The honourable member for Vacluse, who is responsible for legislation which has cars driven by hoons doing doughnuts confiscated—and confiscated perhaps in their thousands—ought to consider introducing legislation to confiscate the seats of members of the Labor Party who continually engage in deceptive and misleading electoral practices. As I said, this is not the first time that Labor has sought to deceive people in relation to electoral matters. I recount the situation of the 1996 by-election in the Southern Highlands. Thankfully the current honourable member for Southern Highlands, Ms Seaton, won the election.

In that election, Labor's candidate Phil Yeo, who campaigned on the sexist and highly offensive slogan "The man for the job" when he was standing against two women who were also candidates in the by-election, handed out brochures stating, "Don't waste your vote in futile opposition. Vote 1 Phil Yeo". At face value, I have no problem with that slogan except that there was no indication that Phil Yeo was the Labor Party's candidate and no presence of a party logo. Phil Yeo was attempting to run without those identifying marks because at that time the Labor Party was on the nose.

Mr Yeadon: Your party is currently doing that in the Blue Mountains.

Mr O'FARRELL: We are talking here about matters that relate to State administration. What we see from the Minister at the table, the Minister for Information Technology, is the same confusion and deception practised by his Federal colleagues when they told lies about Federal governments being responsible for public hospitals and public schools. That is not what the Premier of this State said in February 1995. It is not true, and it is equally not true that the State electoral legislation governs Federal issues. The matter in debate in this House is the State electoral system, which I, for one, want to be fair; it should produce open and honest results. Unless legislation of this type is passed, we jeopardise the very foundations of democracy that operate in this State.

This legislation will require the disclosure of party affiliations of any person who authorises the printing of how-to-vote cards and other campaign material. That is important because the material circulated in Auburn on polling day was indeed authorised but it was not authorised by the usual suspect, Eric Roozendahl of Sussex Street, Sydney. It was organised by Karl Bitar who is one of the great unknowns of the Labor Party's dark rooms. He was deliberately chosen because anyone who is not a member of the Right faction of the Labor Party would never identify Karl Bitar with the State Labor Party. The Coalition believes it is important when any member of a political party authorises material, that the name or the logo of the political party appears clearly on the information so there can be no misleading of voters.

Mr Hickey: What is the Liberal Party going to do about it?

Mr O'FARRELL: I will give the honourable member for Cessnock a lesson in political science. Legislation passed in this Parliament applies to all citizens of the State equally, regardless of the political party to which they belong—One Nation, Country Labor, the National Party or the Liberal Party. I will tell the honourable member for Cessnock an interesting thing: the people on the Coalition side of the Chamber have no problem with this legislation and we are surprised that the Labor Party does. That gives rise to my strong concerns that in Auburn there was a deliberate attempt to deceive people and the Labor Party would like to do that again. That speaks volumes about the commitment of members of the Australian Labor Party to an open, fair, transparent and accountable electoral process. That is why I am pleased to introduce this legislation to stop those slimy rorts. It may be all right for the Labor Party to run its political party that way and it might be all right for the Labor Party to run its caucus ballots that way, but it is not the way that I want the State's electoral system run.

In order to ensure that there is disclosure of party affiliations, this legislation requires the name of any party of which the person responsible for the election material is a member, official or employee to be printed in legible characters on the material. This is a very simple piece of legislation. It is simply named and simply set out. Clause 1 sets out its name. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of its operation on the date of assent. Clause 3 amends the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act in the manner prescribed, namely, to require party affiliations to appear on the material. This legislation is unlikely to be passed in this Chamber for reasons demonstrated amply in this Chamber by the Minister for Information Technology, the honourable member for Granville, and the honourable member for Cessnock. But it will be introduced in the upper House and I look forward to another chance of having this matter debated when the upper House passes this legislation either later in this session or early next year. This is important legislation. It has the support of all fair-minded people who want a decent and honest electoral system. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Yeadon.

CROSS-BORDER COMMISSION BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 18 October.

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [10.18 a.m.]: I continue my comments on the Cross-Border Commission Bill by again congratulating my colleague and friend, the honourable member for Ballina, on introducing this long overdue legislation. I reiterate the point that this long overdue legislation will provide another forum for discussion of community concerns in New South Wales. Along this State's borders with Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, many issues need to be discussed because the Carr Government is disadvantaging communities and businesses in those areas.

The Carr Government has effectively shut down the Parliament of New South Wales as an institution for debate on community concerns. This Parliament should be a clearing house for community concerns but that is not happening. In excess of 500 motions about community concerns are on the notice paper for debate but because of the way the Government is managing the Chamber we are simply not discussing them. This bill would set up a commission to provide an umbrella for a series of consultations with the community. It could include community discussions about matters ranging from payroll tax, workers compensation, roads adjacent to our borders, to the Carr Government's drug policies. It could include discussions about the drug policies of the South Australian Government that cause such problems in south-west New South Wales. Many issues of community concern could be covered under this legislation.

The honourable member for Ballina has done a fine job in putting this bill together and presenting it to the Parliament. The Carr Government should overcome its embarrassment, swallow its pride, do what it has done on a half a dozen occasions in recent years and adopt the Opposition's bill. It should do what it has done in many cases, simply photocopy the Opposition's bill, change a couple of words in the heading, reintroduce it as a Government bill and get on with it. This is a good bill. It will put in place a good forum for discussion of community concerns in cross-border areas.

Mr STONER (Oxley) [10.21 a.m.]: I support the Cross-Border Commission Bill introduced by the honourable member for Ballina. This bill is positive, proactive and sensible in that it addresses some longstanding and significant issues faced by the citizens of this State, particularly those residing in regional areas near State borders. The bill provides for the constitution of a Cross-Border Commission of New South Wales. This commission will consist of a chairperson and between four and eight part-time members appointed by the Premier. The part-time members are to be residents of New South Wales who, in the opinion of the Premier, are suitably qualified to represent various interests in relation to border communities. A person cannot be a part-time member if he or she is a member of the Parliament of New South Wales or of the Commonwealth.

The functions of the commission are to invite members of a border community to make submissions to the commission in relation to matters affecting that community; to conduct inquiries into such matters affecting border communities as are referred to it by the Premier or as the commission considers appropriate; to identify issues affecting border communities and to make recommendations to the Premier regarding such issues; to prepare an annual report for tabling in Parliament on the results of its inquiries into matters affecting border communities, and other functions conferred or imposed upon the commission by or under any other Act or law.

That is a simple concept—to establish the commission and set out a range of functions that are mostly based on consulting with people in communities near State borders and addressing various issues. As the honourable member for Vacluse said, it is an excellent forum for identifying and dealing with issues in a policy and legislative way. Earlier this year New South Wales lost the State of Origin series to Queensland and the Premier of Queensland had the Queensland State flag flying on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Sadly, that is not all that is being lost by this State to other States. More serious than a football series, we are losing jobs and revenue to other States. While ever we have a Government that is not serious about addressing anomalies between New South Wales and other States and Territories, we will continue to lose jobs, revenue and populations to other States such as Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

It is clear that New South Wales is now out of step with other States. It has become uncompetitive and slow to change, particularly in the six years of the Carr Labor Government. The National Party represents country areas and those on the borders. National Party members represent their constituents and are well aware of the range of anomalies that affect the lives of citizens in those areas. This bill is doing the job for the Government. The Government has not addressed these issues. Because of that void, the honourable member for Ballina has done the research and talked to people north of the Tweed. They acknowledge that the National Party listens and seeks to address issues raised by country people; therefore, the National Party should receive the full support of the Government for this bill.

Earlier this year the Premier visited Albury and spoke with the Premier of Victoria. He acknowledged a range of issues that affect the lives of people in the Albury-Wodonga area. He put up some proposals, none of which, to my knowledge, have been implemented. This bill is a concrete step towards addressing issues on the New South Wales-Victorian border, the New South Wales-Queensland border, the New South Wales-South Australian border and New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory border. All we have had thus far from the Government has been rhetoric.

Previous speakers outlined a wide range of anomalies experienced by people living in border regions, which include the establishment and construction of roads across borders and the complexities involved in that process, and environmental legislation. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour referred to the extension of the airport and work involving wetlands in the Tweed area. Although New South Wales has problems, Queensland does not seem to have the same problems. Another anomaly is vehicle registration. In my travels up and down the Pacific Highway I see many hire cars that are registered in Victoria.

Mr Fraser: Because of cheaper registration.

Mr STONER: Yes. Anyone living close to border areas or in transitory employment will register their vehicles outside of New South Wales. We are losing revenue because of our regime of fees and charges and because New South Wales is not competitive with other States. Trucks travelling up and down our highways are all registered in Queensland. Even New South Wales freight companies have trucks registered in Queensland, another anomaly. Fuel prices were mentioned. Modern vehicles have a range of fuel tanks and anyone driving from the mid North Coast to Queensland will wait until they get to Queensland before they fill up because fuel is so much cheaper there. They would fill up in New South Wales if it were more competitive. All this has an effect on retail jobs in the service station industry and on revenue in this State.

Daylight saving is a further anomaly. In my younger years on the Gold Coast, on New Year's Eve we would travel across the border into Tweed to see the new year in and have a bit of a party, and then we would head back to Queensland and do it all again. At the time we thought that was pretty good. But there is a far more serious issue. So long as New South Wales is out of kilter with Queensland with regard to daylight saving we will have problems with bus and airline schedules and business opening hours, and those matters affect the economy and jobs in this State.

Workers compensation premiums are significantly cheaper in other States, particularly Queensland and Victoria. Businesses will set up in other States if they can reduce the cost of doing business, such as workers compensation. Payroll tax in this State is also out of step with the payroll tax of other States; it is too expensive in this State. Two large employers in my electorate are Multinail at Wauchope, which exports roof truss systems, and Express Coach Builders, one of Australia's largest coach manufacturing businesses. Those companies have received overtures from Queensland, and they have thought seriously about relocating their businesses there. It might be a little more difficult because they are further south of the border than some other companies. If I were a businessman in the Tweed or on the Victorian border, it would not take much to convince me to relocate if it meant saving money.

The honourable member for Burrinjuck referred to anomalies relating to traffic infringements, bus accreditation standards and public health issues. The honourable member for Vacluse spoke about drug issues between the States. What has the Governor done about these anomalies? Apart from the rhetoric of the Premier, along with his Victorian counterpart, it has done virtually nothing. As I have said, we are falling behind other States; we are out of step with other States. The Government is ignorant of the anomalies faced by country people in border regions. However, this excellent bill will ensure that those anomalies are addressed. It will result in a legislative agenda, it will stem the loss of revenue and jobs to other States, and it will enhance the quality of life for country people. As I have said, this is a case of the Opposition once again doing the Government's job. Given the opportunity, the Opposition will correct these anomalies, as it has fixed other Government policies and other legislation in the past.

The honourable member for The Entrance argued that the establishment of a cross-border commission would be a waste of money. But we are losing money hand over foot to other States. Surely, if we are losing jobs to other States, this commission would be a very worthwhile investment. It would result in savings in the long run, and surely there should be a cost benefit analysis of the proposal. But then again, given the Government's track record as an economic manager, perhaps it has overlooked the benefits of a simple cost benefit analysis. A cross-border commission would put these issues on the agenda, it would establish a very valuable forum for public consultation, and it would also establish priorities for legislative reform. I can see no reason why the Government would not support this sensible, positive and proactive proposal, and I commend it to the House.

Mr SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Leader of the National Party) [10.33 a.m.]: It is with pleasure that I support the Cross-Border Commission Bill. At the outset I indicate that this legislation is considered very important and is clearly necessary. I congratulate the honourable member for Ballina on his foresight in introducing the legislation, which has been welcomed by all sections of the community, particularly those living in cross-border regions. Obviously, New South Wales has many such cross-border communities on its borders with Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory.

This bill is not about political point scoring. It is plainly about addressing serious issues that make life difficult for thousands of residents in cross-border communities. It is also about putting New South Wales businesses on an even keel with their competitors in other States and the Australian Capital Territory. It has the potential in the long term to boost employment in cross-border communities. I am disappointed that the Premier has not seen fit to throw his weight behind this innovative proposal. The honourable member for Ballina wrote to the Premier on 5 April last year asking for bipartisan support to deal with a multitude of issues confronting border communities. On 16 May last year the Premier replied:

While I am in favour of seamless borders, I am concerned that the proposed Cross-Border Commission would create an unnecessary and ineffective level of bureaucracy for little, if any gain.

The Premier went on to say:

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.

I am amazed by that response. One wonders in what way the Premier consulted his members. Was this decision taken by the Labor Party caucus? One also wonders what manner of consultation the Premier or his Government had with relevant communities. There is no evidence whatsoever of any of that. There is not a press clipping, nor a scrap of paper, nothing. In fact, the letter I have just cited was clearly written by a bureaucrat within the Premier's department who, fruitlessly, has been in charge of this issue. I have never seen a more bureaucratically driven response.

Was the honourable member for Tweed, who we know has been lobbied hard on the need for a cross-border commission, allowed any input? I would like to know what his current level of input is. After all, his electorate is greatly affected by cross-border anomalies. Indeed, at this stage we are sure that the Premier has either refused, or inadvertently denied himself, the benefit of consultation. The honourable member for Albury, on the other hand, has significant views to put to the House about problems on the New South Wales-Victorian border. I am pleased that he will follow me in this debate. Members of this House who have a direct involvement in cross-border anomalies ought to be heard, and their opinions ought to carry a little more weight than, obviously, the Premier is prepared to give them.

The Premier's response is petty politics at its worst—and it is petty politics at the community's expense. Just because the bill was not the Government's idea it should not automatically be rejected—which is exactly

what the Government has done—thus denying thousands of cross-border residents the benefit of it. I am pleased that Premier Beattie's view was quite different to Premier Carr's view. Premier Carr welcomed the proposal on the other side of the Queensland border, and said he would be interested in supporting it and being involved in consultation. I urge the Premier to swallow his pride, for once in his life, and agree to something that would make a real difference to the people of rural and regional New South Wales affected by thousands upon thousands of cross-border anomalies.

I am not surprised by Premier Carr's response, because his Government is obsessed with the metropolitan conurbation. In his letter the Premier argues that current arrangements for dealing with border problems are more likely than the proposed commission to solve those problems. That is a laugh. The Premier knows that is an inaccurate picture of the reality—and that is a mild version of what I think about the Premier's response. Very few cross-border anomalies have been resolved since Premier Carr came to power six years ago. The evidence of the past six years completely contradicts the Premier's position that the current arrangements and structures are solving the problems. They are not solving the problems.

This little government instrumentality—this little quango buried somewhere in the Premier's Department—is perhaps the most ineffective government body in the entire New South Wales bureaucracy. That is a pretty big statement, which I might contradict later. This invisible section within the Premier's Department is hardly likely to challenge the status quo; it is hardly likely to become involved with the community and exceed its almost non-existent charter. I challenge the Premier to ask any cross-border community resident or businessperson what his department has done to alleviate cross-border problems.

I challenge the Premier to produce their responses. There will be none. Cross-border residents and businesses do not even know that this bureaucracy exists, let alone be aware of its purported achievements. No-one to whom we spoke who suffers as a result of cross-border anomalies—that includes local government, the club movement, the trucking business and so on—knew of the existence of this bureaucracy, let alone has been invited to contribute an opinion about a cross-border anomaly that is being discussed or investigated by the unit. I bet that that body has nothing under discussion at present. I bet that one bureaucrat has been assigned the additional minor duty of writing letters to rebut and reject any suggestion that might help to solve cross-border anomalies. I reckon the unit's charter of operation is that no constructive effort should be considered.

The Premier paid a presidential visit to the Albury-Wodonga region to announce the merger of not only both local government areas but the two cross-border communities. I do not know—and it is not for me to say—whether that merger should occur. The local communities must consider their position in that regard. I did not support or oppose the merger; that is not the issue. We are trying to solve cross-border anomalies, and they will be a key issue for those cross-border communities to consider in the event of a merger. I understand that some 1,200 cross-border anomalies have been identified and must be resolved. In addition, there are major issues of jurisdiction, the level and delineation of sovereignty, and whether there would be a dual legal system. These are big cross-border anomalies, and none of them has been addressed by the Premier.

Mr Ian Sinclair is consulting the community about such issues, but I bet the Premier has not given those cross-border anomalies a second thought since his whirlwind presidential tour of the region. I am interested to hear the contribution of the honourable member for Albury as he is involved in the merger consultation process and can offer some insight into cross-border anomalies. We are not debating the proposed merger of Albury and Wodonga; that is not the point of this bill. This bill is about providing a mechanism in New South Wales to resolve cross-border anomalies and developing a process for involving the public in that activity.

The proposal by the honourable member for Ballina for an independent, stand-alone cross-border commission is the first real and serious attempt to tackle the problems confronting cross-border communities. I will not glorify the current arrangement by calling it an attempt to solve cross-border anomalies; it is an attempt to write one or two letters per annum in rebuttal of any good suggestions. That is the only role of the stupid committee that the Premier has incorporated in his personal bureaucracy.

Commission members will be suitably qualified to represent one or more of the following interests in relation to border communities: consumers, businesses, farmers, local government and the broader community generally. These people will not be faceless bureaucrats based in a glass office tower in Sydney; they will work on the ground in cross-border communities and have practical experience of the problems. When we floated the proposal for this bill we were overwhelmed by support. Residents in cross-border communities recognised that someone had finally objectively considered the problems they face on a daily basis, that someone had actually gone to the trouble of asking, "What are businesses in New South Wales suffering by comparison with their

competitors on the other side of the border? What are the issues?" Payroll tax anomalies, workers compensation differences, daylight saving, gaming laws, education standards and so on impact on cross-border communities in one way or another—usually adversely.

We must acknowledge that our cross-border communities suffer many disadvantages every day, and this bill is the first serious attempt in New South Wales to deal with those disadvantages. The Carr Government's response is pathetic, and will be viewed as such by cross-border communities. This Government's level of care and concern about the vexed problem of cross-border anomalies is revealed in its claim that the present arrangement is working well and that the anomalies are being solved left, right and centre every day. I can tell the Premier and Labor members that the people in cross-border communities will not buy that one—in fact, I can hear them laughing already. This bill is the first fair dinkum attempt to address this issue and it should be treated in a fair dinkum manner by this Government, which should recognise the total failure of its cross-border policy over six solid years.

Mr PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [10.47 a.m.]: I echo the comments of the Leader of the National Party about the Cross-Border Commission Bill. My electorate bounds on the Victorian border for 200 or 300 kilometres and I face cross-border anomalies every day—in fact, my office keeps an updated list of the different types of anomalies. People in my electorate, and I am sure in every other area of New South Wales that borders other States, face these problems also. About 12 months ago the Deniliquin newspaper initiated a discussion about shifting the Victorian border to north of the town. Although that discussion was slightly tongue-in-cheek, many people who live close to the Murray but on the New South Wales side of the border suffer enormous inconvenience.

Melbourne is only two or three hours away while Sydney is five, seven or eight hours away. It is obviously easier for people in southern New South Wales to travel to Melbourne or to other regional centres in Victoria, such as Shepparton and Bendigo, for the types of services supplied in capital cities. These people face this problem every single day. I am sure most Government members do not understand that, as most of them are from metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. The honourable member for Murray-Darling is probably aware of the cross-border anomalies but he is definitely in the minority in this Labor Government.

I will point out a couple of completely ridiculous cross-border anomalies that the commission proposed by the bill would help to solve. In New South Wales ovine Johne's disease [OJD] levies are paid on the farm while in Victoria they are paid at the point of sale. Therefore, New South Wales farmers who live along the border and sell their sheep in Victoria pay the OJD levy once in New South Wales and then again at the saleyards in Victoria. Those farmers are faced with absolutely no option but to pay the OJD levies twice, which is a significant cost and a huge inconvenience. My office has been trying to sort out this matter with the Premier's Department cross-border committee, but to no avail. That is why the proposal in this bill would be of great benefit to people in border regions and would provide them with an opportunity to have farmer representatives on that committee and present evidence to it. Those representatives would have an understanding of and empathy with those problems, and I am sure a more rapid solution would be found.

It would be of no detriment to the Government to support and pass this bill; indeed, that would be to the benefit of residents of New South Wales. People who live in places such as Tocumwal, Albury, Wentworth and Moama travel to Melbourne, which is only a couple of hours away, for their health care, to watch football or to visit their family but they cannot use their senior citizens or travel concession cards. They can travel the seven or eight hours to Sydney on concession rates but they cannot use those cards to get to Melbourne or in Melbourne.

The cross-border anomalies also affect motor vehicle registration, insurance and fishing and building licences. A person who lives in Moama, in particular, has to have New South Wales and Victorian building licences to operate in Echuca. For young people in southern New South Wales who want to go to TAFE, for example, it is a significant problem. Apprentices may be only half an hour from the TAFE at Echuca and not far from Shepparton or Bendigo, where they can do their related courses, but the Victorian TAFE will not accept them and they are forced to go to Wagga Wagga, Sydney or Wollongong.

People cannot understand how 03 can be the area code for telephone numbers in parts of my electorate, because 03 is a Victorian prefix. Though it is difficult for people to understand, it would be easy to overcome that problem. Government department 1800 numbers in New South Wales cannot be accessed in the 03 or 07 area codes, although quite a few residents of New South Wales have those area codes. So it is also difficult in Broken Hill and Queensland. There are big and small anomalies, but a cross-border commission as proposed in this bill would give people the opportunity to solve those anomalies; and by solving people's problems you make their lives a little easier and more convenient.

Now that there are Labor governments in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland there is no excuse why an arrangement cannot be made between those States. Previously the Government may have been able to use the excuse that a Coalition Government in Victoria would not co-operate, but everyone knows that those in the Australian Labor Party across Australia love each other so much—

Mr Yeadon: We were not elected to implement your policies; we were elected to implement Labor policies.

Mr PICCOLI: Yes, and that is terribly unfortunate and to the great detriment of New South Wales. Labor States border New South Wales, so there is really no excuse. The Minister can snarl all he likes but this is about sorting out the problems of the elderly who want the same opportunities as everyone else in New South Wales. They want to travel to Melbourne on their senior citizens card, but because of these problems they are unable to do so. I know it is difficult for the Minister, but I ask the Government to show compassion and understanding for people living in border areas. If the Minister for Information Technology took the opportunity to spend a few days in the border regions he might have more of an understanding. I urge this House to support the legislation and the establishment of this commission to help to solve some of the problems of these people.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [10.54 a.m.]: I support this bill, and on behalf of the people who live in our border areas I congratulate the honourable member for Ballina on introducing it. Border anomalies are the bane of life for people who live in border areas. Every day they are faced with the problems that the anomalies pose. The Leader of the National Party mentioned the anomalies committee that has been in operation for a number of years and has been working away to try to solve border anomalies. Its record of success is absolutely abysmal. The committee has brought about very little change for the benefit of people who live in the border areas, and the major problems faced by them every day have not been addressed.

Not so long ago there was a month's difference in the commencement of daylight saving time as between Victoria and New South Wales. Life for people who live in Albury and Wodonga, which, for all intents and purposes are one city, was chaotic. Many schoolchildren who live in Wodonga have to cross the border each day to go to school in New South Wales. Similarly, schoolchildren in Albury go to school in Wodonga. When daylight saving was out of sync between the two States it was chaotic for parents getting their children to school. Two people who work in my office in Albury live in Wodonga, and it was chaotic for them when daylight saving times were different.

Many of the thousands of people who live and work in New South Wales break the law by driving cars registered in Victoria—because of the border anomaly that car registration and third party insurance in Victoria is far cheaper than it is in New South Wales. Victorian people who live in Wodonga have a New South Wales 02 telephone area code, for the simple reason that they would otherwise have to make a subscriber trunk line call to Albury. The border, in fact, means very little to people who live on the border. They cross it everyday for various reasons and think nothing of it, but border anomalies such as workers compensation make their lives very difficult.

Fishing licences anomalies plagued border areas for many years. I am pleased that a marine safety bill was debated last week, because the reciprocal arrangements that have been made are a big step forward. But there are more than 1,200 other majors issues that plague people's lives every day, and only this cross-border commission can effectively deal with them. Some time ago when the New South Wales and Victoria Cabinets met in Albury-Wodonga the Premiers announced that there would be one local government administration for those two cities. In many ways that will be a great advantage to the border area and to those two cities, but it will not help to any great extent unless these border anomalies are dealt with.

There is a great deal of resistance to the proposal to merge into one city. People are asking, first of all, for a referendum—and I agree with them. Putting that aside, the greatest concerns they have are with border anomalies. They ask what is the point of having one administration for the two cities if they still have to go on living with the vexatious border anomalies. The Government is not making any attempt to deal with the anomalies in any way at all. It has identified four or five border anomalies to be dealt with if the administration of the two cities is merged. But that leaves more than 1,200 further anomalies that will not be dealt with and that crop up every day for people living on the border and make their lives difficult.

We deal with cross-border problems on a day-to-day basis. The people who make the decisions and can change the situation live nowhere near a border. They do not understand what the problem is and do not care much at all. The situation is too difficult for them, they are not interested and they leave the people who live on

the borders with these enormous problems. Much has been said about this issue, but it simply comes back to the fact that those of us who live on the border face these problems every day. We need relief. The committee that was set up many years ago to deal with the anomalies has been ineffective and has achieved very little. The Cross-Border Commission, as proposed by the honourable member for Ballina, is the only practical and sensible way to solve these enormous problems that plague people's lives on a daily basis. I strongly support this bill.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [11.01 a.m.], in reply: I would like to thank all honourable members who have contributed to this debate: the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, the honourable member for Burrinjuck, the honourable member for Lismore, the honourable member for Vacluse, the honourable member for Monaro, the former member for Tamworth, the honourable members for Oxley, the Leader of the National Party who made a constructive contribution this morning, the honourable member for Murrumbidgee and the honourable member for Albury, and also the member for The Entrance, who spoke on behalf of the Government and the honourable member for Cabramatta. Significantly, I note two Government members who did not speak to this bill. The honourable member for Tweed did not make a contribution to this bill, yet New South Wales and Queensland cross-border issues in the Tweed are of great significance. It ill behoves the honourable member for Tweed not to have made a contribution to this debate because his community is very concerned about cross-border issues. Similarly, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, who has three States and one Territory bordering his electorate—Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory—did not make a contribution to this debate. Yet his electorate is also very concerned about cross-border issues.

A significant number of members made a contribution to this debate identifying cross-border anomalies. If one wants justification for this legislation, one should refer to the contributions of members of the National and Liberal parties, which highlight the problems that exist in cross-border communities. The detailed contributions from the honourable member for Burrinjuck and the honourable member for Monaro about the problems in the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales communities give the lie to the contribution made by honourable member for Cabramatta, who had the temerity to say that no issues of any significance arose between New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. The honourable member for Cabramatta, who is now present in the Chamber, should read the contributions of the honourable member for Monaro and the honourable member for Burrinjuck about the problems that exist in the cross-border communities in Queanbeyan and the Australian Capital Territory. Those problems relate to health, school transport and a whole range of other issues which obviously the Government is not interested in trying to resolve.

The Government does not support the bill because, it asserts, the existing arrangements are working. Nothing could be further from the truth. The existing arrangements are that a committee, which operates out of the Premier's Department, is supposedly bringing forward recommendations, which nobody knows about, to the government of the day for a solution. With this legislation we are trying to get away from the darkroom mentality that currently exists and give communities the opportunity to have their say, to make recommendations to an independent, non-political body. That body will then report to the Parliament on an annual basis about the nature of the recommendations made to it and, importantly, examine the Government's response to the recommendations.

This legislation is all about a genuine, non-political attempt to solve the many problems that have been identified by the many speakers who have made a significant contribution to this debate. It is about a non-political solution. It is about putting in place a mechanism that enables communities to come forward with recommendations to an independent body. That body will decide whether to accept or reject the recommendations and then report to the Parliament, not the Government, every year, so that every member can see the recommendations. The body will also examine whether the Government has acted on the recommendations, and if not, why not. That is what this bill is all about.

The Government also put that the commission would be an extra layer of bureaucracy. I point out that we already have one layer of bureaucracy, that is, the committee in the Premier's Department, which is costing money but not delivering any outcomes. The problems pointed out by honourable members who contributed to this debate would not be so great if outcomes were achieved. But clearly the cross-border committee is not working. I propose to replace that cross-border committee with a Cross-Border Commission that has independence and mechanisms for accountability. There is no net cost increase in what I propose. Indeed, it is the vision of the National and Liberal parties that this commission having done its job would disappear after five or six years, or however long it took to address the cross-border issues. It may take a little longer. The idea is that once the problems have been solved a sunset arrangement would apply and the body would disappear. The commission will comprise one permanent head and four part-time deputies. A huge number of people would not be involved and it will not cost the Government very much at all. As I said, the committee already costs a great deal of money but is not delivering any outcomes.

I am bitterly disappointed that the Government will not support this bill. I remind the House that when this proposal was floated, the Premier of Queensland, Mr Beattie, said that it was a very good idea. He said that he did not care whether the proposal came from the National Party, the Liberal Party or the Labor Party, it was a good idea and it should be supported. That was his positive contribution when he heard about the proposal for an independent body to look at these issues and come forward with real solutions on an accountable basis. The Premier of New South Wales initially said that he thought the idea had some merit, until the bureaucrats got at him. His letter of response to me was in bureaucratic terms. Initially he wanted to support the concept because it was proposed on a non-political basis. In a letter I wrote to the Premier when I was originally interested in introducing this legislation I said:

It is my 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 New South Wales Parliament.

It is my belief that the Coalition's proposal for a Crossborder 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 a year.

Further I said:

It is my hope that this proposed legislation will enjoy bipartisan support and I would welcome your comments with a view to a positive outcome that will benefit thousands of New South Wales residents and businesses.

If the Government thought that amendments were necessary to get this concept up and running, I would have been quite happy to entertain them. But no, after initial positive comments from the Premiers of both New South Wales and Queensland, the Premier of New South Wales subsequently sent me a letter that was quite clearly drafted by the head of the Cabinet Office, which indicated that existing arrangements were working well. Quite clearly, they are not working well. If they were we would not have so many problems to deal with. Honourable members have referred to the numerous problems encountered by people living in border towns, such as daylight saving, different workers compensation premiums between the different States, the necessity to take out two workers compensation policies to operate in two States, and differences in payroll tax, health arrangements and school buses.

The list is endless. I am disappointed to think that this genuine attempt by the National and Liberal parties to support a meaningful body that would listen to the concerns of the communities will achieve nothing. The communities know what their problems are. They have been talking about them for years. They want someone to do something about them. A couple of days ago I noted yet another article in the *Daily News* about the problems of daylight saving, as well as other problems in the Tweed. Councillor Brinsmead of Tweed Shire Council had this to say:

It's a horrible nightmare for business and for families who have to operate on both sides of the border, but those who have been expecting politicians to come up with a solution are hoping in vain.

Communities are of the view that politicians should get their act together to start solving cross-border commission anomalies. This legislation is a fantastic opportunity, on a bipartisan basis, to do that. But because of the narrow-minded, short-sighted position of the Carr Government we will not achieve that potential outcome. I am greatly disappointed. There are no political points to be scored in this debate. I made it plain right from the start that this is not a political exercise. The bill specifically provides that neither a Federal nor State member of Parliament can be appointed to a position of part-time commissioner on the commission. The purpose of that clause was to take the politics right out of it and deter governments from appointing one of their members in need of votes so that that member could be seen to be doing something about it. This whole thing is non-political.

The bill is a fantastic vehicle to enable communities to bring forward their immediate concerns and to enable those concerns to be heard, but more importantly to tell the people of New South Wales, via the Parliament, that certain recommendations were made to the commission and this is the Government's response to those recommendations. At the moment that does not happen. No-one knows what the recommendations are. They are put to some committee within the Premier's Department. No-one knows whether the response of the Premier's Department is positive or negative. Occasionally we might get an announcement about some minor change. But that is not good enough. The current arrangements are not working. This is a great opportunity for us to put forward a mechanism that will deliver outcomes for people in border communities right across the State, whether it be New South Wales-Queensland, Victoria-New South Wales, ACT-New South Wales or South Australia-New South Wales.

The bill is a great opportunity for this House to deliver a statesman-like proposal supported strongly by members on this side of the House. Unfortunately, the input from the Government was two speakers whose contributions were marginal at best. It is significant to note that the two Government members in seats most affected by cross-border issues, the honourable member for Tweed and the honourable member for Murray-Darling, did not participate in the debate. Their lack of participation is indicative of their contempt for their constituencies and the problems of their constituents in relation to cross-border issues. I know, and it is to the Government's shame, that it will vote down the legislation. This is a great opportunity to do something positive to help solve the problems faced by cross-border communities. But the Government is denying those communities that opportunity. Shame on the Government!

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 37

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

Noes, 53

Ms Allan	Mrs Grusovin	Mr Orkopoulos
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 Whelan
Mr Debus	Ms Megarritty	Mr Woods
Mr Face	Mr Mills	Mr Yeadon
Mr Gaudry	Mr Moss	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
Mr Greene	Ms Nori	Mr Thompson

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT
(OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT) BILL**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 4 May 2000.

Mr GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.22 a.m.]: The Government opposes the bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition. The establishment of the position of an information commissioner is

clearly superfluous. The Administrative Decisions Tribunal [ADT], established by this Government, already has the power to make binding freedom of information [FOI] determinations. Having both an ADT and an information commissioner would be merely a duplication of roles. The Leader of the Opposition may not be aware that in the two Australian jurisdictions that have information commissioners, namely Queensland and Western Australia, neither has an ADT. The Government also opposes the proposal in the bill that members of the public be entitled to be present at any meeting of a board of management of a statutory corporation.

As the Leader of the Opposition would be aware, corporations in the private sector do not have their board meetings open to shareholders. There is a very good reason for this. Over the last decade there has been much greater emphasis on the importance of corporate governance in both the private and public sectors. Good corporate governance aims to ensure that the board of an organisation effectively supervises the management, has clear accountability to its stakeholders, and properly discharges its legal duties. An example of one type of statutory corporation that would be disadvantaged by the Opposition's proposal would be a State-owned corporation. Such corporations are required by legislation to operate as successful businesses. They are expected to compete on a level playing field with their private sector competitors.

Having all board meetings of a State-owned corporation open to the public would enable its competitors to attend such meetings and obtain access to all sorts of useful information. It would also be possible for a person doing business with a State-owned corporation to take advantage of information obtained at a board meeting. There are other types of statutory corporations that have access to confidential information that is not commercial in nature. The New South Wales Crime Commission is a good example of such a corporation established by statute. The commission is responsible for such things as assembling evidence to be used in a prosecution, and for providing reports on illegal drug trafficking and organised crime. Having the meetings of the commission and its management committee open to the public would be totally counterproductive.

Requiring a statutory corporation to have all of its board meetings open to the public fails to recognise the important distinction between board decisions that may be made public and the process of making those decisions. Having all board meetings open to the public may have the undesirable effect of preventing board members obtaining all of the information necessary for them to properly exercise their functions. It may also have the effect of stifling the type of discussion that is necessary for good collective decision-making. The remaining proposals in the Opposition bill are simply unnecessary. The proposal to allow external review proceedings of FOI determinations to commence without the need for internal review to be completed is unworkable. It will stretch the resources of the external review bodies without any foreseeable benefit for FOI applicants.

The current internal review process in the FOI Act is neither costly nor onerous for an applicant. An internal review costs \$40 and is required to be dealt with within 14 days. If the determination is changed significantly as a result of the internal review then the \$40 fee is refunded. Requiring applicants to seek an internal review before going to the Ombudsman or the ADT has the advantage of a more senior officer conducting an independent review of the determination and addressing any errors that may have been made. It also has the effect of reducing the number of FOI determinations proceeding to external review. The proposal to clarify that it is the agency that has the burden of establishing that documents are exempt under the FOI is unnecessary. Section 61 of the FOI Act already provides exactly that. Similarly, there is no need to amend the Act to provide for fees to be set by regulation. FOI fees and charges were set eleven years ago by the Coalition when the Act commenced and have not increased since then.

It is my view that, contrary to the view put forward by the Opposition, the FOI Act is working well. This is based on evidence provided by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's most recent annual report indicated that in 1997-98 either all or some documents were released in 91 per cent of determinations, and only 7.9 per cent of reported applications resulted in access being completely refused. The selective quotation of statistics from the Ombudsman's report by the Leader of the Opposition in her second reading speech paints a misleading picture of FOI in New South Wales. She indicated that the Premier's Department refused in full 55 per cent of all FOI applications. That statistic is wrong. The Premier's Department annual report puts this matter into proper context. In 1997-98 the Premier's Department received 18 FOI applications and of those 12 were refused in full.

Mr Debnam: Will you read that sentence again?

Mr GAUDRY: Yes, I will. The Premier's Department annual report puts this matter into proper context. In 1997-98 the Premier's Department received 18 FOI applications and of those 12 were refused in full. Two were refused because no deposit was paid by the applicant and five were refused because the department did not hold the document. The department's most recent annual report discloses that in 1998-99 there were six

refusals out of a total of eight FOI applications. Of those six refusals, four were because the department or the Premier's Office did not hold the document, one was because the applicant did not pay the fee and one was because the document was exempt.

I will provide the Parliament with more examples of why this bill is unnecessary. The same Ombudsman's report disclosed that there has been a decrease in the estimated number of FOI applications. The Ombudsman attributed that decrease to the adoption of open access policies recommended by the Department of Health. Those policies have led the number of formal FOI applications to area health services dropping by more than one-third over the past three years. The report indicated that approximately 75 per cent of all FOI applications relate to the personal affairs of the applicant and, in most instances, agencies grant full access to such documents. It should be noted that the commencement of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal in October 1998 led to a decrease in the number of FOI complaints to the Ombudsman by 18 per cent from the previous year. Significantly, the Ombudsman has made no adverse findings in relation to an FOI complaint in the past two years.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

Debate resumed from 20 September.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! I understand that the honourable member for North Shore has concluded her reply.

Mrs SKINNER: Yes.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 52

Ms Allan
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
Ms Megarrity
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 Whelan
Mr Woods
Mr Yeadon

Tellers,
Mr Anderson
Mr Thompson

Noes, 37

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

Mr Kerr
Mr Maguire
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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 52

Ms Allan	Mrs Grusovin	Mr Orkopoulos
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 Whelan
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Woods
Mr Debus	Ms Megarrity	Mr Yeadon
Mr Face	Mr Mills	
Mr Gaudry	Mr Moss	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Newell	Mr Anderson
Mr Greene	Ms Nori	Mr Thompson

Noes, 37

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

ABORIGINAL DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr R. H. L. Smith.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

Debate resumed from 18 October.

Mr TINK (Epping) [11.44 a.m.]: I strongly support the motion of the honourable member for Hornsby, which 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 Road, Thornleigh, and for the widening of the rail bridge at Duffy Avenue. Those locations are just outside my electorate. The Esplanade runs into my electorate and carries heavy traffic north from my electorate towards Hornsby at all hours of the day and night. As people all over northern Sydney are aware, this road network is under increasing pressure. It is interlinked, being an arterial system that backs up the Pennant Hills Road link between Pennant Hills,

Wahroonga and Hornsby with The Esplanade-Chilvers Road link on the western side of the railway line through to Hornsby. It is common knowledge that the road capacity is not sufficient to cope with the traffic. In peak periods the situation is chronic, as it is on Pennant Hills Road.

The matter came to a head during the last State election in 1999. I commend the honourable member for Hornsby for the detailed way in which he set out the history of the matter and the promises that were made. Many promises were made and the Labor Party, particularly in our area of Sydney, is always keen to forget its promises made during election campaigns because normally they turn out to be highly embarrassing. In addition, the record of the promises—the footprints in the sand, so to speak—are so lightly tracked that they disappear within 12 months. The honourable member for Hornsby has done everyone in northern Sydney a service by reminding the House and putting on the record where the Labor Government and the local Labor candidate stood prior to the 1999 election in relation to this matter.

The honourable member for Hornsby was perhaps a little more generous to the Labor candidate, Mr Cardamatis, than I would have been. He said that initially the promise by Mr Cardamatis of \$600,000 was contingent. Mr Cardamatis subsequently firmed up when the local media pressed him—and rightly so—on the contingent promises and he removed the contingency, so to speak. So far as I am concerned, in those circumstances the promise was never contingent. It was a straight-out promise by the Labor Government and the Labor candidate to put \$600,000 into that area, and specifically into the Duffy Avenue bridge. That promise was not kept. Nevertheless, as the honourable member for Hornsby indicated, the fact that the Government program for the intensification of medium density housing in the area continues apace was no better illustrated than by the development of the Ormond site.

The Government, having pressed the local government authority to dramatically increase the density of housing—and, therefore, traffic in the immediate vicinity—did nothing to increase the road-based infrastructure to cope with the extra traffic. That affects the constituents of Hornsby, particularly those in Westleigh. It has the effect of the gumming up the whole off-centred intersection in The Esplanade-Chilvers Road-Duffy Avenue area, which in turn is gummed up through the significant constriction that occurs on the Duffy Avenue bridge. Basically, this subregional traffic area binds up. The Government has pushed ahead and increased the housing density in a dramatic fashion on one site, thus dramatically increasing the amount of traffic, but it has done nothing to meet its commitment to increase the capacity of the local road infrastructure to carry the extra load. That is a specific broken promise and those who represent the Labor Party in northern Sydney as successors to Mr Cardamatis must explain why the promise has not been kept.

As the honourable member for Hornsby pointed out, Hornsby council has not been sitting on its hands with regard to this project. It has planned works for the bridge, called for expressions of interest and expects to let contracts next year for that bridge work. The problem is that no money is forthcoming from the State Government for the work. The Government is shirking its responsibilities in this regard. The Duffy Avenue bridge links a significant secondary road network directly with Pennant Hills Road, which is perhaps the busiest and most constricted road in New South Wales—probably the whole of Australia. Traffic conditions are particularly bad in that precise location.

The Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads is proceeding apace with the Western Sydney Orbital, and therefore I believe he has a fundamental duty to understand the impact of the orbital on Pennant Hills Road. He has consistently refused to do that. A study is being conducted, grudgingly and belatedly, into Pennant Hills Road options. The Minister must understand that, as the Western Sydney Orbital will precede any measures to ease the pressure on Pennant Hills Road, he has a direct and immediate obligation to improve the infrastructure of those major roads that link to Pennant Hills Road. This is a major and pressing issue. The only result from the Minister's management of this issue is increasing constriction in the Duffy Avenue area. That is why it is vital to widen the bridge as promised.

The Minister is not ignorant of this problem as the Labor candidate for Hornsby, Mr Cardamatis, made a significant election commitment in this regard. The Minister has been aware of this issue at all times, and he should be extremely ashamed and embarrassed about his failure to meet that commitment. That promise must be kept, especially as Hornsby council has made it a top priority. Hornsby council is one of the largest councils in metropolitan Sydney both in terms of population and area. It is no coincidence that this bridge and these roadworks are a priority in the shire. Pennant Hills Road, which extends from the Western Sydney Orbital, is immensely important to the State Government's infrastructure program.

The State's commitment must join that of local government and the intersection and the bridge must be upgraded. The Labor candidate for Hornsby in the next election campaign, whether Councillor White or

someone else, will be held accountable for the past failures of the Government and former Labor councillors, particularly Mr Cardamatis, who made this promise initially. If Mr Cardamatis failed in this endeavour, how can we accept the word of any Hornsby councillor or any future Labor candidate on this issue? I assume that the honourable member for Cabramatta aspires to be Minister for Roads after the next election. [*Time expired.*]

Ms MEAGHER (Cabramatta—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.54 a.m.]: What a disappointing performance by the honourable member for Hornsby. The Government opposes this narrow and ill-conceived motion, and I will provide a fairly good summary of the reasons why. I am advised by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] that the roads in question are a mixture of regional and local roads. I am also advised that Duffy Avenue is a local road and that The Esplanade and Chilvers Road are regional roads under the care and control of Hornsby shire council. However, I point out that the route comprising The Esplanade, Chilvers Road and Duffy Avenue is recognised as a regional route and is therefore eligible for funding under the RTA's Repair and Improve Regional Roads [REPAIR] program. By way of explanation, Hornsby council can apply to the Roads and Traffic Authority for funding under the repair program on a dollar for dollar basis for specific reconstruction and/or improvement works. To assist the council with its financial management it may use the 3 x 3 council determined allotment as its part share in the REPAIR program.

The Roads and Traffic Authority is well aware of the road issues raised in this motion. In response to the assertions of the honourable member for Hornsby, I am advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority has already provided comment to the council about the proposed Westleigh local environmental study and master planning process. This commentary included a request that the capacity of a number of critical intersections, including Duffy Avenue and Chilvers Road, be taken into consideration when the council considers future rezoning and development of the Westleigh area. In addition, the House must be aware that Hornsby council has received section 94 contributions from the developers of land adjoining Duffy Avenue, and the council is able to spend this money to help ameliorate the traffic impacts that result from the development.

I take this opportunity to advise the House that the RTA has already contributed funds to significant works in the immediate vicinity of Duffy Avenue. The RTA has contributed funding to the important roadworks at the nearby intersection of Sefton and Chilvers roads. This work includes the installation of traffic signals, pavement upgrading and resheeting the road surface. The honourable member will no doubt be aware that when the development occurred at the Ormond site, as stated in his motion, a significant amount of money was made available to Hornsby council as part of its section 94 contribution. I do not know whether the honourable member has pursued the council about how it proposes to spend that money on local road and bridge infrastructure. He would be well advised to discover what is happening with that money rather than coming into this Chamber and playing politics.

I am advised that Hornsby council has considered a number of options to widen the overbridge at Duffy Avenue to accommodate the increased traffic flow. The honourable member is obviously not aware that more than six weeks ago representatives of Hornsby council met representatives from the Rail Infrastructure Corporation [RIC] and mediated an outcome between the two parties. I am advised that both the RIC and the council have resolved significant differences and continue to work closely together. A key advocate for Hornsby council was Councillor Susan White, against whom the honourable member for Hornsby launched a cowardly attack in this House. I am advised that Councillor White made a significant and positive contribution to resolving this matter. Where was the honourable member for Hornsby?

The fact is that the honourable member for Hornsby is floundering out of his depth on this relatively simple local issue. How can he aspire to be Treasurer of this State when he cannot understand basic funding issues in his own electorate and has demonstrated that he is hopelessly out of touch with his own council and community? It is unfortunate that the narrow motion moved by the honourable member for Hornsby seeks only to be negative and carping and does not recognise the good work being done by the RTA and the RIC in that immediate area. The Government opposes this poorly thought-out and poorly delivered motion.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.58 a.m.]: The honourable member for Cabramatta is making a career of apologising to people. Not satisfied with besmirching the reputation of Tim Priest and being forced to apologise, she has now sought to besmirch the reputation of the honourable member for Hornsby.

Mr McBride: Point of order: My point is obvious. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition continually takes points of order about relevance. This debate is about Duffy Avenue, The Esplanade, Chilvers Road and widening the railway bridge. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows that better than anyone, but he has launched a cowardly attack on the honourable member for Cabramatta. I ask that you instruct him to restrict his remarks to the subject under discussion.

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

Mr O'FARRELL: The Parliamentary Secretary then attempted to cast aspersions on the honourable member for Hornsby. Clearly, she had not been in the Chamber to hear his speech to this motion. If she had, she would not have said the things she did. That goes to show the sort of research she undertakes before coming into this Chamber. This is a simple motion that goes to legislation I sought to introduce earlier today. It goes to honesty in politics. I recognise that the Australian Labor Party candidate, Scott Cardamatis, is no paragon of honesty. That man has never passed an honesty or ethical test in his life, yet that has never stopped him being endorsed by the Labor Party or employed by the Labor Party as a ministerial staffer. During that election campaign the Labor Party candidate for Hornsby, Scott Cardamatis, said at a public meeting that he has just finished speaking to the office of the Minister for Roads and that \$600,000 was ready to go to upgrade this road bridge. Now 2½ years later we are trying to get the Government to honour that promise.

I speak for two reasons in this debate. First, this road bridge is situated in my former electorate. Second, and more importantly, in February last year with the honourable member for Hornsby I attended a meeting of the Hornsby Chamber of Commerce at which the Premier spoke about his so-called post-Olympics job program—something we do not hear much about these days. The Premier spoke to the Hornsby business community about many issues that day, but from memory not one of them related to northern Sydney or the Hornsby area.

When he was asked during question time by the honourable member for Hornsby about the promises given during the State election campaign by the Labor candidate, the Premier adopted the approach of the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads and sought to personally attack the honourable member for Hornsby. It went down like a lead balloon in that audience and the Premier contributed to giving the honourable member for Hornsby one of the greatest headlines and editorials in the *Hornsby and Upper North Shore Advocate* he has ever received.

All the Hornsby shire wants is for the Labor Party to honour the promise that the Labor candidate gave during the last election campaign. It was not a throwaway promise; it was not a promise given on his own; it was not a promise given with qualification. It was a promise given with the rider that he had just been on the phone to the office of the Minister for Transport and the money was ready to go. What concerns me is that in its attempts to resolve this issue, Hornsby shire council, supported by the honourable member for Hornsby in this Chamber and in letters to the Premier, which went unanswered for months, has been lumbered with a bigger bill than ever. The Government is seeking to have it both ways. As successive speakers have said, it is prepared to foist increased densities upon Sydney suburbs but it is not prepared to upgrade infrastructure to cope with those densities.

The council is being forced to spend its money to replace the bridge. But it does not have to merely widen the bridge; it also has to lengthen it because of a rail infrastructure determination to make the bridge wide enough for so-called quadruplication of the rail line. Quadruplication of the line has been talked about for decades. If there were to be quadruplication, surely the State Government more than ever would have to contribute to the lengthening and widening of the bridge and not simply seek to leave the burden with Hornsby council. I am disappointed by the response of the Parliamentary Secretary. All she can do is attack and abuse; she fails to address the issues. She does not explain why, on the one hand, the Minister could give this commitment to the candidate and the candidate could give it to the public, yet, on the other hand, 2½ years later the funding is not forthcoming.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [12.03 p.m.]: I listened to the speech given by the honourable member for Hornsby in the Chamber last week and I have just listened to the contributions of the Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Roads and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We could have a million of this type of motion in the Chamber every Thursday or Friday. This matter involves a mixture of local and regional roads, and policies and funding are in place for these types of works.

As a former Parliamentary Secretary for Roads I travelled around the State looking at road issues and I would always be told about what is known as the missing link. The honourable member for North Shore acknowledges, as I am sure every other member would acknowledge, the missing link notion. Councils will say, "If you undertake this component of work the world will be a better place overnight." The development of road networks is a continuous, moving project. It is not locked in time or state. What is a priority one day is not a priority the next. As a former chief of staff to a Minister for Transport, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows that better than anyone. If we went through the Coalition's track record we would find similar situations. Priorities change from day to day because of developments and other changes within communities and throughout the whole of the State.

Funding mechanisms such as the repair program and the 3 x 3 allocation are in place for these works. When I was the Parliamentary Secretary I informed councils of the opportunities to access State and Federal funding. There are myriad opportunities. As State members know, council priorities shift and works can be passed back to the State member. However councils determine their budgets—whether it is a two-year, three-year or annual rolling program—members would know, particularly one member present in the Chamber who is a former mayor, that priorities change because of changes that occur within the community. As priorities change, the council has to change its program. It cannot go ahead blindly.

The Carr Labor Government has made an enormous commitment to roads throughout the whole of the State since it has been in power. If you need money for one area, it has to come from somewhere else. Under previous governments, obviously not Labor governments, the money has been taken from other areas. We all know what the allocations are. During the time we have been in government, since 1995, there has been an increase in road funding every year.

The funding balance between country New South Wales and the greater Sydney metropolitan area has been maintained. It was argued that the funding balance would change and tilt towards metropolitan Sydney. Ask any mayor in any country local government area and they will tell you that one of the greatest fears, which was pushed by the Liberal-National Coalition, was that the funding balance would change. It did not change. In fact, the funding balance was maintained and improved. For example, under the previous coalition government Cobbs Highway—

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: It pains me to do so, but the honourable member for The Entrance has been a member long enough to know that a member's words should have some relevance to the motion. Cobbs highway is a long way from Duffy Avenue.

Mr McBRIDE: You would not even know where it is.

Mr O'Farrell: I do know where it is. Cobbs Highway has nothing to do with this motion and we ought to get back to the lies told by Scott Cardamatis at the last campaign.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! This is a wide-ranging debate. There is no point of order. The honourable member for The Entrance has the call.

Mr McBRIDE: One can see what the Coalition's priorities are on country issues. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is a senior member and aspires to be leader of the Coalition, although the member for North Shore is a rival. Yet when you mention funding for country New South Wales you get nothing but contempt from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [12.08 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for The Entrance for his contribution, which had substance. He addressed some of the issues and spoke about overall road funding, which, although it was interesting, we would dispute. His contribution was far better than that of the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Roads, who read a prepared statement—every word was written for her by someone else, contrary to the standing orders. The member is well-known for doing that and for engaging in personal abuse and attack rather than addressing the substance of the motion. That is exactly what she did on this occasion. I expect she will apologise later to me in the corridor for reading out the shabby, grubby attack that was written for her, no doubt, by the Minister for Roads.

I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Epping for their contributions to the debate. These members, who represent northern Sydney electorates, have an interest in this intersection and this part of the regional roads network in northern Sydney. The electorate of the honourable member for Epping adjoins my electorate near this intersection. Prior to the redistribution the Deputy Leader of the Opposition represented this area.

The motion asks the House to acknowledge the promise made by the Australian Labor Party in the March 1999 election campaign; it asks the Government to pay up the money. The motion reminds the House that in March 1999 at a very public meeting that I attended along with members of the community and the local press the Labor candidate said, "I have spoken to Carl Scully's office. There is \$600,000 ready to go for this project."

That clear and unequivocal promise was made on behalf of not only the candidate—and everyone knows that candidates can sometimes run off at the mouth—but the office of the Minister for Roads. The Labor candidate told the meeting that the Minister had authorised him to make that statement. Everyone present was entitled to rely on that statement as a direct promise from the Government. Since that time neither the Australian

Labor Party nor the government of the day has acknowledged that promise. The promised \$600,000 has never appeared in any of the budgets produced since that time, nor does it appear in the program of forward works planned by the Roads and Traffic Authority.

The Government's response, which was read by the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads, clearly indicates that the Government has no intention whatsoever of making that money available. The best the Government can do is to say that the council should apply for the funding under the roads repairs program. The council has been in discussions with the Minister's office and his departmental officers for years. The Government has had ample opportunity to make good its promise of \$600,000. But it has not done so. The Government continues to blame everybody except itself for failing to provide the money.

This is not only about the honesty of the candidate and the Minister for Roads in failing to acknowledge the promise and come good with the money; it is also about the bullying tactics of the Government. The Government has tried to blame everyone except itself for its failure to honour its very simple and clean-cut commitment to the people of Hornsby. The work at this intersection is significant and important.

A consequence of the State Government increasing density in the Westleigh area is the necessity to amplify the capacity of the bridge. The council has already planned the works and will let a contract next year worth \$1.2 million-plus. Unless the State Government provides the money that the council is entitled to expect, \$600,000, it will have to come out of money that the council has allocated to other priorities in our shire. The Carr Government's failure to meet its promise has created a direct cost on other local works in Hornsby. I was accused by the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Roads of playing politics, but is it politics to stand up for your electorate? That is exactly what I am doing, and I will continue to do so until the Government honours its promise.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 37

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

Mr Kerr
Mr Maguire
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, 52

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
Ms Megarrity
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.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Committee Reports: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to postpone consideration of General Business Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) until Friday 26 October 2001.

NORTHERN BEACHES SCHOOLS INTENSIVE READING PROGRAM

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [12.22 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the importance of intensive reading programs to ensure the literacy skills and self-esteem of students in New South Wales.
- (2) expresses its concern at the reduction of 2.8 teaching staff in the availability of the intensive reading program to northern beaches school students, which will make the program less available to students in need.
- (3) notes that currently students in need of intensive reading programs on the northern beaches can often not gain access to the programs or when they do gain access there is usually less than optimal time in the program.
- (4) calls on the Minister for Education and Training to intervene to ensure northern beaches students get a fair go in improving literacy.

Kim Beazley wants us to be a knowledge nation. Bob Carr claims to be the education Premier. But neither of those men is delivering for the people of the northern beaches. Neither of them is making sure that the reading recovery needs of students on the northern beaches are addressed. Collaroy Plateau Public School Parents and Citizens Association wrote to our so-called Minister for Education and Training on 4 August 2000 and outlined its concern about the reduction in funding for reading recovery programs in that area. The letter stated:

The government of which you are a member and the department, which is your responsibility, have repeatedly enunciated their commitment to numeracy and literacy in Government schools.

In light of this commitment we are distressed to find that the only way anything other than a pitifully inadequate amount of specialist teaching in these areas at our school can be funded is if our P&C allocates a significant proportion of its limited resources to pay for it.

At the P&C's June 2000 meeting, our school community faced the difficult issue of deciding whether to continue to provide funding for the specialist teaching resources that we funded in the first half of the year and, indeed, in previous years. This commitment severely limits the P&C's ability to support the school in other facets of our children's education. Ultimately the association decided to continue to provide financial support for the balance of the year so as to not disadvantage the children who had been in the program in the first semester.

We understand that the Department's view is that our school is of low priority in the allocation of funding in this area ... It is little consolation to parents of children in need of specialist teaching that other schools have worse problems—perhaps the parents should enrol their children in those other schools to get the support they need! Surely it is a central tenet of public education that it meet the needs of all students equally.

The Collaroy Plateau Public School P&C demands answers to the following questions:

1. What happened to your 1999 commitment to literacy and numeracy programs as it pertains to our children?
2. When will the Department provide adequate funding for the specialist teachers our children need?

The problem at Collaroy Plateau Public School has continued over the past 18 months, as it has at all schools on the northern beaches. A reply was forwarded to the school, but the Minister did not bother to respond; that task was fobbed off to the area district superintendent. At best, the letter could be described as the necessary bureaucratic mumbo jumbo that bureaucrats have to provide in an attempt to justify what this Government is doing with education. That is no reflection on the bureaucrat in question, whom I know personally. She does what she must do to explain the poor policies of this Government.

The problem being experienced at Collaroy Plateau school is exactly the same as the problem being experienced at numerous other schools on the northern beaches. Despite the promise by John Aquilina and Kim Beazley to ensure that public education reaches out to all students, by far the majority of public school students who experience reading and other problems simply do not get the assistance they need. If we accept that public education should essentially be free, surely there is an obligation on the Carr Government—on any government—to ensure that core teaching services are provided through the public education system.

The experience of schools on the northern beaches, and probably of schools in other parts of the State, is that the school community has to band together to raise funds. They have lamington drives, trivia nights and a whole range of other functions to try to raise funds. Collaroy Plateau Public School held a walkathon earlier this year to try to raise money to pay for core services. The parents are paying for the teachers who assist with reading recovery and staff the intensive reading and learning difficulties programs. This is Labor's education policy 2001! Parents work their butts off in order to raise money simply to make sure there are teachers in the schools, when in fact the Government should have provided those teachers.

Collaroy Plateau school has a proud history of providing money, in fact up to almost \$20,000 a year, to fund intensive reading programs and learning difficulty problems. I understand that other schools are doing similar things to raise funds. Parents do not want to put money into these types of programs. They believe that if they have a child at a public school the education system should provide core services to make sure that literacy problems are addressed.

Prior to the restructure by this Government about 18 months ago, three schools on the northern beaches offered special classes for intensive reading programs—Killarney Heights Public School, Brookvale Public School and Mona Vale Public School. Each of those schools was able to take a number of students for what is termed a semester, which is equivalent to two terms. Students who were more than two years behind their age in reading proficiency were eligible to attend the classes, for which specialist reading teachers were provided. I know some of the children who attended the program one day a week for two terms—about 20 weeks—and at the end their parents could see a real difference in the children's ability to read. It made a difference to the lives of those children. In fact, it turned the lives of some of these children around.

This Government has turned the lives of those children and other children around yet again, but in a negative sense. It removed the reading programs at Killarney Heights and Mona Vale schools. One class is operating at Brookvale school with six children each term. So six children out of something like 10,000 children on the peninsula have the benefit of this program—12 children for the whole year. This Government should be ashamed. Kim Beazley should be ashamed. The Premier should be ashamed. The Minister for Education and Training should resign.

Mr Brown: Your party did nothing for education.

Mr HAZZARD: Come down and tell the kids on the northern beaches that. Six kids on the northern beaches will have reading intervention and another six kids, if they are lucky, will get into the special learning difficulties—

Mr Brown: That is six more than you gave them.

Mr HAZZARD: No, it is one-third of what was available when the Coalition was in government, you twit. You ought to have a good look at what is happening in your area because they tell me that in your area the same problem exists and you are too stupid and too moronic to bring it to the House. You are simply a lackey for Bob Carr and for Kim Beazley. Get out and actually do your local member's work. I am talking about kids' lives. We have a chance to turn kids' lives around or we do not. We have free education and the provision of core services or we do not.

Mr Brown: Are you going to sack the teachers again, Brad?

Mr HAZZARD: Would you go and sit quietly somewhere and have a cup of coffee or something? The problem is thousands of children are missing out. I am told that on average across each of the schools in the northern beaches about 10 to 20 children each year apply to the special intensive reading program. So a small group of six, of the hundreds of children that apply, is chosen for each semester. So hundreds of children are being left in the slipstream of life because they are not being given intensive support. Parents should not have to pay for core services; they should not have to provide the extra intensive reading teachers. The Government should be doing that. It is a core government responsibility. Thousands of children on the northern beaches are exposed to a lack of those services. Hundreds effectively are being programmed for failure in life by the Carr Government and the so-called education Premier. I call on the Government to support the motion and to give the northern beaches the resources we need.

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [12.32 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (2), (3) and (4).

The motion would therefore read:

That this House recognises the importance of intensive reading programs to ensure the literacy skills and self-esteem of students in New South Wales.

I am pleased to participate in this debate because it gives me the opportunity to highlight some of the fine work that the Government and the Minister for Education and Training have done in relation to reading services in our schools. This Government has always recognised the importance of providing specialist services to students with literacy and numeracy difficulties. Since 1995 the Carr Labor Government has ensured that every student has the necessary literacy help through the State literacy plan. This plan focuses on identifying and providing additional support to students with special literacy needs. The Government acknowledges that improved literacy outcomes contribute to increased self-esteem for students. That is not disputed by anybody. We have committed an additional 400 reading recovery positions to provide intensive reading programs for students in year 1. The Government has committed an additional 40 assistant principals, learning difficulties, to co-ordinate each district's learning difficulties services. It has committed an additional 255 support teachers, learning difficulties, to work with identified students in primary and secondary schools. This is clearly a major improvement in literacy services to schools.

These resources are in addition to services provided by English as a second language [ESL] teachers, school counsellors, Aboriginal education assistants and a range of special education teachers. In every one of the State's 40 school districts specialist learning difficulties support teams work closely with classroom teachers to assist students with literacy problems. More than ever before, students in New South Wales with learning difficulties have greater access to specialist literacy support within their own school. At no other time has there been a greater range of specialist support services for students with learning difficulties, including access to intensive reading programs. The 1,189 support teachers, learning difficulties, work collaboratively with other school-based personnel to meet the literacy needs of students with problems. Classroom teachers also benefit from the literacy and numeracy follow-up program being implemented in all 40 districts over the next four years to assist teachers to identify and work with students with literacy and numeracy difficulties.

Basic skills test data for years 3 and 5 show a decreasing percentage of students in the lowest or at-risk group for literacy since 1996. The most recent national data on the achievement of national reading benchmarks for years 3 and 5 shows that New South Wales is the leading State in the nation. Support services to students with literacy problems have been strengthened by the expansion of the reading recovery program, which provides intensive reading support to year 1 students across the State. The reading recovery program has assisted 8,000 students with significant reading difficulties in 850 schools. In 2000, 77 per cent of the identified reading recovery students had band 2 or higher results in the year 3 basic skills test. This Government is determined that no student will slip through the cracks. The statistics support that.

In 2001 students who need intensive reading programs are now able to access assistance within their own school through improved district specialist support services. Specialist reading teachers are provided to districts as part of the support teacher learning difficulties resource. This resource is allocated to districts across the State on the basis of need, taking into account basic skills test data over three years. District committees managed by the district superintendent make a decision about how the resource will be best allocated to meet district needs. The provision of the support teacher resource is monitored and evaluated to ensure that learning needs of individual students are being met.

This Government aims to give every student in the State the help needed for a fair go. In 2001 all primary students in New South Wales with learning difficulties who require specialist help are able to receive it in their own schools as well as through district level provision. Under the Government's literacy and numeracy plan \$464.5 million will be provided over four years for literacy and numeracy strategies. In 2001-02, \$16.9 million will be provided to implement those strategies. By 2004 the Government will have committed more than a billion dollars to literacy and numeracy support. From 1976 until I was elected to this Parliament I was a teacher. I have witnessed the improvement in our intensive literacy programs since 1995. From working in schools I saw the improvements the Government introduced for students with literacy and numeracy problems. We have recognised the difficulties and put money into programs to ensure that nobody slips through the cracks and that all students who have problems have those problems addressed.

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [12.40 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the honourable member for Wakehurst and join with him in drawing to the attention of the House the problems with the provision of intensive reading programs on the northern beaches. Without doubt the problems are a consequence of cuts, by about two-thirds, to specialist resources for northern beaches schools. I am deeply disappointed about that, because it reflects a general bias by the Government against that part of the State and is evidenced across numerous portfolios including health, roads and environment.

The northern beaches receive very little capital resources, and certainly when there is any discretionary recurrent resource available we get nowhere near our reasonable share, given our need. Unfortunately, children, families and communities are deliberately penalised because they happen to live in a part of the State that is represented by non-government members of Parliament. All we want is a fair go, a fair level of resources. Not all people who live in that part of Sydney are well off. A substantial proportion of the community is not able to resource the services they need, such as intensive reading programs. If the public school system does not provide what students need, the parents will have to either pay for it or transfer their children to private education, a move that penalises them substantially.

The education system should provide those basic resources, without debate, to ensure that children do not fall through the cracks. If children have support, intervention and assistance they will be mainstream students and will not create problems for other students in the school or outside the school environment. All we are asking for is a fair share of those basic services that are critical to the needs of many students. For example, schools have assessed children within their communities as desperately needing intensive reading support, and in some cases the students cannot access reading programs. The honourable member for Wakehurst said that parents and citizens associations have to fund the basic services that should be provided by government.

One school that was in my electorate until the 1999 State election, Killarney Heights primary school, was affected by the cuts. That caused enormous distress to the parents and teachers, who recognised the substantial benefits available through the intensive reading program. The school community knew the consequences of those cuts, which have now become a reality. The Premier is, allegedly, concerned about education and is a member of the same party as the would-be Prime Minister, who is supposedly committed to what he terms a "knowledge nation". If that were his commitment, the Government would not penalise students, particularly young students, by denying them access to those programs.

Those core services are an essential responsibility of the State Government. It is reprehensible that students of this age, in this part of the State, are being deliberately penalised. That penalisation is not confined to intensive reading programs. Resources should be directed to gifted and talented students, because if they do not have the support that they desperately need they will become distracted and bored and may cause problems within the classroom for other students. Far more resources should be directed sensibly to those who need them. That is not occurring on the northern beaches and probably not occurring elsewhere. The northern beaches are being deliberately penalised. I find that unforgivable and reprehensible.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [12.45 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Wakehurst. The motion was moved two years ago, and the House has just disposed of a motion that I moved at the same time. It is a disgraceful indictment of the Government's management of the House that it should have taken two years to allow this motion to be dealt with. The circumstances that prevailed then prevail today. The fact that the problem has not been fixed during that time shows, once again, that the Government is failing to properly manage not only the House but also the State.

The issue is still a lack of resources for students who need additional help to learn to read. Reading is the key to all other areas of learning. Every honourable member would understand the link between early success in literacy and success at school. Early failure in literacy, particularly if left unchecked, leads to ongoing failure at school and very often failure in life. Many students who fall into that category develop other forms of behavioural problems that in some ways are a consequence of learning difficulties. Things just go from bad to worse. For that category of students other issues are often in the background, involving the family or community, disadvantage, poverty or other forms of deficit that must be addressed in a way that encompasses the wellbeing of children.

We need to look at those difficulties in the context of communities and families. Rather than taking away resources, one would think that the Government would put in additional resources. The sad fact is that two years ago schools reclassified the way in which resources were calculated. In my electorate, as in the area represented by the honourable member for Wakehurst, the result was a reduction in educational resources to deal with the students who are most educationally disadvantaged. It reflects badly on the Government that it dressed up the reclassification as some sort of equitable redistribution of resources throughout the State. The fact that the Government thought that it could get away with that argument shows how little it cares about students with learning difficulties in certain areas.

The Government tried to link that argument with one about wealth and privilege, saying that the so-called rich, leafy North Shore should have resources taken from it because other areas need more resources. It is

certainly true that in other areas of the State much more needs to be done. But does it follow, therefore, that the Government does not care about the students in my electorate or in the Wakehurst electorate who are disadvantaged or who have reading and learning difficulties? It must be so, if the Government's logic is to be believed. The Opposition does not accept that. Socioeconomic status is not the only indicator of difficulty in learning, and to punish students who have a learning difficulty because they live in a more affluent area is barbaric.

We need to make sure that every school has additional resources and that they are able to meet the needs of all children. In many schools in my area parents raise additional money to fund teachers to work with students who have learning difficulties. The honourable member for Wakehurst tells me that that happens in his area. The school communities raise money to help a small, but critically important, number of students. We should take our hats off to the schools in which that happens. They are doing what we hope governments would do, that is, recognise the needs of a few and assist them through the generosity and support of many. The fact that the Government cannot apply the same principle to give additional help to students who need it throughout New South Wales, once again reflects very poorly on its understanding of communities' needs.

More intensive reading teachers are needed in schools and the number of support teachers, learning difficulties, should be increased, not decreased. We also need to make sure that there is an ongoing program to reskill and re-equip classroom teachers with what they need to help students in the daily flow of classroom life. We cannot attack these problems with specialist programs only, we also need programs that operate across the board.

Mr ARMSTRONG (Lachlan) [12.50 p.m.]: It is my understanding that it is inherent in the Constitution that education is both free and compulsory and that it is a core responsibility of the State Government. There is nothing more important—and that was universally and internationally acknowledged earlier this year—than the capacity of children to be able to read. Indeed, I give credit to one of the leaders in public education, who recognises the importance of reading, the principal of Parkes Public School, Ms Rhonda Brain, who for some years has developed reading techniques and incited the community of Parkes to venture into expanded reading programs. Indeed, she has introduced a reading day for the children and people of Parkes. For eight or 10 years virtually the whole town turns out on a nominated day in May each year. People read in the streets, in the parks, in the schools, and it is a wonderful fun day based on education. Rhonda Brain was the innovator of that and it has markedly increased the reading capacities and academic abilities of kids within the town. I used to represent Parkes so I know the town well.

This issue covers both sides of the spectrum. Only yesterday a letter was read on a well-known and popular radio talkback show from a gifted student aged 15 who was having great problems at school; his conduct was not acceptable within the school because he was bored. He has an IQ of 160. He also has a gifted younger sister. His parents were on low incomes and they had to find additional income to allow his sister and him to attend an advanced place of education appropriate for their intelligence levels to enable them to later contribute to society. He stated that he wished to study medicine. He pointed out that the system cannot cope with other children like him because of a lack of resources. There is a crying need for enhanced resources to assist children to learn to read at an early age. The development stage for children is between one and three years and reading should be well established by the age of three years.

Every child agency would recommend that parents and grandparents should read to children—and I do this as often as I can with my own grandchildren—to develop their personalities, minds and intelligence. Reading is probably one of the most satisfying pastimes that can be undertaken. Many of us develop a passion for reading and we in politics become avid readers, starting with the daily newspapers—although that does not always enhance our intelligence—but we are required to do research and must have inquiring minds, something that is cultivated by reading.

It is disappointing and reprehensible if the Government is withdrawing resources and preventing our children from having the opportunity to advance their reading skills within the New South Wales education system. It is also reprehensible that there are insufficient resources to advance those children at the other end of the intelligence scale, that is, those who are gifted. We need gifted people because, to use the throwaway line favoured by some politicians, we have a brain drain in this country. People with brains are going overseas. I am not sure whether that is right but if adequate resources are not provided we will certainly have a brain drain because those brains will not be fully developed. I ask the Government to acknowledge its responsibilities and to acknowledge that it is not providing adequate resources anywhere in the State, particularly inland New South Wales, to help to develop children who do not have other opportunities to develop their minds through reading assistance at either end of the education spectrum.

Mr HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [12.55 p.m.], in reply: How sad and worrying it is that in such a significant and important debate that deals with children's intensive reading opportunities and literacy opportunities the Government of the so-called education Premier, the political colleague of Mr Beazley, who drives the knowledge nation concept, has shown so little commitment. We have had just one Labor Party speaker—and I thank him—the honourable member for South Coast. I do not agree with his comments and, although many thoughts were his own, I believe he was persuaded to put the Government's view on the issue. The only other contribution from Labor was the interjections by the honourable member for Kiama, who sought to belittle the Coalition and me for raising concerns about children's literacy. That is a sad indictment of the honourable member for Kiama. I hope when he returns to his area he will realise that those sorts of interjections are trite. I know he is an intelligent human being and he would do much better to retain that persona of intelligence than indulge in stupid interjections on such an important issue.

Mr W. D. Smith: I think you have misrepresented him, except for the intelligent part. That was accurate.

Mr HAZZARD: I leave that to you. The honourable member for Kiama should stay out of it. Sadly, the Government has not bothered to put up any speakers on this important issue other than the honourable member for South Coast. There are thousands upon thousands of children in our education system in New South Wales and there are hundreds on the northern beaches who are the requisite two years behind in reading to be eligible to enter intensive reading programs. They need those programs. Some parents in government schools on the northern beaches have said to me that when their children commenced the intensive reading program it changed their lives. Resources are needed but the Government must not just talk the talk, but must walk the walk when it comes to delivering reading programs for children.

As shadow Minister for Community Services I am also aware that 8,500 children are wards of the State or are in foster care. Many of those children come from broken and dysfunctional homes, which is why they are wards of the State or in foster care. Many of them have huge literacy problems as well as a host of other problems. The Department of Community Services has no formal structure to ensure that their literacy skills are benchmarked. The Department of Education and Training, because of a lack of intensive reading resources, makes no effort and indeed does not want to know the problems of those children, so many are not receiving any support.

Aboriginal children throughout New South Wales with literacy problems are not receiving the support they need from the Government and this has been an ongoing problem for Aboriginal children. As a community we need to identify these needs and not just talk, as the Government is prone to do with literacy and numeracy, but deliver. I am saddened that the Government has sought to delete paragraphs (2), (3), and (4) from the motion and simply wants to recognise the importance of intensive reading programs to ensure the literacy skills and self-esteem of students in New South Wales. If the Government is not prepared to look at problematic children on the northern beaches, it is definitely not a government for all the people. The honourable member for Lachlan has said there are children in his electorate who need intensive reading programs and others who need programs for gifted and talented children.

The honourable member for Hornsby was the shadow Minister for Education and Training and shadow Minister for Community Services and is now the shadow Treasurer. He understands these issues only too well. We also heard from the honourable member for Davidson. I thank each of those colleagues for having the commitment to bring this matter to the attention of the Parliament. They said that needy children on the northern beaches, if they were lucky, may be attended by a flying squad of people every now and then, one day a week. Those children need far more than that. They need an intensive reading program every morning for two terms. It is time that the Premier delivered if he wants to be an education Premier.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BILLS RETURNED

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

Apprenticeship and Traineeship Bill

GEARYS GAP PIGGERY

Ministerial Statement

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation) [2.16 p.m.]: I wish to make a statement in respect of a piggery at Gearys Gap near Lake George in south-eastern New South Wales. I was informed today that this piggery is being investigated by New South Wales Agriculture and the RSPCA. The subject of the investigations relates to the keeping of 60 pigs, 150 sheep and about a dozen dogs on this site. The pigs and sheep are in poor condition. Some of the pigs are lame and have what is known as sarcoptic mange. The property was temporarily quarantined by New South Wales Agriculture this morning before a full assessment was made of the disease potential.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr AMERY: That quarantine is no longer in place as New South Wales Agriculture has confirmed that no exotic disease is present. I am advised that the owner of these animals is an elderly gentleman who the RSPCA has already prosecuted five times for the neglect of his animals. A private veterinarian is currently preparing a full report on the conditions of animals on the property. It is also alleged that the pigs are being fed swill via road kill found on the Federal highway, including kangaroos. That form of feeding, which is illegal under the Stock Diseases Act, carries a maximum penalty of \$11,000.

It is illegal to feed to pigs any tissue or blood derived from the carcass of any animal. A New South Wales Agriculture officer is now preparing a brief on the alleged swill feeding of pigs at the Gearys Gap property with a view to prosecution. The feeding of swill to pigs remains a serious pathway for the introduction of exotic diseases such as foot and mouth disease. New South Wales Agriculture, which follows up many claims about swill feeding to pigs with a view to prosecution, is currently investigating a number of cases.

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

Mr AMERY: As part of the fight in New South Wales to keep exotic diseases such as foot and mouth disease out of the State, many rural lands protection boards [RLPBs] include in their annual health plans the monitoring of pig feeding on farms to ensure that there is no swill feeding. That is already working well in a number of RLPB areas along coastal New South Wales and the department is currently encouraging boards to expand that monitoring into the rest of the State. On a national front, New South Wales Agriculture has made recommendations to the Council of Australian Governments task force on foot and mouth disease that restaurant waste be included in the food regulation standing committee's code of practice for food safety.

That code of practice should then be audited by local government to ensure that all commercial food waste is correctly disposed of. Property owners are required to furnish an annual report to their local RLPBs on the status of stock ownership. I am advised that there may be some breaches of the Act in relation to that matter. More details are being sought in relation to the matter and further investigations are being carried out. I will advise the House should any prosecutions be launched in relation to this case.

Mr SLACK-SMITH (Barwon) [2.20 p.m.]: The Opposition applauds the Minister and New South Wales Agriculture on immediately investigating the incident at Gearys Gap near Lake George. For the information of honourable members, Gearys Gap is located 15 miles from the headquarters of the Australian Pork Council in Canberra. This situation is serious. The feeding of swill to pigs in New South Wales is totally against the law and a person can be prosecuted for it. The risk of disease from the feeding of swill is far too high, especially in Australia which now exports pig meat to several countries.

We must take every step that we can to ensure that the pig industry in New South Wales is disease free. Earlier the Minister referred to the threat of mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease, to name only two. We must keep those diseases out of Australia at all costs. One of the ways to prevent such diseases occurring in Australia is through the prevention of the feeding of swill to pigs. I congratulate New South Wales Agriculture, the rural lands protection boards of New South Wales and the RSPCA on their immediate action in relation to this issue. Australia will not tolerate that sort of behaviour. We must ensure that incidents of that nature do not occur again in New South Wales.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Jeff Finkle, President, and Kurt Chilcott, Co-chair, of the United States International Economic Development Council. I welcome them to the Parliament.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

[During notices of motions]

Mr Brogden: Point of order: The forms of the House permit members to make personal explanations. However, I put it to you, that the honourable member for Manly is seeking to use a substantive motion to make a personal explanation rather than using other opportunities that the House provides for making personal explanations.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The point of order taken by the honourable member for Pittwater has substance. However, if I were to uphold his point of order half the notices of motion given by members of the Opposition would have to be ruled out of order.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I suggest Government members remain silent so that the Chair can hear the notice of motion being given by the honourable member for Manly. I ask the honourable member to restate his motion.

Later,

Mr Hazzard: Point of order: I do not want to confuse Government members with too much detail so I simply indicate that the standing orders require that motions should not contain argumentative statements. I therefore ask you to rule the motion of the honourable member for Manly out of order. Motions must not contain fabrications and lies, which is what the honourable member for Manly is putting before the House. He knows that he is involved up to his eyeballs; he has been stirring Warringah Council mercilessly. His motion should not be allowed.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat. The House will come to order.

Later,

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: I draw your attention to Standing Order 79, which states:

A Member shall not reflect on a previous decision of the House unless debating the rescission of such a vote.

Last night the motion before the House was "That private members' statements be noted." The Leader of the House laughs. He is always surprised when I quote from standing orders. The standing orders are always a shock to him.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! What is the honourable member's point of order?

Mr Hartcher: The House agreed to the motion that private members' statements be noted. Therefore, under Standing Order 79 you cannot allow the honourable member for Manly to speak about this matter unless he moves a rescission of that motion. That is set out clearly in Standing Order 79. The honourable member for Manly is entitled to use the forms of this House but he must do so in accordance with the standing orders.

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

Mr Hartcher: I give notice of dissent from that ruling. Standing Order 79 is clear.

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**.

Willoughby Paddocks Rezoning

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

McDonald's Moore Park Restaurant

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

Cronulla Police Station Upgrading

Petition praying that the House restores to Cronulla a fully functioning police patrol and upgrades the police station, received from **Mr Kerr**.

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**.

Gordon Policing

Petition praying that Gordon police station be upgraded and that the number of police operating out of the station be increased, received from **Mr O'Farrell**.

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**.

Mona Vale Hospital

Petition praying that services at Mona Vale Hospital be retained, received from **Mr Brogden**.

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**.

Scottish Hospital

Petition supporting an upgrade of the Scottish Hospital, Paddington, that does not diminish the heritage value of the site, 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**.

Cabramatta West Public School Hall

Petition requesting funding for a school hall at Cabramatta West Public School, received from **Ms Meagher**.

Fairy Meadow Demonstration School Pedestrian Arrangements

Petition requesting the installation of a crossing in Balgownie Road outside Fairy Meadow Demonstration School, the installation of a crossing at the northern end of Cambridge Avenue adjacent to the Princes Highway, and the introduction of a 40-kilometre school zone on the Princes Highway, received from **Mr Campbell**.

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**.

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**.

Wilderness Access

Petition praying that the Government allow continued access to public lands, abandon plans to declare the south-east wilderness study area wilderness, and repeal the Wilderness Act 1987, received from **Mr Webb**.

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

Petitions praying that the House reject the compulsory buy-out of fishers and defer all fishing policy changes for a year, received from **Mr Fraser** and **Mr J. H. Turner**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Routine of Business**

[During notices of motions for urgent consideration]

Mr O'Doherty: Point of order: The other day you made it clear that honourable members had to hand up typewritten motions. The honourable member for Manly has not done that. He had given notice of a motion for urgent consideration that is not in the required form and, therefore, is out of order. By any stretch of the imagination it contravenes your ruling. The motion as he handed it up is a motion to reorder business.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I advise the honourable member for Hornsby that if I were to accede to his request and rule the notice of motion for urgent consideration out of order, the motion of dissent of which notice was given earlier will have no standing. Does the honourable member for Hornsby want me to rule in his favour?

Mr O'Doherty: Yes.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The motion for urgent consideration is not in the proper form and is therefore out of order.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

TEACHER ASSAULTS

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. What further steps will the Minister take to protect teachers in our public schools in light of confidential figures compiled by his department that reveal that in the past two years alone more than 450 teachers were assaulted by students, with at least 32 of those teachers requiring medical attention?

Mr AQUILINA: The Leader of the Opposition has raised violent attacks on teachers. The Department of Education and Training takes these matters very seriously. The reason these figures are available is that we have given power to principals and the department to ensure that specific direct action is taken. In the past many of these matters would have gone unreported. But because we take these matters seriously, because we want to ensure that specific action is taken—yes, suspension rates have increased because of the powers we have given to principals—we have ensured that students who engage in this sort of activity are weeded out of the system. I do not resile from that in any way. I totally support the principals and the strong action they may take.

We will continue to do everything we can to ensure that teachers in our schools are properly and appropriately protected. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that I was the Minister who introduced the provision to enable teachers to take out apprehended violence orders at the expense of the department to ensure that teachers are protected. Any teacher who feels threatened, whether by a student or a parent, as sometimes happens—unfortunately, increasingly so—will be assisted by the department to take out apprehended violence orders. We will do everything we can to ensure that those teachers are protected. I do not resile from the fact that we have a very strong policy to protect teachers in our schools. We will continue to do that, even if it means compiling figures and statistics that were kept under the carpet and were unreported when the Coalition was in government.

INTERNET PORNOGRAPHY

Ms MEGARRITY: My question without notice is to the Attorney General. What is the Government's response to Federal Government initiatives to curb the use of pornography on the Internet?

Mr DEBUS: The honourable member for Menai is one of many members of this House who have raised with me, on behalf of their constituents, concerns about the proliferation of sexually explicit and excessively violent material on the Internet. Parents of young children are particularly concerned. They want their children to have access to the invaluable educational resources that are available online, but they want to protect them from offensive and disturbing material. The very nature of the Internet means that unregulated online pornography is a worldwide problem. It crosses national boundaries and State boundaries. No single measure will solve the problems presented by invasive Internet pornography. But there are steps that the Government can and will take.

Honourable members will be aware that classification laws in Australia involve a co-operative Commonwealth, State and Territory legislative scheme. The Commonwealth has enacted amendments to the Broadcasting Services Act and the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment Act which, among other matters, aim for the first time to impose a classification scheme upon online material. Those amendments were agreed upon by the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General. I advise the House that to complement the Commonwealth legislation, the New South Wales Government will be introducing amendments to the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1995. The Act, for the first time, will contain provisions in relation to online material.

Broadly speaking, under Commonwealth legislation the Australian Broadcasting Authority is empowered to take action against Internet service providers against whom complaints are lodged. The Commonwealth legislation is aimed at those who purvey sexually explicit or highly violent images in a form that can be accessed by children. This Government's complementary legislation is designed to catch individual or corporate creators and suppliers of objectionable content. In order to complement the Commonwealth legislation, the New South Wales Government will introduce provisions that will deter the making of objectionable matter available on the Internet, and protect children from matter unsuitable for minors.

The amendments will make it illegal to make available or to supply objectionable matter to the Internet that would be refused classification or would be classified X for its explicit sexual or violent content. The

maximum penalty for such offences will be 100 penalty units or \$11,000 for an individual and 250 penalty units or \$27,500 for a corporation. The Government proposes to introduce another amendment to the Act, which will make it illegal for a person to make available or supply any matter unsuitable for minors by means of an online service. That provision will therefore embrace matter that would be classified R and is not subject to an approved restricted access system. The maximum penalty for doing so for an individual is 50 penalty units or \$5,500 and 100 penalty units for a corporation or \$11,000.

The practical effect will be that, for example, a predatory paedophile who creates a porn site on the Internet, aimed at luring young children into communication, will be able to be charged under these new provisions. This is in addition to the host of offences under the Crimes Act that such an offender is likely to have committed. In other words, this new legislation gives police another string to their bow. We will create another brick in the wall against online sex offenders. As I have said, there is no simple solution to this deeply disturbing problem. The matter is obviously not one that can be dealt with only by legislation. It requires vigilance from parents. It requires vigilance from child protection authorities. It requires vigilance from the legitimate Internet industry.

My colleague the Minister for Community Services has had a longstanding commitment to addressing this issue. Indeed, she has flagged her intention to convene, later in the year, a major strategic meeting with major Internet industry bodies, child welfare organisations and police to address some of the very practical issues raised by the problem of child access to disturbing material on the Internet. This new legislation will represent one more weapon in the armoury of those who fight against child pornography and child access to cyberporn.

SEWAGE POLLUTION PREVENTION

Mr MARKHAM: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy what is the latest information on measures to prevent sewage pollution?

Mr YEADON: The honourable member's question is both important and timely. In 1997 the Government announced the \$3 billion, 20-year waterways package, the most comprehensive plan ever introduced to address the key water, waste water and stormwater problems throughout New South Wales. I am sure all honourable members would applaud the protection of key waterways, such as Lake Illawarra, Port Kembla, South Creek and the Parramatta, Georges, Woronora and Hawkesbury-Nepean rivers. Under the Government's stewardship, Sydney Water has developed WaterPlan 21, a long-term plan for sustainable water, waste water and stormwater management in the Sydney, Illawarra and Blue Mountains areas.

An important objective of WaterPlan 21 is to reduce the impact on the environment of dry weather sewage overflows by improving the overall operation of the sewerage system. I am pleased to inform honourable members that the Government's commitment to limiting the environmental impact of sewage overflows is a step closer with the finalisation of a contract for a \$200 million boost to this infrastructure. This is a major component of the \$2 billion SewerFix program designed to increase the reliability of Sydney Water's massive 20,000 kilometre waste water system. The net result will be a dramatic increase in water quality for major rivers in the Blue Mountains, the Illawarra and Sydney.

The Pumping Stations program will be rolled out to a massive 39 local government areas. It is a joint initiative between Sydney Water and Team 21—a consortium made up of market leaders Bovis Lend Lease, Tenix Alliance, CH2MHill, Sinclair Knight Merz and the Phillips Group. In order to achieve the best from the contractors, the risks and rewards are to be shared with the members of Team 21. That means that excellent performance under the terms of the contract will mean higher returns to the contractors. Conversely, poor performance will mean lower returns. Approximately 330 pumping stations will be upgraded to dramatically reduce the frequency of sewage overflows and the water pollution it causes, including materials such as faecal coliforms and enterococci bacteria.

Honourable members need to be aware that, although the Government and Sydney Water are committed to environmental protection, there are challenges in operating Australia's largest water and sewage system. Sewage pumping stations help transport sewage from all corners of the sewerage system to sewage treatment plants. They allow families who live in undulating areas such as the Blue Mountains, the Northern Beaches and the Sutherland Shire to have a reticulated sewerage system. From time to time the pumping stations overflow, causing sewage to spill into the environment. On average, there are 50 overflow events from pumping stations each year. Under this program those overflows will be reduced to only 20 events over any 10-year period. That is an average of only two per year—down to an average of only two events per year from what is now 50 events per year. It is an extraordinary increase in benefits to the environment.

Four million people rely on the services provided by Sydney Water and therefore our infrastructure programs are diverse so that they can responsibly deal with multiple priorities. The Government and Sydney Water are managing the obvious and out-of-sight problems at the same time. This year's annual environment report for Sydney Water has taken on this fundamental approach; it is called "Towards Sustainability" and will be released in the immediate future. I am advised that it will identify key areas that have had vast improvements while acknowledging work that still needs to be done. The results are already there, in the work done to date. My colleagues and the public certainly know that our beaches are the cleanest they have been for years, and that is a direct result of competent management and a healthy budget to ensure that the infrastructure is maintained and improved.

The current pumping station program will build on that overall program by reducing overflows and increasing the reliability of the waste water system. The upgrades will provide additional capacity, especially in areas of population growth. The upgrade will increase storage space to manage sewage flows and will replace the mechanical pumps. The program will upgrade electrical and support equipment. Many areas on the fringes of the Sydney Basin will benefit substantially from this program. Waterways in the Blue Mountains, a World Heritage listed area, will be improved by 71 separate upgrades. The Illawarra and Sutherland areas will each receive 20 upgrades.

The honourable member for Pittwater is not deserving, but we will not hold that against his constituents. His electorate will benefit from 12 upgrades. Preliminary work has commenced on the upgrade of some of Sydney Water's sewage pumping stations, but construction work for the main program will start in December. Construction work for this important initiative is estimated for completion by December 2005.

PRESCHOOLS FUNDING

Mr SOURIS: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Given the Government's professed recognition of the importance of early childhood services, how can the Minister defend the failure of the Government to provide any increase in funding to State preschools since coming to government, resulting in extreme financial distress to preschools at Albury, Tamworth and elsewhere across the State?

Mrs LO PO': My department has worked on this issue and this year it increased funding to preschools. Country members should be aware that the Federal Government gives a subsidy for long day care centres but no subsidy for preschools. In many country areas people are taking their children from preschools and putting them into long day care centres so they can get the subsidy. The Government has written to Amanda Vanstone to tell her that this area needs to be looked at. The Government is very conscious of the role that preschools play in country areas and is desperately keen to keep them afloat. The New South Wales Government is talking to the Federal Government in an endeavour to have it come to the party.

LOTTERY TICKET SALES STAFF AGE RESTRICTIONS

Mr HICKEY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Gaming and Racing. What is the Minister's response to community concerns about children selling lottery tickets?

Mr FACE: By far the greatest source of the sale of lottery tickets in this State is through newsagents, and they provide a great deal of casual employment for school-age children. This has created a dilemma for the Government. I will cite an example, which actually happened to a member of my family who purchased a lottery ticket from a local newsagency as a Mother's Day present. He was sold the ticket by a young girl whom he knew from his school and whom he knew was about his age, 17. Under the present lotteries legislation, children as young as 10 or 15 years could have been behind the counter selling tickets at their family newsagency; quite clearly an anomaly exists. The law prevents people under 18 years from buying lottery tickets.

It is difficult to imagine how a 10- or 15-year-old could assess whether a purchaser of tickets is of legal age. Teenagers under 18 years cannot sell alcohol or tobacco products, but they can sell lottery tickets which, by law, cannot be purchased by anyone under 18 years. Clearly, an anomaly exists. The Government has therefore decided that as a matter of policy young sales assistants in newsagents should not be permitted to sell lottery tickets unsupervised unless they are over 18 years. However, if they do have adult supervision, 16- and 17-year-olds will be allowed to sell tickets. Lottery tickets are a form of gambling. They are a restricted product, and rightly so. For some people the purchase of lottery tickets can develop into problem gambling.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The honourable member for Fairfield and the honourable member for Kogarah will remain silent.

Mr FACE: A woman in the Hunter region spent so much money on lottery tickets that her family found that she was left with little money for food.

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

Mr FACE: As with any other form of gambling, the Government believes in responsible gambling practices. It is not acceptable that young children can effectively be in charge of implementing such practices. No-one would accept schoolchildren being in charge of poker machines, so they should not be in charge of the sale of lottery tickets. Newsagents will be informed of the policy and told they can employ children aged between 16 and 17 who can sell lottery tickets, provided they are supervised.

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

Mr FACE: Newsagencies will be given ample time to make the necessary staffing arrangements.

TRANSPORT TICKETING SYSTEM

Mr O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given the personal warnings that the Minister received from the Victorian transport Minister, Peter Batchelor, will the Minister explain why preferred tenderer status for the \$500 million New South Wales smart ticket system has been given to the same company that installed the much-criticised Victorian system?

Mr SCULLY: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition went to Victoria to learn about privatisation. He went to Victoria to learn how to Kennettise the New South Wales public transport system. Be warned! Do not vote for the guy, unless you want our transport system privatised. Obviously when he went to Victoria he did not look at its ticketing system, because the system we are to introduce in New South Wales is fundamentally different from their system. We are introducing smart card technology. We have gone through an exhaustive process and two tenderers have put in competitive bids. One is Co-operations Around the World, known as Cubic, and the other is ERG, which picked up Motorola as a joint venture with the NRMA. The Government is proceeding with that technology.

The feedback from commuters is that they want the Government to engage in new technology and have supported the electronic tolling systems that we put on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We have developed interoperable systems with the M5, and the M4, M2 and Eastern Distributor are coming on stream. People who use a bus, ferry or train can use one smart card, one ticket. Commuters who get on a bus in western Sydney to go to a train station can travel on one ticket. The Opposition obviously has no understanding of integrated technology and no understanding of smart card technology. It has no transport plan. I invite the Opposition to go to Melbourne and see its technology. Melbourne does not have a smart card, it has a magnetic swipe ticket, which is what New South Wales is getting rid of over the next few years. The Government has selected ERG. I visited Hong Kong and looked at a few cities.

Mr O'Farrell: I know, I have seen your itinerary.

Mr SCULLY: I went to Hong Kong because I wanted to make sure that we got it right. I looked at Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Mr Iemma: Are you going to Dapto?

Mr SCULLY: Yes, I am going to Dapto because we are electrifying the line between Dapto and Kiama. But ERG, an Australian company that was able to get the contract for the Hong Kong smart card system, has a very impressive system. I know that the Director-General of the Premier's Department was also invited by the Hong Kong operators to have a look at it. It is a very impressive system that ERG has introduced there. Thousands of people were going through the turnstiles, getting on the buses, and using the ferry system with the one smart card.

[Interruption]

Listen, Wayne, I do not want to talk about your ministerial tenure of nine months gestation. We are going through a process now where ERG is the preferred tenderer. We are going through detailed contract negotiations, but the comparison with what happened in Melbourne is completely irrelevant.

Mr TERRY FLANAGAN FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Mr FRASER: My question is to the Minister for Fair Trading. Will he instruct his department to take action for false representation and misrepresentation against Terry Flanagan, an Australian Labor Party candidate for the seat of Page, who claims to be a farmer when he has only three cows and, therefore, does not qualify as a primary producer?

Mr WATKINS: No.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr THOMPSON: My question without notice is to the Premier. Could the Premier advise the House of the Government's response to the Auditor-General's recently released report?

Mr CARR: The Government has every confidence in the Auditor-General doing the job he should be doing.

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

Mr CARR: That is spelt out in the legislation we presented to Parliament. The Auditor-General does need to have wide-ranging powers to robustly perform his job. Our bill widens rather than restricts the functions of the Auditor-General. In fact, the Auditor-General's powers will be wider than ever before but we are not going to transform the Auditor-General into some kind of commentator-general. We simply will not allow the Auditor-General to become a body that traverses the responsibility of ICAC, the Ombudsman, the Administrative Decisions Tribunal, the Police Integrity Commission and any other bodies that have a responsibility for enforcing accountability and good government in the New South Wales public sector.

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

Mr CARR: The Opposition wants to give the Auditor-General the power to traverse the responsibilities and roles of other public accountability bodies. The Government is not limiting the Auditor-General's powers in financial and audit matters. We are widening the powers of the Auditor-General, giving him powers he has not had until now. The issue here relates to financial matters, which are the core of the Auditor-General's concerns. This is not an attack on the Auditor-General or his powers.

As for the Opposition's demand that either House of Parliament should be able to call on the Auditor-General to investigate a matter, we reject that. We will never accede to it. One House, whether the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council, does not constitute the Parliament. The Opposition would have the Auditor-General dragged into the political fray day after day. In other words, the position would be politicised and devalued.

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

Mr CARR: I note in passing that these propositions were never promoted under the Greiner or Fahey governments. The Auditor-General would be compromised under these proposals.

Mr O'Doherty: What about Kennett?

Mr CARR: Kennett privatised the Auditor-General. What an idiot. Kennett not only took away the powers—we are not doing that—but he privatised the Auditor-General's function. If any side of Parliament would do that, it would be the Opposition, not the Government. Fancy talking about Kennett in this context. Wouldn't you think that a shadow Treasurer would know what Kennett had done to the office of the Auditor-General. He says, "What about Kennett?" I tell you why I prefer the shadow shadow Treasurer. The shadow shadow Treasurer would not have got that wrong. The shadow Treasurer is just a shadow of his former self. We will simply not agree to all the amendments moved in the upper House. I will give another reason. The

Opposition seeks through another amendment to enable the Auditor-General to ignore the secrecy provisions in the Act and hand over any information sought by the Public Accounts Committee. The Auditor-General already has extensive powers to gain access to accounts, records, documents—

[Interruption]

Why didn't you give these powers when you were in government? The Leader of the Opposition has no answer.

Mrs Chikarovski: Point of order: The reason the Auditor-General wants these powers is because—

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

Mr CARR: The member for Baulkham Hills keeps interjecting. I have dug out his record as Minister. He talks about accountability. Do honourable members think it is unfair to raise matters in this document because it is all about accountability, the very issue we are discussing? Prison break-out number one when he was Minister: Prisoners were organising the export of stolen aircraft parts while on work-release—talk about accountability and Auditor-General inspections! Number two: Bruce Snapper Cornwall was allowed out on work release after serving only six years of a 23-year sentence for drug trafficking. Break-out number three—talk about the Auditor-General and accountability: by bureaucratic bungle the member for Baulkham Hills released early a convicted rapist, Graham Jack Walker, and when he was asked about it, he said, "It is totally unacceptable that any inmate could be released by mistake."

Break-out number four—talk about the Auditor-General and accountability: The member for Baulkham Hills presided over the release of a life sentence prisoner from a New South Wales gaol, despite misgivings from the Serious Offenders Review Board. That former prisoner was charged with murder in Queensland three months later. Break-out number five was the member's personal break-out when John Fahey dropped him from Cabinet after a total of four months as Minister. Yet he talks about the Auditor-General and accountability.

Mr Merton: Point of order: The Premier is completely wrong in what he is saying; he has misled the House. The Premier has delusions of grandeur. He is frustrated like Barry Moore and he will go down in history.

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

Mr CARR: After all that, when Fahey sacked him, he said, "Of course I was disappointed. I really thought we were getting somewhere." This is all relevant to the great theme of accountability. We will not have the independence of the Auditor-General compromised by day-to-day political argument. Returning to where I was before I was interrupted in such an appalling fashion, the Opposition sought to amend the legislation further. The Auditor-General is not entitled to have access to Cabinet documents or documents that are subject to legal professional privilege. At its discretion, the Government permits the Auditor-General to access such documents if requested. It is again appropriate for the Government to make those decisions.

The purpose of the legislation on this subject that we presented to Parliament was to clarify and strengthen the powers of the Auditor-General because they had become subject to question through legal interpretation. However, there is no way we will agree to the Auditor-General becoming a commentator-general. New South Wales has more accountability bodies in the public sector than any other jurisdiction.

Mr Hazzard: And you don't respond to any of them.

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

Mr CARR: We respond to all of them. It is not in the interests of public accountability to broaden the scope of the Auditor-General's powers to traverse the responsibilities of half a dozen other bodies that are already active, respected and operating professionally in the New South Wales public sector. I repeat that the Government is legislating to give the Auditor-General powers that are wider than he has ever had, and wider than he enjoyed during seven years of Coalition Government. We are not privatising him, as Jeff Kennett did and as the Opposition would want to do.

Mr O'Doherty: That's not what I've heard.

Mr CARR: The honourable member for Hornsby is inventing some sort of bogus authority and ridiculous Kennett analogy. I am indebted to our old friend the former Minister for Corrective Services for his contribution to this debate.

DEATH OF JAYDEN LUKE

Mr HAZZARD: My question is directed to the Minister for Community Services. Can the Minister explain why, six months after the death of baby Jayden Luke while in Department of Community Services [DOCS] care and three weeks after his foster carer was charged with his murder, neither the Minister nor her director-general has offered his Aboriginal mother their personal expressions of sympathy or an explanation of how her baby ended up with a carer who was later charged with his murder?

Mrs LO PO': I try very hard to convince the honourable member for Wakehurst that if matters are with the Coroner or the police I will not comment on them. My notes have "Confidentiality; name not to be revealed" all over them. Yet time after time the honourable member stands up in this place and reveals names. I will not respond.

Mr HAZZARD: I ask a supplementary question. In view of her answer, can the Minister inform the House what procedural steps or changes she has sought from her department to ensure that babies in foster care like Jayden Luke do not end up with DOCS-appointed carers who provide more dangerous environments for them than those from which they came?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a supplementary question. For the information of honourable members, a supplementary question must arise from the answer given by the Minister. The Minister for Community Services did not mention in her answer any of those matters about which the honourable member for Wakehurst has asked.

Mr Hazzard: Point of order: In her answer, the Minister for Community Services indicated that she has certain procedures in place that preclude her answering questions about serious matters such as babies dying while in DOCS care. What procedural matters is she addressing and what changes is she seeking to make to ensure that this cannot happen again?

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

SUSSEX INLET HOLIDAY CABINS

Mr W. D. SMITH: My question is directed to the Minister for Land and Water Conservation. How is the Government responding to community concerns about the Sussex Inlet holiday cabins?

Mr AMERY: I thank the honourable member for South Coast for his important question, which I hope to answer both to his satisfaction and to that of the community, which has lobbied strongly through him to resolve a matter involving not only the future of some cabins on the South Coast but a bar watch service that could save the lives of those who get into difficulties in the water.

I have received a number of representations from the honourable member for South Coast on this issue. The future of holiday cabins on Farnham Headland at Sussex Inlet is important not only to the honourable member's electorate but to the South Coast generally. The cabins are situated on Crown land and are currently held under licence by Mr Charles Cropper. Mr Cropper has operated holiday cabins on Farnham Headland for 24 years. For most of that time the site was Commonwealth land, but it passed to the State Government in 1995. The cabins are located next to the entrance to the Sussex Inlet waterways. Mr Cropper has also maintained a bar watch facility for boats that use the entrance to access the ocean.

In May 1999 the Department of Land and Water Conservation completed a Crown land assessment of Farnham Headland, the site of the holiday cabins, to determine the future use of the land. The assessment recognised the environmental significance of the area and determined that it should be included in the adjoining Cudmirrah National Park. In fact, about 90 per cent of Farnham Headland will soon be added to the National Park Estate. Mr Cropper and some community members have argued strongly against the remainder of the headland—the section on which the holiday cabins are located—being included in a national park. They have also claimed that the human presence at Farnham Headland provides a valuable bar watch service for the boating public.

Recognising these concerns and the persistent representations of the honourable member for South Coast, I advised Mr Cropper in March 2000 that he could continue to occupy the site under licence for the rest of his life or until he decided to leave the property. Transfer of the licence was not permitted. However, Mr Cropper has now expressed a desire to improve the standard of existing cabins and infrastructure on the site—for which he should be applauded.

In fact, improvements are needed on the site to address a number of environmental issues. Mr Cropper has also sought a transferable long-term lease to give his investment and tenancy more certainty. Mr Cropper's proposal will require a new land assessment and the site may require rezoning. Any proposed improvements will require the approval of Shoalhaven City Council. The honourable member for South Coast has been negotiating with council representatives and has raised the issue with council on many occasions when I have visited the South Coast. On one occasion I visited Shoalhaven council the honourable member took part in a deputation to council about this matter.

Other legal, probity and administrative requirements will also need to be met. Subject to these matters being resolved, I can give an indication to Mr Charles Cropper and the honourable member for South Coast that I would be able to grant Mr Cropper a 20-year lease on the site. The lease would include a clause that limits the scale and extent of any proposed improvements, which will ensure that the land is not overdeveloped. However, the lease could be transferable to family members in the event of Mr Cropper's death during the 20-year period. That provision recognises that Mr Cropper, as he told me on my recent visit to the South Coast, is in his early seventies.

A new land assessment and any changes to planning controls will necessarily involve community consultation. Such consultation will commence following my announcement today. We also have to consider the Government's new coastal policies. If Mr Cropper is willing to improve the cabins and we can balance that investment with environmental considerations, we should be able to do so. I have asked the Department of Land and Water Conservation to urgently work with the relevant government agencies and Shoalhaven City Council on a whole-of-government approach, which will enable us to move forward on this issue as quickly as possible. I am sure that this lease will resolve a very difficult issue, not only for Mr Cropper but also for the general community, who are concerned about the future of the bar watch facility should Mr Cropper be forced off his land. On behalf of the general community I congratulate the honourable member for South Coast on his persistent representations, which have, no doubt, brought about this resolution of the matter.

Questions without notice concluded.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Friday 26 October 2001 at 10.00 a.m.

Mr O'DOHERTY (Hornsby) [3.34 p.m.]: I take the opportunity afforded by the moving of this motion to place on record my disgust at the actions of the Government in reordering the business paper on Tuesday 6 November so that we can adjourn for the Melbourne Cup.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Hornsby is out of order.

Mr O'DOHERTY: I am addressing the motion moved by the Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled the honourable member for Hornsby out of order. The motion he is addressing has been agreed to. A different motion is now before the House.

Mr O'DOHERTY: I am addressing the motion before the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Hornsby is out of order.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 56

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

Noes, 32

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Precedence of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Minister for Police) [3.41 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) the consideration forthwith of the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) (Warringah Council) given this day by the member for Manly;
- (2) the following speaking times to apply:

Mover	-	20 minutes
Member next speaking	-	20 minutes
Four further members	-	5 minutes each
Reply	-	5 minutes; and
- (3) private members' statements to be taken at 4.15 p.m.

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [3.42 p.m.]: The Leader of the House is reordering the business of the House so that the motion for urgent consideration about Landcom, notice of which was given by the honourable member for Pittwater, is not debated. The motion of an individual member, the honourable member for Manly, is being given precedence and priority not normally afforded to motions of other members of this House. The Minister for Corrective Services had a motion for urgent consideration, but he did not give notice of it. The Government's motion for urgent consideration has gone. The Opposition has a motion for urgent consideration ready to be debated by the House, but the Government does not want it to proceed. The Government wants the

private member's motion of the honourable member for Manly to proceed. There is only one explanation: that the honourable member for Manly is working in concert with the Australian Labor Party.

In his electorate the honourable member for Manly is a stooge for the Australian Labor Party. He does deals with the Government in this House to advance the agenda of the Australian Labor Party. He has pretended to be an Independent member of this House, yet he works his agenda not to show his independence, but to show that he is a member of the Australian Labor Party. The Premier is in the House to support the honourable member for Manly. From this day forward the people of Manly will know that he works in concert with the Australian Labor Party. He is their boy in Manly. The honourable member for Manly has exposed himself today in a way that we could never have done, no matter how hard we tried. He has come here and worked his own deals with the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Carr: Point of order: This is irrelevant. These are infamous allegations that cannot be sustained.

Mr HARTCHER: How delightful that the Premier has come to the defence of the honourable member for Manly. The Australian Labor Party pulled out the big guns, the big heavies. The Premier of New South Wales, who works with the honourable member for Manly, now defends him. The motion is about the honourable member for Davidson exposing the activities of a group of people on Warringah Council who are affiliated with the honourable member for Manly. They are affiliated also with Peter Macdonald in his campaign for the seat of Warringah. Peter Macdonald, David Barr and Warringah Council are working with the Australian Labor Party on an agenda. That agenda has now been exposed. Whatever happens, we can always have the Carr and Barr show: Bob and David working together—not for Manly, but for the Australian the Labor Party. The motion of the Leader of the House is cynical and opportunistic. It is rejected by the Opposition in favour of a far more important matter involving Landcom.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 56

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

Mr Greene
Mrs Grusovin
Mr Hickey
Mr Hunter
Mr Iemma
Mr Knowles
Mrs Lo Po'
Mr Lynch
Mr Martin
Mr McBride
Mr McGrane
Mr McManus
Ms Meagher
Ms Megarrity
Mr Mills
Ms Moore
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 Torbay
Mr Tripodi
Mr Watkins
Mr West
Mr Whelan
Mr Woods
Mr Yeadon
Tellers,
Mr Anderson
Mr Thompson

Noes, 33

Mr Armstrong
Mr Brogden
Mrs Chikarovski
Mr Collins
Mr Debnam
Mr George
Mr Glachan
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Humpherson
Dr Kernohan

Mr Kerr
Mr Maguire
Mr Merton
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 J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Webb
Tellers,
Mr Fraser
Mr R. H. L. Smith

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

FORMER MINISTER FOR JUSTICE PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE**Personal Explanation**

Mr MERTON, by leave: Earlier today during question time the Premier made some allegations concerning my term as Minister for Justice, and Minister for Emergency Services in the Fahey Government. I would simply like to say that, in fact, the reference to my term being four months is absolutely incorrect and the records will indicate otherwise. The reference to several prisoners, including Snapper Cornwall and two or three others who were named, and, by implication, to my being the person who authorised their release is also completely incorrect. Those people were sentenced under the previous Government's sentencing legislation, which was truly a mockery and a sham. As a member of this House I have had my privileges undermined.

Mr Fraser: Tell us about Rex Jackson.

Mr MERTON: I will not mention Rex Jackson. I will stick to the personal explanation. What the Premier said has undermined my performance as a Minister. He referred to situations that I believe are untrue. Secondly, he has not disclosed to the House that the reason these people received early release was the sentencing legislation of the Government of which he was a senior Minister, which permitted all those things to happen.

RAIL SYSTEM PRIVATISATION**Personal Explanation**

Mr O'FARRELL, by leave: In the course of an answer during question time the Minister for Transport accused me of being committed to the privatisation of the New South Wales rail system. I make the point on the record that I have never said any such thing. I make the further point that the only person who has presided over the privatisation of the railway, or part of it, being Freight Corp, is Carl Scully of the New South Wales Labor Government.

AUDITOR-GENERAL PRIVATISATION**Personal Explanation**

Mr O'DOHERTY, by leave: During question time the Premier implied that the Coalition or I had some intention to privatise the office of the Auditor-General. Nothing could be further from the truth. Furthermore, the Premier, in his remarks, questioned the nature of the amendments that the Opposition has moved to the powers of the Auditor-General, who—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Hornsby has sought leave to make a personal explanation. He should confine his remarks to matters that affect him personally and not refer to the role of his party.

Mr O'DOHERTY: The personal explanation is that the matters referred to by the Premier were drafted by the Auditor-General in a report to this Parliament, so the Premier's assertions were not correct. If the Premier wants to have this debate in the public arena, so be it. If he wants to muzzle the Auditor-General he will pay the price.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**Personal Explanation**

Mr HAZZARD, by leave: During question time I asked a question of the Minister for Community Services about the death of a little baby, Jayden Luke. When the Minister responded she accused me of having leaked confidential information and she said that on past occasions she had had experience of my leaking information, or making information public, about very sensitive Department of Community Services [DOCS] cases. They were cases of little babies that had died or been injured.

I indicate to the House by way of explanation that neither I nor anyone in my office has ever, without the specific authority of the family or relatives of the child, released the name of a child who had been injured or

killed, or who died while in DOCS care. I have never released the name of any child; nor would I. In the specific case of Aboriginal baby Jayden Luke, the Minister may have been under a misapprehension, but, in fact, a similar issue was raised about the death of Jayden Luke about six weeks ago.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst has now moved outside the ambit of a personal explanation.

Mr HAZZARD: I am still explaining it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I repeat that the honourable member has moved outside the ambit of a personal explanation.

Mr HAZZARD: I have not. In fact what I have to say—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair has ruled that the member is outside the ambit of a personal explanation.

Mr HAZZARD: The Chair is wrong, Mr Speaker, on this particular issue. This is a very important issue.

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

Mr HAZZARD: This is really important. I ask for your redirection, because it is important that I get this out. The baby was actually named by his mother and the media six weeks ago.

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

Mr HAZZARD: I did not name the little baby.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Wakehurst does not follow the direction of the Chair I will ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him from the Chamber.

Mr HAZZARD: This is important. She should be chucked off the front bench.

WOODLAWN MINeworkERS ENTITLEMENTS

Personal Explanation

Ms SEATON, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Earlier today the Minister for the Environment implied that the honourable member for Burrinjuck and I, in the motions that we had each given notice of today, in some way contradicted each other. I want to make it very clear to the House that the two motions—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a personal explanation.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr HARTCHER: I seek leave to move a motion for the suspension of standing orders to allow the honourable member for Davidson to be given his opportunity to make his speech this day in reply to the allegations of the honourable member for Manly.

Leave not granted.

WARRINGAH COUNCIL

Mr BARR (Manly) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the member for Davidson in his private member's statement yesterday spoke about the activities at Warringah Council and made accusations against myself and several others, including:—

Mr Brogden: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the point of order after the honourable member for Manly has moved his motion.

Mr BARR: My motion continues:

- (a) that we are part of a conspiracy "condoning or encouraging" attacks on Warringah councillors, including a death threat;
 - (b) that myself and Dr Peter Macdonald have "harboured and encouraged those who have engaged in these despicable acts"; and
 - (c) that my office is involved in the alleged "malicious campaign."
- (2) notes that these allegations were made against not only myself but also other current and past members of the Parliament, Ms Lee Rhiannon, MLC, and Dr Peter Macdonald.
 - (3) notes that in the course of his speech the member for Davidson also made unwarranted attacks against minority councillors on Warringah Council.
 - (4) condemns the member for Davidson for his abuse of parliamentary privilege.
 - (5) deprecates the attack on the reputations of all of those named, and calls upon the member for Davidson to withdraw the offensive remarks and apologise without delay.

Mr Brogden: Point of order. The honourable member for Manly is quite clearly using the forms of the House to make what is nothing other than a personal explanation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House has voted to debate the motion of the honourable member for Manly. There is no point of order.

Mr Brogden: I have not finished my point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order. The honourable member for Pittwater will resume his seat.

Mr Brogden: How can you make a ruling without hearing my point of order?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have been the Speaker for a long time.

Mr BARR: I caught only the tail end of the speech of the honourable member for Davidson yesterday and I did not realise the serious implications of what he had said. In my private member's statement I said that to be attacked by the honourable member for Davidson is like being mauled by a dead sheep. I correct that in light of the despicable comments he made: it is like being mauled by a putrid sheep.

Mr Hartcher: Point of order. We have robust debate in this House, but there are conventions about terms that are parliamentary and terms that are unparliamentary. The honourable member for Manly has transgressed by making a remark about putrid sheep, and that is set out in the standing orders. I ask that he withdraw that comment.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Gosford is correct. While I occupy the chair I would prefer members to exercise a little decorum and not address other members as the honourable member for Manly has. Two wrongs do not make a right.

Mr Hartcher: Ask him to withdraw it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Speaker cannot compel the honourable member for Manly to withdraw.

Mr Ashton: Point of order: Mr Speaker, as you were making that ruling the member for Coffs Harbour audibly called the member for Manly a grub.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Manly has the call.

Mr Humpherson: Point of order: I ask you to ask the member for Manly to withdraw and apologise for the comments he just made.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Manly has the call.

Mr BARR: Mr Speaker—

Mr Brogden: Are you going to withdraw?

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

Mr BARR: The member for Davidson has made a despicable attack on a number of people, including me.

Mr Brogden: Are you going to withdraw?

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

Mr BARR: He said that the minority councillors on Warringah Council have engaged in terrorist tactics. He said:

These attacks have now reached an unacceptable level, with a written death threat made against one councillor. The attacks had been either condoned or encouraged by a coalition of ambitious beneficiaries, including Greens member of the Legislative Council, Ms Lee Rhiannon; her Greens council colleague, Peter Forrest; the honourable member for Manly; the former Manly member of Parliament, Peter Macdonald, and others. Much of this malicious campaign has involved the office of the honourable member for Manly ...

This is a shabby political stunt in light of the Federal election of 10 November. It is an attempt to besmirch not only my reputation and that of others, but to besmirch the reputation of Dr Peter Macdonald by suggesting that he, I and others have engaged in terrorist tactics and were involved in a written death threat against a councillor. This is absolute desperation on the part of the member for Davidson and of the Coalition. The honourable member for Pittwater pointed and yelled across the floor as though—

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: I hesitate to interrupt the honourable member for Manly. He has moved a motion under Standing Order 82, which is quite appropriate, that casts reflections on the honourable member for Davidson. He cannot in this debate then turn it into an attack on the honourable member for Pittwater. If he is going to do that, he must move a motion against the honourable member for Pittwater and keep his comments relevant to that motion. He cannot make a wide-ranging attack on other members unless he moves an appropriate motion against those members.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Manly is alluding to an interjection of the member for Pittwater.

Mr Hartcher: No, it was not made during this debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member was alluding to an interjection. The honourable member for Manly has the call.

Mr BARR: I do not know how many times this kind of allegation has been made in this House, but certainly not in the 2½ years that I have been here. The most despicable allegation that could be made is that a former member of this House along with a member of the upper House and the former minority councillors on Warringah Council had engaged in terrorist tactics and had been part and parcel of a written death threat against a councillor. What could be more serious than that? It is an outrageous attack. Dr Peter Macdonald, the candidate for the Federal seat of Warringah—who went to Iran and worked on humanitarian aid, and followed that up with work in Timor—is accused of terrorist tactics and death threats.

How low can the member go in making those allegations? This week Warringah Council was reported as having had the most complaints against any council: 117. It is far ahead of any other council, even Byron Shire Council. Councillors have been attributed with shocking behaviour and the honourable member for Davidson has said that the five majority councillors on Warringah Council should recognise that jackboot tactics, while satisfying—which is a curious remark to make—are not productive in the long term. The point is that they have four minority councillors, community-based councillors, who had been fighting an entrenched Liberal Party-dominated council that has held power in Warringah for many years. Members of the Opposition are well aware of all the irregularities and other things that go on in Warringah Council that have not been spoken of. This is the first time—

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: I take a point of order under Standing Order 81. Offensive words have been used in respect of me as a member of the Liberal Party. That is disorderly. I have not been involved in of Warringah Council's activities. The honourable member for Manly is accusing me of being involved in the activities of Warringah Council. I ask that he apologise and withdraw. He is entitled to move a motion about what the honourable member for Davidson said.

Mr BARR: What are the offensive words?

Mr Hartcher: That there is corrupt conduct in Warringah Council that is condoned by Liberal members opposite. That is extremely insulting. I have never been to Warringah Council. I find that offensive and I ask that the honourable member for Manly be made to withdraw those words under Standing Order 81.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will allow the honourable member for Gosford to make a personal explanation at the appropriate time.

Mr Hartcher: This is not a matter of a personal explanation. I ask you to rule under Standing Order 81.

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

Mr BARR: The honourable member for Davidson went on to say:

The honourable member for Manly and Peter Macdonald must accept responsibility for having harboured and encouraged those who have engaged in these despicable acts. They should come clean and disclose what they know and who was responsible and ensure that there is no repetition of these attacks in the future.

I am more than happy to come clean. I know absolutely nothing about these despicable acts and I know nothing about death threats. I point out that Dr Peter Macdonald has not been the member for Manly for 2½ years and has not been involved in Warringah Council activities. This is an attempt to shore up Tony Abbott, who is desperate. He has his back to the wall to hold the seat of Warringah.

Mr Hazzard: What's Tony got to do with this?

Mr BARR: What's Tony Abbot got to do with it? Why did the honourable member for Davidson bring in Peter Macdonald? Because Peter Macdonald is posing a real threat to the tenure of Tony Abbott in the Federal seat of Warringah.

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: I take this point of order having listened carefully to what the honourable member for Manly says. His thesis is that—

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

Mr O'Farrell: My point of order is relevance. Tony Abbott was not mentioned by the honourable member for Davidson. The honourable member for Manly is seeking to use this issue as part of the Federal campaign for Warringah. It is despicable and typical of what this guy tries to do under the pretence of behaving like a so-called Christian.

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

Mr BARR: I suggest the honourable member read *Hansard* and read the despicable comments made about the four minority councillors of Warringah Council. I will name those councillors: Councillor Peter Forrest, Councillor Kevin Smith, Councillor Ruth Sutton and Councillor Phil Colman. They are people of the highest integrity and are battling an entrenched majority to fight for justice and an open and accountable way of doing business on Warringah Council. The two members sitting across from me whose electorates straddle the Warringah electorate have said nothing about the things that have been going on at Warringah Council: the 117 complaints made about Warringah Council, the dodgy dealings at Warringah Council or the pecuniary interest matters flying around about Warringah Council, with developers and real estate agents being in control of the council. They know full well what I am talking about yet they have said nothing. The reason they have said nothing is because they are their mob.

Mr Hazzard: Point of order: The honourable member is obviously referring to the Liberal members—

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

Mr Hazzard: The honourable member for Manly is now attacking me by way of substantive motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat. If he wishes to take part in the debate he may do so at the appropriate time.

Mr BARR: Those four minority councillors have had their reputations besmirched by the honourable member for Davidson.

Mr Hartcher: Point of order: It is against the traditions of this House for people outside the House to be named in this Parliament. That is why we are debating the substantive motion. I am trying to protect the reputation of those four councillors that the honourable member for Manly has besmirched. Those four councillors were not named by the honourable member for Davidson.

Pursuant to resolution debate interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEONATAL BABIES HEARING TESTS

Dr KERNOHAN (Camden) [4.15 p.m.]: Yesterday I spoke about the acquisition of a brain stem auditory evoked response system by the Infant Hearing Diagnostic Unit at Liverpool Hospital with money donated by New South Wales Quota clubs. Some New South Wales hospitals have an item of screening equipment available locally but the Liverpool unit is the first to provide a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation of neonatal babies. Through this pilot program Kirsty Gardner-Barry is responsible for training all university students from the audiology course at Macquarie University in infant hearing techniques. I first heard of testing neonatal babies for hearing impairment three years ago at the thirty-fifth district Quota conference held at Camden where audiologist Judy Taylor, a Ryde Quotarian, spoke about the technique used and then demonstrated the equipment. That computerised test is non-invasive and done while the baby was in a natural sleep.

My hearing was tested also and I can guarantee that there is no discomfort whatsoever during the testing. Judy emphasised the importance of this work and the need for all neonatal babies to be tested. In New South Wales only babies considered to be at high risk of having a hearing problem are tested routinely, for example, those born prematurely or jaundiced. Such selective screening will, at best, identify only half the babies with a congenital hearing loss. Australian Hearing cites an incidence of two babies per thousand who have a bilateral hearing loss of 40 decibels or greater at birth. That figure is significantly higher than the combined total of all other conditions for which babies are routinely screened. The average age for diagnosis in Australia, even in centres which screen at-risk infants, is still more than two years of age, yet the first six months of life are crucial for language development. An early intervention program can produce language skills within the normal range for children.

Technologies available now can produce false positive rates of less than 4 per cent. Costs for screening have been estimated at \$24 to \$34 per baby while the cost per baby diagnosed is \$12,000 to \$22,000, which is well within the range of other screening techniques. Universal newborn hearing screening is evolving in many countries as a standard of care. American data shows a cumulative cost benefit when the need for intensive intervention and specialised education is avoided. Moreover, it demonstrates significant cost savings to the community over as little as 10 years.

At the March 2001 South Pacific Area Meeting of Quota International held in Canberra it was decided that every Quota club in the South-Pacific area would lobby their health Ministers and parliamentary representatives to introduce a mandatory infant hearing screening program for all babies. Perhaps it was pure coincidence that as the directive was being sent to all Quota clubs, page 13 of the *Sunday Telegraph* of 23 September featured a report of a trial at the Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick over the past year which identified 10 babies out of about 4,000 with a hearing loss. Only two out of these 10 babies had risk factors that would ensure their hearing loss was picked up under current testing policy. The article stated:

... the New South Wales government plans to expand hearing testing to include all babies instead of those considered to have a high risk of hearing loss.

The question is: When will this happen? It is obvious how important the tests are for hearing impaired babies. I ask honourable members to pass to the Minister for Health any letters from Quota clubs on this subject and to lobby him actively to ensure that mandatory screening of all neonates occurs in New South Wales hospitals as soon as possible.

ANDREW SALIBA SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

Miss BURTON (Kogarah) [4.20 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to the young sports men and women of the St George region. Over the two and half years that I have had the pleasure of being the local member of Parliament I have seen many young men and women from local schools selected to represent New South Wales and Australia in their chosen sporting fields. I pay special tribute to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Premier for their continued unwavering support of youth sport, especially in the St George region.

I pay particular tribute to Andrew Saliba, a visually impaired young man from the St George area who has been selected to play cricket for New South Wales in the thirty-sixth annual State carnival to be held in Melbourne this December. Andrew works full time as an orderly at St George Hospital where he has been employed for seven years. In addition to playing for New South Wales, Andrew plays social cricket for the Canterbury Visually Impaired Cricket Club, formerly the Sydney Visually Impaired Cricket Club. I note the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Canterbury, who is very proud of his local cricket team.

Andrew has been associated with the club for 16 seasons. The club has no age or gender restrictions and is open to all visually impaired cricketers. Andrew is a fierce competitor, as are his team-mates. The New South Wales team consists of 15 members, including one female, the coach and manager. Andrew will play under One Day International rules, with the only modification being underarm bowling. Andrew is only the second blind person chosen to play in the New South Wales team. I am proud to say that the first was also a local St George boy, Glen Siddons. He captained the New South Wales side and led the team to two wins at State carnivals. Andrew models his game on Glen's and has learnt some useful cricketing skills from him.

When Andrew was first selected he approached many local businesses and me about sponsorship. He wrote me a letter explaining that he had to travel to Melbourne at a cost of \$1,500. I approached Mr Rodney Bell, the Secretary-Manager of Hurstville RSL Club, to whom I offer my special thanks, who donated \$200 on behalf of the RSL club to Andrew's sponsorship for the State carnival. I take this opportunity to thank all the clubs in my area, particularly St George Leagues Club and Kogarah, Hurstville and Kingsgrove RSL clubs, for their continued support of and contribution to young people and sport. They give generously whenever approached for donations to ensure that the sporting achievements of young people in our area are well and truly recognised.

I also approached the Premier's office about sponsoring Andrew. The Premier, who is a great sports supporter, kindly donated another \$1,500. I thank the Premier for his support. Andrew will now be able to go to Melbourne and compete in the cricket carnival. He is very proud to be upholding the St George area's tradition of fine sporting achievements and is extremely grateful for his sponsorship. He wishes to thank both the Premier and the St George community for their support. Andrew, who is an all-rounder, has told me that he will do us proud, and I wish him all the best.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith—Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for Women) [4.24 p.m.]: As was Mayor of Penrith, I and the honourable member for Mulgoa, who is in the Chair, experienced the joy of being well and truly thrashed by the blind cricketers of Penrith. We marvelled at their abilities. They won the match because they kept playing until it was dark. We could not see the ball and they did not need to see it because it had a bell inside. I did an interview on Penrith radio about the match and had to reveal that, in my one and only game of cricket, I was an absolute loser. I admire those who participate in sport despite their disabilities. It would be all too easy for those who do not have the same skills as others to retreat to their bedrooms and stay there. I congratulate Andrew, and I hope he thrashes his opponents too.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [4.26 p.m.]: I am concerned about the availability and cost of public liability insurance to small community groups. Several groups have approached me recently about, first, their inability to renew public liability insurance premiums and, second, the prohibitive cost of renewals. There is obviously a problem in this area, and I am sure that other honourable members have experiences similar to mine. Something

must be done, but I am not sure what as this is a complex and vexed issue. I was approached initially by Norm Sturgeon, President of the Ballina branch of the Royal Australian Air Force Association. The association had previously taken out a \$10 million policy with GIO that cost \$381 per annum, an affordable sum.

However, when the association attempted to renew the policy, GIO advised it that it no longer offered public liability insurance. Mr Sturgeon then tried to purchase public liability insurance from a number of other companies, but unfortunately was not successful. He approached FAI, the QBE Insurance Group, AON, Zurich Financial Services Australia Ltd, Eagle Insurance Brokers, CGU Insurance and AMP. The few insurance companies or brokers that offered cover to the association wanted between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per annum for a \$10 million policy. Such policies appear to be a common requirement. The association sells tickets at Ballina Fair, a typical shopping centre, which requires a \$10 million public liability policy.

I am concerned that small associations and clubs must these days pay between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per annum for public liability insurance premiums on \$10 million policies. Many such groups do good work in the community. They maintain connections throughout the community and often give their time to charities and other public interest groups. This is the International Year of Volunteers, and I am concerned that many members of small associations are being frustrated in their attempts to purchase public liability insurance.

The President of the Richmond River Scottish Society, Margaret Graham, required a minimum \$10 million policy to cover non-members who attended the society's functions. The society cannot hold a function or a meeting outside Ballina RSL Club because it is not covered. No company will cover the society's highland games, which it holds each year. Scottish House in Sydney, of which the society is a member, is also having difficulties obtaining umbrella insurance for the 460 registered clans or societies in New South Wales. Total membership is 13,000 across the State. It has been reported that some Scottish societies in Queensland have had to cancel festivals because of the cost of insurance and litigation.

I made representations on behalf of the Scottish Society to the Attorney General and received a reply from his departmental head on 2 October. The Director-General of the Attorney General's Department stated that whilst the Government recognises that public liability issues are a concern for many voluntary groups in the community, the availability of such insurance is a matter for the respective insurance companies. Further, the director-general said that the issue has been examined by the Attorney General's Department in recent years with a view to finding a balance between the competing needs of the respective parties whilst ensuring that the public interest is also accommodated. However, at present there are no proposals for legislative change in this area.

The Attorney General and the Government say that it is a matter for the insurance companies and the Government does not propose to do anything about it. This is a serious issue. Many people who run small halls that may hold only a few functions per year do not have the opportunity to raise enough money to cover the cost of public liability insurance. I do not know what the answer is. However, the Government should have a close look at the matter and endeavour to come up with a constructive proposal that will reduce public liability insurance for small community groups.

PETER MOORE SPORTING AREA

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.31 p.m.]: Two months ago I attended a moving function in the Canterbury-Bankstown region to formally name a sporting area after one of the great personalities of the Canterbury-Bankstown district: the late Peter Moore. Canterbury City Council formally named a large playing area in Belmore, consisting of two sporting fields, netball courts, a jogging track and passive recreation space, after Peter. Although the function was very moving, there was nothing morbid about it. It was a celebration of the life of a great man who had passed away about 12 months earlier. He will always be remembered fondly in the Canterbury-Bankstown district and in rugby league circles. He will be remembered particularly for pulling Canterbury-Bankstown Rugby League Football Club out of the doldrums it had been in since the 1940s. Until Peter Moore took control, the club had not won a grand final since 1942.

In recent years Peter Moore gained the honorary title of "Patriarch of the Bulldogs", a title he thoroughly deserved. He had spent 25 years at the helm of the club as secretary. He was one of the most forward-thinking administrators that rugby league has ever produced. Peter Moore established a system of scholarships for young up-and-coming footballers in the Canterbury-Bankstown club, a program that was to be followed by other clubs in later years. Many footballers undertaking university or TAFE courses spent the day working and studying at night and were unable to attend training. Rather than throw bags of money at the players, Canterbury-Bankstown sponsored them so that they did not have to work in the daytime. They could undertake their studies at university or TAFE during the day and train at night. The club turned out many

players who were participants in that scheme. Probably the most famous recipient of the Canterbury-Bankstown scholarship scheme was Dr George Peponis. He captained Australia and captained the famous Bulldogs side that won the club the first grand final to bring them out of the doldrums in 1980.

Under Peter Moore, Canterbury-Bankstown was the premier club in the 1980s, winning five grand finals. It won more grand finals in that decade than any other club. In Peter Moore's term as club secretary another 11 grand finals were won by the club's minor teams in reserve and third grade competitions, Jersey Flegg and S. G. Ball. Peter was a life member of the club for some years. He was also a wonderful family man. At his funeral mass Ken Arthurson, a great friend, said that Peter pursued three things in life with tremendous passion: his family, his football and his faith.

Canterbury City Council did a great job on presenting the ground that was named after Peter. I was worried because the outer ground, commonly known in earlier years as the Belmore outer, was nothing more than a quagmire and was used as a car park for Belmore sportsground. Now that the Bulldogs do not play at Belmore the ground has been rejuvenated into a wonderful area with a good playing surface that is very fitting of the name Peter Moore. I was honoured to share with Marie Moore, Peter's wife, his family and the mayor this joyous occasion in memory of a person whom I regard as a great man and a good mate.

EAST GOSFORD ROAD SAFETY

Mr HARTCHER (Gosford) [4.36 p.m.]: I wish to draw the attention of the House to a serious issue of road safety in East Gosford. Henry Parry Drive, a winding and hilly arterial road, intercepts with a number of local roads. In particular, I refer to Carroll Avenue. Motorists who attempt to turn into Henry Parry Drive from Carroll Avenue have to negotiate not only heavy traffic but also a blind corner as cars come seemingly out of nowhere over the hill. East Gosford is a growing area, with two primary schools and many young families. Many constituents have written to me to express their concern about this problem. On 5 February I attended an on-site meeting with local residents and representatives from Gosford City Council and the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA]. The RTA has responsibility for Henry Parry Drive and the council takes care of local roads, signage and curbs. At that meeting the RTA agreed to carry out a survey to ascertain the best solution for this dangerous intersection.

Almost nine months have passed since that meeting. Despite assurances that the RTA has produced a concept plan as a result of the survey, there is still no indication as to what it will do to improve road safety and, more importantly, when it will begin. Despite many calls from my office via Gosford City Council, I have not been able to find out anything about the plan. Even the council seems to have difficulties getting any real information from the Roads and Traffic Authority. This matter must be treated with the utmost seriousness. The lives of young schoolchildren, elderly residents and young families remain at risk every day that goes by. The stalemate is causing concern and frustration to local families. Nine months is surely enough time for the department to act. We should not have to wait for a tragedy or a series of tragic accidents before the RTA finally decides to act.

The RTA is ignoring another major road safety issue in the area, that is, the dangerous corner at York Street and Masons Parade, East Gosford. It is well aware of it; the area has certainly had good local media coverage. One couple who live on the corner have had their front fence smashed in repeatedly by wayward cars. So significant is the damage, their property was featured on a television program on Channel 3. Mrs Shaw, the owner, said that she no longer bothers to have the front fence fixed. The situation is so farcical, she joked, that she leaves the smashed brick fence where it is because it saves her mowing the lawn. It also acts as a safety barrier for their personal protection. This very issue was raised some time ago, yet still nothing has been done to improve the safety at the corner. Mrs Shaw says that a car skids off the road into her brick fence on average once a week.

Recently, Mr and Mrs Shaw went away for two weeks. The morning after they left there was an accident, and while they were away there were five more accidents. As late as last week at 1.30 a.m. a ute ran into what is now left of the fence and overturned. The driver had to be taken to hospital. I will continue to raise awareness of dangerous intersections in East Gosford until the Minister for Roads takes my concerns and those of my constituents seriously. It is not enough to promise that something will be done. Concept plans will not ensure the safety of the residents of East Gosford.

I call on the Minister to personally take up this matter and ascertain why the Roads and Traffic Authority appears to be stalling on improvements to the intersection of Henry Parry Drive and Carroll Ave. At

the same time the Minister should also look at the now notorious York Street-Masons Parade corner. I am sure that Mr and Mrs Shaw would love to entertain the Minister with a cup of tea in their front garden when he ensures that the work necessary for road safety and their safety is completed. Road safety at East Gosford has reached crisis point. It is incumbent on the Minister to act immediately.

CESSNOCK ELECTORATE SHOOTING AND FIREARMS CLUBS

Mr HICKEY (Cessnock) [4.40 p.m.]: I welcome this opportunity to speak about the co-operation my office has received from the various shooting and firearms clubs in the Cessnock electorate. Co-operation has not been a one-way street. This Government and the previous Labor Government have done much to foster the sport of recreational shooting in the Cessnock electorate. Clubs in my electorate cater not only for locals; they also attract members and competitors from all over New South Wales. National events are held at our first-class venues. I often hear that Cessnock has a strong pro-gun lobby, and that is correct. But that is a simplistic view of the activities of those in the area involved in the sport of shooting. I am proud to say that I am the patron of the Hunter District Hunting Club, and that club officials and affiliates of the organisation are honourable in their dealings with my office.

The Cessnock electorate hosts several firearms clubs, including the Cessnock Rifle Club, the Hunter District Hunting Club, the Cessnock Clay Target Club and the Cessnock Pistol Club. The strength of the sport is reflected in the number of members attached to local clubs. Total membership across all firearms clubs in the Cessnock electorate would be in the vicinity of 10,000 men, women and children. The firearms clubs to which I referred are not only about shooting or boys with toys. All the clubs offer social activities and fundraising events for charity. Like all clubs, they provide a place to meet with friends and associates to relax and enjoy their hobby. In some sections of the community the stereotype of shooting clubs was formed to counter the backlash of the anti-gun lobby. I can attest that this is far from fact in the Hunter area.

The Cessnock Rifle Club has a long and proud history that goes back to 1908, making it one of the oldest sporting clubs in Cessnock. The club was first situated at Kitchener, but in 1918 it moved, in the first instance, to its current site near the Cessnock Racecourse. In 1921 the course was redefined and consisted of four target areas to 700 yards. Until recently the staple weapon used by members was the standard issue.303 Lee Enfield, many of which were produced in the electorate of the honourable member for Bathurst at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory. The club is affiliated with the New South Wales Rifle Association, which was formed in 1860, and the National Rifle Association of Australia, which has its roots dating back to 1888. All lower Hunter rifle clubs, as well as the Hunter District Hunting Club, use the Cessnock range.

The Cessnock range is also used by the New South Wales Police Service and the Australian Armed Forces for target practice and sniper training. Cessnock Pistol Club has a history of its own, and has produced both national and international champions. The club has produced some shooters of note. Kel Vickers was awarded the silver medal at the Commonwealth Games, young local shooter Josh Sweeny is a current Junior World Champion and Garry Sweeny from the same family is currently rated fifth in the world. This is a great effort for the club and its members who regularly take part in national and international competition. A positive reflection of the safety of the sport is that there has never been a serious accident at Cessnock shooting facility, nor have any injuries been reported.

The clubs have a strong focus on safety, and members are addressed at monthly meetings on the importance of safety while handling firearms. The Government has been a strong supporter of sport and recreational shooting in the Cessnock electorate. Only last month the Government announced a grant of \$7,600 to the Cessnock Clay Target Club to assist the club with funds to install a ball trap. The grant was part of the New South Wales Government's 1999-00 Shooting Club Development Program. It was one of only 15 grants across the State to assist clubs to develop the sport of shooting. I am pleased to note that the Cessnock Clay Target Club has benefited as part of this Government's commitment to assist responsible shooting clubs around the State to improve their facilities.

The Cessnock electorate sporting and recreational shooters attracted major funding for the construction of the shooting complex that will serve the whole Hunter region. The Government has committed a total of \$1.3 million to this project. The money will be provided under the New South Wales Government's Shooting Facility Development Program, which is handled by the Minister for Sport and Recreation. This grant will help to develop the site from the ground up. I am pleased to say that Cessnock has gained the funds to develop a world-class facility that will be both safe and meet the needs of local and regional shooters.

The Government is committed to providing better shooting facilities to encourage the growth of this sport and to foster safer environments for all participants in the sport. Recently, the Government announced an extension to the Shooting Club Development Program, which will inject a further \$1 million into the scheme over the next two years. The proof of the commitment of this side of the House to fostering the sport of shooting is evident from not only from grants and capital infrastructure but also from open communication and consultation with shooters and firearms clubs across the State.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [4.45 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Cessnock for bringing this most important matter to the notice of the House. He is to be congratulated on his achievements, as is his immediate predecessor, Stan Neilly, who, with me, initiated the development of a Hunter complex for shooting. There were some obstacles to get over, but there was a lot of goodwill among the shooting fraternity to ensure that we turned the Hunter complex into a showplace and a world-class facility. The New South Wales Government recently provided \$1.3 million to achieve that aim. Further progress and other money will be made available over time. The complex, which has existed now for some time, caters to a range of disciplines. Initially, difficulties were encountered with the land, but Stan was able to overcome them.

When the honourable member for Cessnock entered this Parliament I informed him that I was interested in the project, and that we had done a lot of work on it, the project. That work particularly involved a person by the name of Richardson, who constantly visited in an effort to overcome those obstacles. When others were running around arguing among themselves and trying to make firearms an issue, these people got on with the job. Their efforts are now bearing fruit. The 1999-2000 shooting program is an acknowledgement of that work. John Tingle played an important role in ensuring that this shooting complex, which will attract people inside and outside the Hunter region, became a reality. I again congratulate the honourable member on bringing this matter to the notice of the House.

LISMORE ELECTORATE FUNCTIONS

Mr GEORGE (Lismore) [4.47 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a number of important functions that have been held in my electorate during the past four weeks. The Annual Lismore Cup racing carnival was held on 20 September. Sadly, I could not attend because the House was sitting that week, and that is more important than going to the races. I pay tribute to Ron Marriott, Michael Timbrell and their committee from the race club; they have done a tremendous job. The Nimbin show was on Saturday 22 September. Again, sadly, I was unable to attend because I was at a meeting in Sydney. A pavilion was dedicated to a long-time stalwart of the Nimbin show committee, Chief Cattle Steward Bruce McClelland. My father-in-law always says that it is better to give people recognition before it is too late than to put flowers on their graves. It is nice to recognise people while they are able to enjoy that recognition. I appreciate the Nimbin show society making that dedication.

The Fairy Hill Revisited reunion was held on the weekend of 29 September. Fairy Hill, a small community some 10 kilometres outside Casino, has a hall and a few of the residents have lived there for some time. They organised a reunion. I had the honour of being there on Saturday and the president, Bev Henley, and her committee did a tremendous job. John, Bev's husband, wrote a book on the history of Fairy Hill. It was released that night at the main function. On the same day the Mummulgum school celebrated its centenary. Joe Urquhart and his committee did a great job of organising the celebration and hundreds of people attended. That evening the local Casino Volunteer Rescue Squad celebrated 21 years in Casino. They have put in a mighty effort. Naturally enough, all communities want to support these organisations while hoping and praying they will never need to use their services. I pay tribute to the volunteer rescue squad on its twenty-first anniversary for the wonderful job the volunteers do in the community.

The show circuit started with the Nimbin show, and the Kyogle show was held on the weekend of 5 and 6 October. Grahame Gooding, together with Kerry Donaghy and their organising committee, also did a great job. I had the honour of attending the Kyogle Show and the North Coast exhibits were excellent. Some honourable members may be aware that I have been involved with the local cattle industry, and the quality of the cattle and horse exhibits at the Kyogle show was a credit not only to the breeders and exhibitors but also to the districts they came from. The Casino show was held the following week. The show circuit is always enjoyable and it provides an opportunity to focus on individual towns. Eric Phelps, Sandra Humphrys and their committee did an outstanding job in organising the Casino show for 2001.

The Lismore show, the North Coast national show, was next on the show circuit. John Gibson, the president, and Sue Serone, the secretary and the Lismore show committee also did a tremendous job. I spent

Friday and Saturday at the show. I was proud to note that the exhibits were of exceptional quality. It reinforced what local shows are all about. Last Sunday the local Rotary Club, headed by John Nipperess and his committee, recognised the efforts of local volunteers, this being the International Year of Volunteers. It was an honour to be present to join in the celebrations with them and to recognise the efforts of those volunteers. The day of celebration drew attention to the job that the volunteers have done in Casino this year, especially in relation to the devastating storm last January. It was a privilege to be present last Sunday in my home town with the local volunteers.

LIONS CLUBS FESTIVALS

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [4.52 p.m.]: Today I want to talk about one of the great voluntary organisations in the wider community: Lions International. Last Saturday I had the pleasure and privilege of opening the Oatley Lions Spring Festival, which was organised by the Lions Club of Oatley. This is the twenty-fifth year in which the spring festival has been held. It was a magnificent occasion, held on a beautiful Saturday. I congratulate Oatley Lions not only on the work done in putting the festival together, but on the work done during the past twenty-four years which culminated in this twenty-fifth annual celebration. I particularly take time to compliment Mr Bryan Pirie, then chairman of the organising committee. Bryan is well known throughout Oatley for the enormous contribution that he makes not only to the community but also as a member of the Lions Club. He is to be congratulated on the success of last Saturday's opening of the festival.

I also congratulate the newly elected President of Oatley Lions, Mr Kevin Parker, and all the members of Oatley Lions for drawing together so many community groups into this annual festival. The streets of Oatley are closed for the annual festival. There is great co-operation between Oatley Lions and the various community groups and also the businesses of the district. It is fantastic that, as a community, we can celebrate together. As I said, I congratulate Kevin Parker and the Oatley Lions, but particularly the festival organiser chairman, Bryan Pirie. It is worth noting that they were supported by the other local Lions groups. I had an opportunity to catch up with the President of the St George-Hurstville Lions, Mr Tony Zammit, and I noted the presence of Mr Peter de Meur. They were both there to provide assistance on that day.

Prior to the day, I had the opportunity in September of witnessing the enormous contribution that Lugarno Lions made when they held their spring festival at Gannons Park. The festival is getting bigger every year. Gannons Park is a large area and contains something like eight soccer fields and five cricket pitches. That will give honourable members an idea of the size of the park. Approximately two-thirds of the park is occupied by the events involved in the festival. I particularly note the work of the chairman and co-chairman of the organising committee, Mr Terry Lynch and Mr Colin Bryant. It was a great day for the festival, which brought together numerous community groups. There were rides for the children and various community groups organised barbecues and displayed their goods and wares. Georges River Community Services was one such group.

The day provided an opportunity for the Police Service and the State Emergency Service to put on a display. There was jousting and great entertainment for the local community. The Lugarno Spring Fair draws many members of the wider community to Gannons Park each year to celebrate. I congratulate the President, Mr Neil Thompson, who is in his first year as president. This year Neil had a lot to do with the classic cars that are involved in the spring fair, and a huge number of cars and bikes were on display on that day. It certainly added something to the festival, and it is good to see that the festival is expanding each year. I note the involvement this year of a new member of Lions, Graham Gorman. Graham has just become a member of Lugarno Lions. On the day before the festival I was down at the park and I saw Graham, Neil, Terry and Colin; they were making sure that the arrangements were absolutely right.

When I got down to the fair at about 6.30 a.m. they were working hard to get things all set up. That is what makes the fair so successful, and that is one of the reasons I will be pleased this Saturday evening to attend a Lugarno Lions event: the night golf. Before honourable members comment, it will not really matter if I am playing golf in the dark, but I hope the ball will be glowing some distance down the fairway! It is great to be able to support Lugarno Lions who do so much for the community, as do the Oatley and St George Lions. They put a tremendous effort into both fundraising and putting together significant community events.

DEATH OF Mr NORM PACEY, MBE

Mr TINK (Epping) [4.57 p.m.]: I wish to pay tribute to the late Norm Pacey MBE, formerly of Smith Street, Epping, who passed away recently in Concord Hospital at the age of 88 years. With his younger brother,

Ron, Norm carried on a printing business, F. S. Pacey and Sons, at Parkes Street, Ryde for many years. For a long time that business published the *Ryde-Eastwood News* and the *Concord Recorder*. Mr John Booth, who is the current editor of *Weekly Times* told me today that, as a young child who was interested in writing and the scout movement, he used to submit articles to Norm for publication in Norm's newspaper. That was the start of John Booth's interest in local newspapers, and interest which continues to this day. He is the successful editor of one of the few independent newspapers in the metropolitan area.

Norm was active in many community and civic organisations. He was leader of the Civic Reform Association, which controlled Concord Municipal Council for many years, where he served as an alderman. John Booth told me that Norm was responsible for introducing John to local government. As it transpired, John in turn served for some years on Ryde City Council. Norm was active in the parents and citizens association, the ages of his children spanning a range of ages. He was involved with the North Strathfield Public School Parents and Citizens Association for 20 years, as well as Summer Hill Public School and Fort Street High School. In recognition of his contribution he was made a life member of the State Parents and Citizens Association.

Apart from being an alderman, Norm Pacey was active in politics. He began his political career as a member of the Labor Party, being a close friend of Fred Daly. At one stage he saw the light and joined the United Australia Party. From that party he moved to the Liberal Party as one of its foundation members. Recently, he was made a life member of the Liberal Party. He must have been one of the few foundation members of the Liberal Party to make it to the twenty-first century. Norm was involved in the Concord community and introduced William McMahon to politics. As honourable members would know, Mr McMahon became the Federal member for Lowe and, ultimately, Prime Minister. For many years Norm campaigned on his behalf.

For some time Norm lived in Epping, which is in the electorate of the current Prime Minister, and campaigned extensively for Mr Howard for many years. He was a member of the West Ryde Lions Club, Ryde Rotary and a foundation member of the Ryde Probus Club. He was foundation master of the Lodge Gilwell in Ryde in 1954-55. He was also a church warden at St Albans Church, Epping, where a memorial service will be held for him next Monday. I got to know Norm very well towards the end of his life. He remained an extremely feisty character with a great sense of humour. He was always keen to give advice. I learnt early in the piece that it was wise to take that advice and that it was normally good advice and held good for the long term.

Norm Pacey counted among his friends many members of Parliament, both past and present, from all sides of politics including Fred Daly, William McMahon, John Howard, Nigel Bowen, Lerryn Mutton, Jim Clough, Philip Ruddock, Gordon Jackett and Arnold Jago, to name but a few. As honourable members would know, those names stem from all sides of politics in both Federal and State Houses over a long period of time, with two Prime Ministers and senior Cabinet members among them. In more recent times Norm was involved in the Epping Senior Citizens Club. I regularly saw him at functions, where he was always the centre of attention; he was a real live wire. He also spent a great deal of time at the Epping RSL Club, where his character was much loved. Life is changing and people continue to make great contributions to public life, but Norm was special. It is less common to see his like these days. I commemorate his passing.

LAKE HAVEN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr CRITTENDEN (Wyang—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: It is my pleasant duty to draw to the attention of House the official opening of the Lake Haven Community Health Centre on Wednesday 10 October by the Minister for Health, the Hon. C. J. Knowles. In an early budget of the Carr Government money was set aside for a community health centre in this rapidly growing area. The Central Coast needs community health centres and associated services such as child and family health services, community mental health services and drug and alcohol services. The establishment of this centre lends itself to greater community awareness and collaboration.

The construction of the centre was delayed because the board of the area health service, in its wisdom, decided to investigate the possibility of establishing a dialysis unit within the centre. I was pleased to support that unit because when I was first elected in May 1991 it was common for people who needed renal dialysis treatment to travel for 40 minutes to either Gosford Hospital or Belmont District Hospital. People had to leave home in the dark and return in the dark. The treatment took four hours but the travelling time with connections by the then Ambulance Service could take 12 hours. It was important that dialysis treatment be made available in that area. Presently, 30 patients receive dialysis treatment three times weekly at the centre.

The Lake Haven Community Health Centre is adjacent to a shopping centre and a number of sporting facilities. Family and friends who take patients for dialysis can access those facilities during the four-hour treatment period. It is important that due recognition be given to the Lions clubs on the Central Coast, which raised money for the dialysis machine. A fundraising appeal was launched in January 2001 to raise money for the eight dialysis machines. The Lions clubs agreed to raise half the money required on the basis that the unit would be named the Lions Lake Haven Renal Unit. The offer and the acceptance have been guaranteed, and the commitment has been met. The Lions clubs have done a tremendous job in raising funds, in fact they have exceeded the target. It is important to note that the registered clubs have committed \$26,000 to the appeal.

It is also important to note that, as so often occurs in relation to health matters, people talk about bricks and mortar. However, that is only a minor aspect of the health budget these days. When a decision is made to build a new facility or upgrade an existing facility, it is the recurrent year-on-year costs that are important. It is important that my constituents realise that the renal health unit alone costs \$400,000 per annum to operate and that is funded solely from State Government sources. The unit is a boon to the Central Coast community and is well warranted. The expanded nature of the Central Coast and the Wyong shire has led to the Minister agreeing to establish another community health centre in the Wyong township. Further announcements will be made in due course.

FORSTER-TUNCURRY TAFE CAMPUS FINE ARTS COURSE

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [5.07 p.m.]: On behalf of a number of constituents in my electorate I bring to the attention of the House their concerns about the TAFE fine arts course at the Forster-Tuncurry Campus. At present that campus operates from a number of locations but a new TAFE college is under construction at Tuncurry. Hopefully, the fine arts course can continue at the new location. The students who contacted me are Jane Thomson, David Parsons, Jane Stockham, Carol Tippet, Pauline Wilson, Julie Kelly, Helen Prescott, Carmen Farrugia, Meagan Davies, Wayne Ellis, Annie Reid, Narelle Deighton, and Wendy Wright. They said in their letters to me that it had been brought to their attention that fine arts course No. 5499 may not continue after the end of 2002. Therefore, they will not be able to continue with a statement of attainment No. 7445 for fine arts in 2003.

The students stated that when they commenced the course at the beginning of this year they were informed of the possibility of extending their studies to include the statement of attainment 2003—the culmination of those extensive and comprehensive courses. They are under the impression that they can extend their educational program to include the Fine Arts Diploma in 2004 at the Forster-Tuncurry campus. As a group they are totally committed to achieving these new standards and acquiring the relevant knowledge to enter or re-enter the contemporary workplace in their chosen field.

They wrote to me expressing concern that they may not be able to continue with their diploma course and emphasised that it is difficult to gain tertiary education in small country towns. They are deeply disappointed that they have started a program of education to which they are committed, but that they may not be able to complete the course or, alternatively, they may have to commute hundreds of kilometres to the next campus that offers the course, which is unsatisfactory. I concur and sympathise with them. I have not had the matter verified, but I have asked the Minister for Education and Training to look into the matter. When the Minister visited Forster late last year or early this year to formally inspect the site of the Forster-Tuncurry campus for the new senior-junior high school he said in his press release, *inter alia*:

The Minister stated that there were many advantages in this exciting new concept for secondary education. The closer relationship with TAFE will mean greater flexibility for senior students who will now have access to an expanded and more flexible curriculum. Students interested in vocational subjects will enjoy improved training facilities including a business centre, a fine arts design studio and a building barn.

I am heartened by that, however, I am concerned that these students may be prevented from completing their choice of academic study. I hope that the fine arts course will continue at the Forster-Tuncurry campus.

PLASSER AUSTRALIA PTY LTD RAIL MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT

Mr ANDERSON (Londonderry) [5.12 p.m.]: I wish to bring to the attention of the House a function I attended at the St Marys workshop of Plasser Australia Pty Ltd. On 11 October I had the pleasure of witnessing with the Parliamentary Secretary the signing of contracts between Rail Infrastructure Corporation and Plasser Australia Pty Ltd, a company set up within the electorate of Londonderry that employs people throughout north St Marys, Mount Druitt and even as far away as Richmond. I did not know what to expect, except that a contract

was to be signed for the supply of two large pieces of equipment. Two items on display were in the early stage of development, namely, two pieces of equipment valued at more than \$7.5 million being built by this Austrian company in north St Marys.

The company has a history of providing sophisticated, excellent equipment over many years and this was just another example of quality products being developed locally for the State Rail organisation. I knew nothing about the speed tamper until I attended the site. This machine is designed to maintain points and crossings on railway tracks. It is the largest machine of its type available in the world and a first for Australia. It has a capability of extremely high lifts. Basically, it lifts the railway line, takes the sleeper out, clears the ballast away, resurfaces the ballast, cleans it up, puts it back down, and then tamps the ballast back into place. It is a complicated process and this piece of equipment is essential for the ongoing upgrade and maintenance of railway tracks within the metropolitan area.

These machines are so sophisticated and outstanding that the Rail Infrastructure Corporation is interested in purchasing more. It was with a great deal of interest that we heard Mr John Cowling, the Chief Executive Officer of Rail Infrastructure Corporation, say that although the present contract was for the provision of two high-speed tampers, if the contract is successful and the equipment is provided on time and within budget, more could be provided. In my address to the gathering I took up the challenge on behalf of the workers, who live in the area and are privileged to work in such a field. They are proud of the work they perform. I said that the two machines being built would certainly be built to the specification and to a high standard of sophistication. Hopefully, that will result in another eight machines being built.

The provision of \$7.5 million for the machinery provides 55 jobs within the electorate and future contracts will provide more long-term employment for my area. The workers were very keen when we spoke to them because they know they can do the work as efficiently as anybody, indeed better than most, and they look forward to the challenge. This type of industry has a long history in my district and the workers want to stay there. I was pleased to witness the signing of the contract, which set a benchmark for future jobs of this type in my electorate.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.17 p.m.]: It was my pleasure to also attend—on behalf of the Minister for Transport with my colleague the honourable member for Londonderry and John Cowling, the Chief Executive Officer of Rail Infrastructure Corporation—the Plasser Australia factory for the signing of the contract for the new equipment. I referred to everyone who was present as being members of the railway family. Too often we think that the railway family consists of people employed only in rail but we need the support of companies such as Plasser Australia which have the expertise to produce this sophisticated machinery. It is used to clean ballast, lift the rails, repair points and so on.

A contract involving \$7.5 million worth of equipment is no small matter, and that is why there was a ceremony to witness its signing. John Cowling hopes it will be the start of more projects. Indeed, Plasser is always interested in having more contracts in the pipeline because it encourages employment. Plasser supplies equipment not only to New South Wales but also to Victoria, Queensland, and even New Zealand. It was a pleasure for me to attend the ceremony, representing the Minister, and to support the honourable member for Londonderry in his ongoing campaign to maintain existing employment and create new jobs in the western suburbs of Sydney.

MULGRAVE RAILWAY STATION

Mr ROZZOLI (Hawkesbury) [5.19 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House and that of the Minister for Transport to the deplorable conditions at Mulgrave railway station. The station is located on the Richmond to Blacktown branch line and will become an increasingly important interchange station for bus transport and private vehicle movements in light of the State Government's proposal to reroute Windsor Road at McGraths Hill. There will be a direct road route to the station, and on and off ramps will allow access to it. Many people drive to Mulgrave station to pick up passengers rather than wait for them to arrive at Windsor or Richmond.

My description of the deplorable conditions at Mulgrave station is no exaggeration. The station has no proper toilets and has had portaloos for 18 months. Those who have stood on a station platform in western Sydney on a hot summer's day when the temperature is 38 or 40 degrees Celsius will know that, no matter how conscientiously the staff clean temporary facilities, they are simply unacceptable. They become extremely smelly and offensive in such weather conditions. I also think it is quite outrageous that no drinking water is available to the public. The station has one tap—a standpipe—located within a locked and sealed area. The original buildings have been removed and the station is now serviced by demountables. I also have it on good authority that the water from the tap is unfit to drink.

I am also advised that the temporary facilities necessary to maintain the station are quite costly to hire. I do not have access to the exact figures, but one can imagine that such costs would mount over an extended period. I have also made inquiries of the department and discovered that funds for a new station were allocated in the 2001-02 budget, but that money appears to have evaporated. Funds allocated for resurfacing the car park also seem to have disappeared into the ether. That resurfacing is important as the car park is an absolute dust bowl. Traffic movements generate considerable dust, which drifts across to the station and make conditions unpleasant for people on the platforms. One can appreciate that if the car park is a dust bowl in dry conditions it turns into a mud hole when it is wet. That causes considerable difficulties for commuters.

Nearby Windsor High School would like to take on the station as a community project. So long as it is allowed to do so, it plans to commit a small sum and considerable voluntary labour to improving the station's aspect. The school would like to establish gardens and raise standards generally at the local station. Unfortunately, the volunteers do not know where to put the gardens as there is no plan showing the proposed location of the new station buildings. They obviously do not want to establish gardens only to see them ripped out and replaced by buildings at a later date. These are critical issues. Disabled access to the station is difficult and the ticket machine often does not work. It has a tendency to reject notes—particularly if they are creased—and there is increasing demand for the physical sale of tickets on the station to meet customer needs. This station will become increasingly important and the Government must upgrade it as soon as possible.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.24 p.m.]: I listened with interest to the comments of the honourable member for Hawkesbury about the problems being experienced at Mulgrave station as a result of the road upgrade. I am sure he is aware that a new \$60 million bridge is being built in that area to address a regional flooding problem. I am informed that a good deal of work at the station cannot proceed until the bridge work is in order.

Mr Rozzoli: It has no connection, I assure you.

Mr MOSS: The honourable member for Hawkesbury complained at length about station facilities, but he forgot to mention what has happened at the station in recent times. I believe that a new loop facility has been established in the area, the tracks and points have been upgraded and a new station platform has been built. The honourable member for Hawkesbury did not mention that; he simply listed the negatives. However, I appreciate his concern about the car park, the lack of drinking water and the portable toilets. I am sure the Minister for Transport will take note of his comments and give his concerns every consideration.

SWANSEA BUS AND RAIL LINK

Mr ORKOPOULOS (Swansea) [5.26 p.m.]: In contrast to the honourable member for Hawkesbury, I have a good news story about rail services. The electorate of Swansea covers part of the eastern side of Lake Macquarie and the southern part of Lake Macquarie on the Central Coast. It is a fast-growing area that is particularly popular with retirees who have family links to Sydney. Connecting those communities with a Sydney rail service has been difficult until now because the rail line is located on the western side of the lake. Until now, the residents of Swansea and areas north of the town have only been able to connect with the Sydney train service by catching a bus to Newcastle station in the north, which takes 50 minutes, or by alighting at the busy Broadmeadow intersection and walking for 10 minutes, carrying their luggage across a major road and around the back streets, to Broadmeadow station. In other words, commuters had to go north to Newcastle to travel south of Swansea.

The alternative for commuters in the north Wyong Shire part of the Swansea electorate was to catch a private bus service operated by Busways to Wyong station. That service travels through every village in the district and makes a changeover at Lake Haven Shopping Centre. These transport arrangements are inadequate, and communities in my electorate have lobbied me and my predecessor, Jill Hall, for some time to establish a bus service that connects with the Sydney train service. Numerous organisations, including clubs, the Swansea Pensioners Association, and the Swansea branch of the Australian Labor Party—to name but a few—have urged me to bring this glaring inadequacy to the attention of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads.

Therefore, unlike the honourable member for Hawkesbury, I was very excited when the Minister for Transport—who is one of the more dynamic and responsive Ministers in the Carr Government—announced on 28 August 2001 a six-month trial of a new Belmont to Morisset express bus service. Commuters will save 40 minutes on a trip to Sydney and \$4.70 on a return fare by using this new bus service. This will amount to a saving of six hours and 40 minutes a week and \$14 on a weekly ticket. From 10 September there have been two bus services running south from Belmont via Swansea each weekday morning, and two return services in the evening.

The adult fare for the bus trip is \$2.50 each way or \$2.06 when using a "Travelten" ticket. The rail fare from Morisset is \$24.80 return or \$57 weekly. The pensioner fare is \$3.30 for bus and rail combined, which is a lot for our pensioner constituents. My only disappointment with the arrangements is that Busways, a private bus operator in the north Wyong shire part of the electorate, has exercised its rights to not allow State Transit to pick up passengers in its contract area. As it does not offer any alternative express connection, it has placed an appalling restriction on my constituents. I call on Busways to lift its objections.

Connecting communities to public services is a fundamental part of my job and one that I could not have proposed without the decisive support of Minister Carl Scully. I am grateful for that support. The new service has been popular, and many people come up to me wherever I go in the electorate to express their gratitude for it. My response to them and to the communities in the electorate of Swansea is that we need to use the service or we will lose it. I encourage people to use the service. We do not want to lose this hard fought for and well deserved service.

Mr MOSS (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: What a delightful report, particularly after the previous member. I congratulate the honourable member for Swansea on the role he played together with the Swansea branch of the Australian Labour Party. The honourable member for Pittwater scoffed at the mention of the Swansea branch of the ALP. I remind him that the area needs groups such as the Swansea branch of the ALP. I guarantee there is not a branch of the Liberal Party in Swansea. If there is, it would meet in a phone box.

The introduction of this service shows that ALP branches are not just interested in the great matters of State. They also take a great interest in their local communities and through their local members they achieve real benefits for the community. The reduction of travelling time of 6 hours 40 minutes for bus commuters per week and the reduction of their fares by \$14 per week with the creation of this new bus service is a real achievement for the people of Swansea. I am glad that the system is now operating. I am pleased that the Minister for Transport took note of the representations from the honourable member for Swansea, and I know that the service will be successful.

HOME WARRANTY INSURANCE

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater) [5.32 p.m.]: On Thursday 11 October I met with 35 builders and members of the development industry at the Manly Warringah Master Builders Association club in Dee Why. I had asked the executive of the club to organise an opportunity for me to meet with local builders about home warranty insurance. I am grateful to the club's president, Peter Haack, and Councillor Robert Dunbar, who is a director of the club and a councillor on Pittwater Council, for convening the meeting for me. It was an excellent opportunity for me to determine the state of home warranty insurance on the northern beaches. As members would be fully aware, the collapse of HIH Insurance some months ago has reduced the field to two insurance companies that provide home warranty insurance to builders in New South Wales.

Builders are finding it incredibly difficult to obtain insurance. They are the silent, unknown victims of the HIH collapse. They are not asking for something for nothing. They are asking for the opportunity to obtain insurance so they can go back to work, employ people and make a quid for themselves, just as they did prior to the collapse of HIH. The disappointing thing is that they find it nearly impossible to get insurance.

I am talking about builders who had a turnover in excess of \$1 million, in some cases in excess of several million dollars, in the last financial year but have difficulty getting insurance for jobs worth \$100,000. There is no way they could continue to work the way they did last year. Some of them are effectively getting insurance vouchers for jobs worth \$5,000. Most people would know that you cannot get much for \$5,000 in the building trade these days. You could barely build a book case for \$5,000. These builders are finding it incredibly difficult to get the insurance they need so they can go to work.

A matter of real concern that came out of the meeting is that of the 35 builders present, those who employ staff directly have been forced to lay off 55 employees because of their inability to get insurance. Those 55 people need an income to maintain 55 families. They have children who go to school and they have to pay bills and mortgages. These people do not have work because their employers cannot get insurance to continue their jobs. The collapse of HIH has resulted in a number of victims who are finding it extremely hard just to get back to work. As I said earlier, they are not asking for a handout, they are asking for a chance to get insurance so they can get back to work.

Some of the builders were very emotional when talking about the difficulties they are experiencing. The insurance companies are requiring builders to sign a bank guarantee over their family home in order to get insurance. In most cases the builders have to go home and ask their wives to sign a set of documents that guarantees their house against the failure of a job. Many of their wives are refusing to sign the documents. Some wives do not believe they have to sign the documents; they do not understand what is happening.

This is placing a strain on marital relationships because wives are not willing to sign over the family home. Families are being torn apart by the insurance company collapse. Some of the builders are concerned that if their wives join them in signing over the house to effectively cover the job, and if the builder dies or suffers an injury, they could lose their family home because of their inability to complete the job. There is an enormous amount of concern. These builders are big, burly man who work hard. They are not well-known for sharing insights into their family lives. But they were keen to let me know the extent of their problems.

The Government, through the Minister for Fair Trading, has been of assistance to my office and to me on some occasions. At best, the Government can only make sure that these builders can get through on the emergency line and have a chance to get the insurance. Nothing is being done to open up the market and nothing is being done to force or encourage insurance companies to provide proper insurance policies so that builders can do their job properly. On 31 October I will hold a public meeting at the North Narrabeen Surf Club. I have invited all the builders on the northern beaches to come and explain to me their difficulties and to put forward suggestions as to how we can solve these problems and get them and their employees back to work.

EDGEWORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL FIRE DAMAGE

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [5.37 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the unhappy news that a two-classroom block was destroyed by fire after midnight this morning at Edgeworth Public School. Hunter radio stations reported on their morning news bulletins that a fire had been deliberately lit in the early hours of this morning. They also reported several other instances of arson in Edgeworth last night. I understand that the first fire brigade unit at the scene of the school fire had been only one kilometre away attending and extinguishing a fire at the Edgeworth sewage treatment works. The fire damaged two classrooms located together near the western boundary of the school and adjacent to the Hunter Life Education Centre. Both classrooms are now structurally unsound and will require complete rebuilding. One room has been gutted down to ash; the other may have some salvagable items.

School staff and the Department of Education and Training officers have worked quickly. The department is arranging demountables. Department of Public Works and Services and Department Education and Training officers have been on site today. Students attended classes today, with one class being moved to the library and the other to the computer room. Three counsellors were present at the school today. ABC radio and other media were on site this morning keeping the principal, Keith Brown, busy with interviews. Originally I heard that two demountables would arrive by Monday next week. However, before lunch I spoke to the principal and he told me there was a difficulty with getting one of the classrooms out of Cessnock gaol, where demountables are refurbished. I asked the Minister for Corrective Services if he could arrange an early release of that classroom and I was advised half an hour ago that the demountables will be delivered by Tuesday next week.

At least half a dozen of the kids were extremely distressed because their room had gone. As I said, counsellors have been at the school today to help the students. It has been a very sad day for students, staff and parents of Edgeworth Public School, particularly for the kids whose classrooms were destroyed. They have lost what they were so proud of—the art and craft and assignments that were on the walls. It is a threatening and disturbing thing for those young students. They lose their security and take time to rebuild their confidence. I hope the criminals who set that fire can be confronted with the extent of the harm that they caused to the students of those two classrooms and the extent of the anger of their parents and the school community.

It is unfortunate that the fire happened at Edgeworth, which serves one of the largest urban growth areas in the Hunter, the North Lakes urban release area. The school facilities have been under pressure for many years. The facilities were designed for a school about half the size of the present 500 enrolments. The loss of the use of a library and a computer room, even temporarily, adds additional pressure. The school community has documented a claim of facilities below code standards in withdrawal spaces and practical activity spaces, enclosed communal spaces, library space, administrative space and basic staff facilities.

The parent community at Edgeworth has been very positive, forward-looking and generous over many years in providing extra facilities for the students. They built four covered outdoor learning areas, 60 metres of

permanent covered walkways, and a large fixed play equipment facility; they purchased and installed 14 airconditioners in demountables; and they purchased many computers years ago, before the Carr Government roll out of computers started. I have been making representations on behalf of the Edgeworth Public School community for improved facilities. Those representations are in midstream at the present time. I look forward to renewing those discussions with the Minister and the department in a new perspective, following this awful fire.

I assure the students and parents that I share their sense of loss and upset at this senseless destruction. To Keith Brown, the principal, to staff and parents go my heartfelt thanks for their superhuman efforts today to help the kids and to relieve their distress. I extend my thanks also to the Lake Macquarie school district officers and the counsellors who have done a great job at school today, and who will continue to do so as long as they are needed. I thank public works and school properties people who were at the school this morning, getting the recovery process under way. I also thank the police for their good detective work. Detective Senior Constable Bill Glen from Charlestown is the investigating officer. Scientific police have been at the school and I understand that the police have the names of some suspects. They have done some good detective work. On behalf of the community, I hope the criminals are caught and punished.

Mr FACE (Charlestown—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development) [5.42 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Wallsend for raising this matter this afternoon. I understand the anger of the people at Edgeworth. During my time in this place about six or seven schools in my area have burned down. It leaves a very nasty taste in the mouth of the school community, especially the students, staff and parents, until such time as things get back in order. Of course, irreplaceable items of the school were destroyed.. The Minister for Education and Training replied to the honourable member on 24 September—before this calamity—and acknowledged the desirability of upgrading facilities at Edgeworth Public School to cater for the increase in enrolments. It has been a growth area and will continue to be. Probably now that this calamity has happened it will be reassessed on the basis that it was a small school serving the then suburb of Young Wallsend before it was changed to Edgeworth.

In the budget for 2001-02 an additional \$413 million was made available to school capital works programs over the next four years. The funding enhancement will increase the number of projects that can be achieved over four years, thereby benefiting schools that have been under consideration for a number of years. This school comes into that category. The Minister said that the needs of Edgeworth Public School will be taken into consideration during the four-year period. I concur with what has been said this afternoon. The school will need a lot of assistance from a lot of people to become shipshape. What has happened now will probably cause more demountables to be brought in, and an assessment will be made whether the school needs to be rebuilt on that site or what needs to be done in the way of permanency. Nearby, in the foreseeable future, a large estate will be going ahead. This unforeseen calamity has created a situation that needs to be reviewed, and I will refer the honourable member's comments and my comments to the Minister for Education and Training.

BLIGH ELECTORATE POLICING

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [5.44 p.m.]: Effective policing is vital for Bligh, with urban consolidation dramatically increasing the area's population and many people visiting for work and entertainment. The Bligh electorate has specialised and sensitive policing needs due to its having the gay and lesbian communities, high numbers of people with mental illness and drug dependencies, Australia's most significant urban Aboriginal community at Redfern, youth crime in Woolloomooloo, high density Department of Housing areas, and serious homelessness. Bligh includes the known drug hot spots of Kings Cross, Oxford Street and the Eveleigh Street Redfern railway precinct, with serious problems flowing out into surrounding residential areas. The entertainment precincts of Kings Cross, Oxford Street and the Moore Park sporting stadia have complex policing needs.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research—the Government's official, independent assessment body—reports that the inner east has Sydney's worst rates of robbery, sexual assault, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, steal from a motor vehicle, and steal from a person. I have received disturbing reports from my constituents of increased crime, particularly violent crime and assaults. Many residents and business operators report that police say they are unable to respond because officers are already dealing with other serious incidents. Inadequate police staffing levels is a serious long-term problem. I am concerned that the increased use of police target action groups [TAGs] drains police from already underresourced local commands to run short-term campaigns with short-term benefits. The loss of six or more officers from each command to form a roving squad is causing real distress for already overstretched officers.

While plans to close up to seven police stations in inner eastern Sydney were abandoned following community protest, a new scheme has been developed for the merger of nine local area commands into four, with 30 police taken out of local commands in the eastern region to form a permanent flying squad. The plan has been developed without reference to the local community or me as local member, and local police tell me they fear the plan is being implemented by stealth and will have a negative impact on their effectiveness. Merging local area commands and pulling officers out of commands is the very opposite of what the community legitimately wants. With the high crime rates, dense population and complex issues, Bligh's relatively small geographical area lends itself to intensive patrolling by police on foot.

We need community policing, with adequately resourced local police who know the complex local situation and who work in local stations. Instead, we are getting showtime policing—policing that seems to be run out of a media unit, designed as a feel-good publicity exercise, with an eye toward a splashy newspaper or television story. Has it become policy to advise media in advance of police operations so that a story is ready to roll with the right spin—as seems to have occurred with last weekend's drug raids of inner-city nightclubs, yesterday's drug house raids in Cabramatta, and *Four Corners* reporting on police corruption? Deployment of 300 police in a TAG team to raid four nightclubs got plenty of media coverage, but was it effective use of limited police resources to arrest two dealers?

With limited outcome from the raids using sniffer dogs, I am disturbed by the attack on the Redfern Legal Centre in Parliament this week. The centre has raised concerns about whether police use of sniffer dogs constitutes an illegal search and whether this targeting of recreational drug users, rather than dealers and traffickers, increases the health risks associated with drugs. The centre also reports that there is no evidence that targeting possession offences reduces crime or drug use. Despite the absence of a policy and legislative framework for sniffer dog use, the Redfern Legal Centre estimates the dogs cost in excess of \$2.7 million, plus police time and other resources. These are police resources diverted from the clear policing priorities of the Bligh community.

Last weekend, while nightclubbers were targeted by 300 police, an Oxford Street shop proprietor remained in a coma, the result of being bashed senseless in a daytime assault by a drunk. Commanders try to get officers out on foot patrols to deter crime, but they do not have staff. I am concerned that showy drug raids serve to divert attention from the serious concerns of corruption and mismanagement in the Police Service. It has been well known in the community that there is a drug problem in the vicinity of Oxford Street, Kings Cross and Redfern railway station. I have repeatedly raised concerns with local area commanders and in Parliament. Showtime policing—with police serving as extras in a publicity campaign that diverts attention away from serious problems—does not provide the grassroots, local community policing needed to address serious inner-city problems. I again call on the Government to abandon amalgamation plans, establish a police recruitment program to properly resource community policing, and renew the focus on the reform process recommended by the Wood royal commission.

Private members' statements noted.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m. until Friday 26 October 2001 at 10.00 a.m.
